



RECOVERY DHARMA

Second Foundation of Mindfulness Meditation: Feeling Tone

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the sensations of breath. Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. Try to keep your attention at that spot.

As you breathe in, be aware of the in-breath; as you breathe out, be aware of the out-breath. Simply observe the breath going in and the breath going out.

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to do anything about it. There is nothing to fix. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

[Three minutes of silence]

After building a foundation of calm attention to the breath, you may wish to expand your awareness to include the experience of the senses.

Are there sounds?

Are there sights—even from behind closed eyes?

Are there smells?

Are there tastes?

Are there physical or emotional sensations?

Allow the sensations to arise as naturally as possible. Stay with them gently; let them go as they pass. There is no need to chase or pursue them. Pay attention to how they change.

If at any point you find yourself being carried away by a particular experience, or you find yourself lost in thought, try to take your focus back to the breath, and then gently return to focusing on the flow of sensation.

[Three minutes of silence]

The Buddha taught that all sensations and all experiences have a feeling tone. Feeling tones may be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. How we relate and respond to these feeling tones is crucial in determining our moment-to-moment freedom or reactivity. Quite often, we have no idea of what we really feel in the body. It is central to our practice to investigate our feeling tones in order to become mindfully aware of what we actually feel at a given moment.

What is the feeling tone of your experience right now?

Is there an experience of pleasantness? Can you locate any pleasantness in your current experience of your senses? What is it like when you investigate it? What is its weight and texture? Can you feel yourself becoming attached to it? Try to appreciate the pleasure without getting caught up in it.

[Two minutes of silence]

Is there an experience of unpleasantness? Can you locate any unpleasantness in your current experience of your senses? What is it like when you investigate it? What is its weight and texture? Can you feel yourself pushing away from it? Try to tolerate the unpleasantness, to sit with it.

[Two minutes of silence]

Is there an experience of neutrality? Can you locate any neutrality in your current experience of your senses? What is it like when you investigate it? What is its weight and texture? Can you feel yourself becoming bored or confused by it? Try to stay with it nonetheless.

[Two minutes of silence]

Return to the flow of physical and emotional sensations in the body. Without hanging on to particular sensations, try to be fully aware of the feeling-tone of each passing experience: smell, pleasant; emotional sensation, unpleasant; taste, neutral, and so on.

[Three minutes of silence]

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment-to-moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the change, to the vitality of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.

