

The Daily Tejaniya 2015

All of the daily practice messages

Reality is not solid

Reality is not solid.

You Are Observing Because You Want to Know

*There is no need to make objects disappear,
and it is irrelevant whether they disappear or not.
You are observing because you want to know and
understand the nature of all phenomena.*

This is right view and right attitude.

(1 of 24 on Right View)

Acknowledge Pain as Just Nature

*Acknowledge pain as a natural phenomenon or
just nature. If you can see and learn about thoughts,
feelings and body sensations and how they are related,
then you will be ready for pain when it does come—
and it will. You practice is about watching and
learning about these connections.*

(2 of 24 on Right View)

Defilements Arise From Wrong View

*Which is better: pain or no pain? When we think no pain
is better, then every time we have pain, we won't like it.
We will become upset and the defilements will take over.
Why do the defilements take over? Because we have wrong view.*

(3 of 24 on Right View)

Right View Notices Reactivity

*I was suffering from a knee injury and the pain
would come and go very quickly—sometimes intense
and the next minute no pain at all.*

I quickly came to realize there was no difference between pain and nonpain. It was just the one object, sensation or no sensation, just nature. The only difference being the mind's attitude toward the pain. Right view is to check and notice the reaction the mind is having to the pain or the emotion.
(4 of 24 on Right View)

Investigation Is About Watching

It is important to understand what investigation is and what it is not. It is not unraveling the mind by overthinking particular problems. It is about watching and learning from the reactions and relationships the mind has to objects.
(5 of 24 on Right View)

Drop One Word Into the Mind

If you are struggling and the mind is feeling dull, then a way to investigate is to maybe drop one word or a short simple question into the mind with no expectations of an answer, all the while maintaining awareness.
(6 of 24 on Right View)

The Wheel of Understanding

When I say "inquire" or "investigate," I do not mean to actively overthink what is happening in the mind. Usually with insight, when investigating begins, the thought that starts the wheel of understanding turning usually comes of its own volition, totally unbidden.
(7 of 24 on Right View)

From Gross to Subtle is a Completion

Sharp awareness can see the inner workings of the mind, but partial awareness will never see

the causes that are present. When we go from a gross to a subtle level, we can say conditions are complete. This is when we can understand the nature of our minds.

(8 of 24 on Right View)

The Knee Remains

A pain in the knee can come and go, but the knee remains. It can be easy to see the pain as a process of nature, but we associate with the knee with "self" — "my knee." Right view is to recognize the association you have of your knee to self (i.e., "this is my knee.")

(9 of 24 on Right View)

"This Is A Process of Nature"

From sustained practice we can come to know our experience as nature. However, sometimes it is not helpful to say, "this is not me," or "not mine," because the mind finds this very hard to accept. To say "this is a process of nature" is much easier to accept.

(10 of 24 on Right View)

Right View Has No Preference

When it is quiet or when it is noisy, which is better? When the mind judges or has a preference for something to be better, then it will automatically develop a reaction if the opposite happens. So right view is to not have a preference. Sound is just sound, nature.

(11 of 24 on Right View)

"I'm Going to Melt Into the Floor"

A foreign yogi arrived to practice at our center. It was just before the rainy season began. The heat was very intense with the temperature at about 105 degrees. On the day he

arrived, he went into the dharma hall in the middle of the afternoon to sit. The men's dharma hall is on the second floor, so it was even hotter up there. At the moment the yogi sat down to meditate, his mind said: "I can't do this. I'm going to melt into the floor. I will die." Before he had even stopped thinking this, he realized that his mind was cool. It was only his body that was hot. A separation had occurred in his mind. He knew that if he kept hydrated, then there would be no problem. He saw heat as an object, just nature, not personal. An understanding into causes and conditions had arisen. Conditions were ripe for this insight to arise. This yogi had right view and right thought arise in his mind. (12 of 24 on Right View)

Think of Experience as Nature

How do we view our experiences in the right way? Think of our experiences as nature. Nature is not personal. Nature is just a process of cause and effect. Nature is not out to get us. Anything we experience is natural. It is just happening. (13 of 24 on Right View)

Experiencing "I" as Personal is Wrong View

Wrong view is delusion. Wrong view is attaching to experience. If we view what we are experiencing as personal, or "I," then that is wrong view. (14 of 24 on Right View)

It is Crucial to Have Right View

It is so crucial to have right view. I cannot repeat it enough. It is probably the most important aspect of the practice, because when we don't have right view then wrong view is automatically there. (15 of 24 on Right View)

Remember: objects are just objects, not per-

*sonal, just nature. This is right view.
(16 of 24 on Right View)*

Ask "What Am I Aware Of?"

*Ask these questions often: "What am I aware of?" "What is my level of awareness?"
This will support continuity of awareness.
(17 of 24 on Right View)*

You Don't Need to Know Every Detail

*You do not need to know every detail of your experience. Just be aware and know what you are aware of.
(18 of 24 on Right View)*

When You Are Truly Aware You are Not Focusing

*When you are truly aware you are not focusing, yet you are aware of objects. Practicing in this way the mind will stay fresh.
(19 of 24 on Right View)*

Be Natural and Simple—Relax

*Be natural and simple. Relax. There is no need to slow down unnaturally. You simply want to see things the way they are.
(20 of 24 on Right View)*

Meditation is a Learning Process

*Always bear in mind that mindfulness meditation is a learning process during which you will get to know the mind/body relationship. The mind can get tense and tired when it observes objects. Be natural and simple. Relax.
(21 of 24 on Right View)*

Strength of Awareness + Steadiness of Mind

What is required is strength of awareness and steadiness

of mind. If we can do this as well as investigate our experience and ask the hard questions, the answers will come. Practicing in this way, we see things as they really are. This is right understanding.
(22 of 24 on Right View)

Right View Is The Nature Aspect of All Experience

It may take you awhile to have the ability to reconcile your experience with right view. But by being aware and investigating what is happening in your mind, you will begin to see the nature aspect of all experience.
(23 of 24 on Right View)

No One is There

By simple observation with a calm and aware mind, we will soon see the mind as nature. Not "I," not self, self, not personal. No one is there. The mind is a natural phenomenon.
(24 of 24 on Right View)

Let Any Experience Arise

Let any experience arise. Defilements are just objects too. Because we are getting to know them, there is no need to fear them. Just know they are there. They are a tool for you to further develop wisdom.
(1 of 8 on Right Attitude)

Continuously Check Your Attitude

We need to be continuously checking our attitude. After we have been practicing for while, it almost becomes second nature.
(2 of 8 on Right Attitude)

Ignorance is Not Clearly Seeing The Mind

Desire and aversion arise out of ignorance. What is ignorance? You are just not seeing what is

*really happening in the mind.
(5 of 8 on Right Attitude)*

Having Expectations Creates Anxiety

*Having expectations and thinking you want this to happen or that to happen only creates anxiety and will lead to aversion.
(6 of 8 on Right Attitude)*

Just Try to Know What's Happening As It Is

*You are not trying to make things turn out the way you want them to. You are trying to know what is happening as it is.
(7 of 8 on Right Attitude)*

Judgements of Good or Bad Are Irrelevant

*Whether what is happening is judged good or bad is irrelevant. If it is viewed with the right attitude, then it turns into a learning experience where you can notice whether the mind is judging it to be good or bad and the reactions that go along with those judgments.
(8 of 8 on Right Attitude)*

Right Attitude is Relaxed and Attentive

*Right attitude allows you to observe, accept, and acknowledge whatever is arriving at the six sense doors in any given moment in a relaxed and attentive way.
(8 of 9 on Right Attitude)*

Take the Practice to Heart

*Right attitude is having the right frame of mind to be able to meditate. We really take the practice to heart.
(9 of 9 on Right Attitude)*

Everything You Need is Surrounding You

Everything you need for understanding to arise is surrounding you in this moment. It is all on your doorstep: family, friends, work colleagues, and any other relationships you may have can all be powerful catalysts to your work of revealing wisdom.

Observe the Natural and Animal World

The natural and animal world, if you take the time to observe closely, is a rich source of inspiration and insight.

Death—No Problem!

Right now, in this moment, anything may come and anything may go—even death. No problem!

What is Important Is What Is Happening Now

What is important is what is happening right now—that is all. We can't add to or take away anything from what is happening in this moment. What we can do is be aware.

Right Effort Gains Traction

*When you are riding a bicycle and pedaling hard, you will after a while start to gain a momentum that takes away the need to pedal with so much effort. The pedals start to freewheel, and you only need to put in the minimum amount of work to keep moving forward. This is what right effort is: putting in enough work to gain traction in our practice.
(16 of 16 on Right Effort)*

Awareness Will Automatically Be There

With this practice it is so important to put in a sustained and continuous effort. If we do this, then it will become so natural that it will sustain itself. If you build wisdom, awareness will automatically be there.

(15 of 16 on Right Effort)

Awareness Will Take the Right Object

If the mind is in the right frame, it will take the right object. We then have the opportunity to see the nature or dhamma aspect of all phenomena. This is right view and right effort. We are truly meditating.

(14 of 16 on Right Effort)

Take the Role of Observer

If we take the role of observer and watch what is going on in the mind and body without reaction, then the mind is automatically going to become quiet and stabilize.

(13 of 16 on Right Effort)

Understand Cause-and-Effect Relationships

If we can understand cause-and-effect relationships, we will know how to deal with any situation. We need to always be asking ourselves whether we know the causes and conditions that will achieve a certain result. This is right attitude and right effort.

(12 of 16 on Right Effort)

Mindfulness + Right Attitude → Concentration

We cannot develop concentration by just trying to concentrate. We need to know how concentration is developed. When mindfulness is applied with the right attitude, concentration is developed.

(11 of 16 on Right Effort)

We Can Only Work on Causes

We can only work on causes, not effects. We can be aware of effects, but we need to know the conditions that brought about that effect.

(10 of 16 on Right Effort)

The Quality of Awareness is Wakefulness

The quality of awareness itself is wakefulness, so the moment we are doing right practice that quality grows. If the practice is going right, even though we are fresh in the morning, we will be much more energized in the evening. This comes from right practice and right effort.

(9 of 16 on Right Effort)

Don't Put in Too Much Effort

Some people are very fresh in the morning, and they put in too much effort. But they don't see that because they're not watching to see how the mind is working.

(8 of 16 on Right Effort)

Always Ask: Is the Mind Awake and Aware?

Thinking logically about this, if we sit and we're alert: why does the mind become dull and then even more dull? Because we aren't looking to see if the mind is still awake and aware.

(7 of 16 on Right Effort)

Don't Get Sucked Into the Object

If you know the mind is working, then it doesn't get sucked into the object. But when awareness starts to drop off, we don't notice because we are absorbed into the object.

(6 of 16 on Right Effort)

Awareness is the Home of the Mind

Awareness is the home of the mind so we must stay at home.

(5 of 16 on Right Effort)

Reside in Awareness and See What Arises

Reside in awareness and see what comes along; be with your experience as it is and allow things to turn out without trying to control.

(4 of 16 on Right Effort)

Right Effort is No Effort

Right effort is really no effort; it is very easy; just don't expect anything from the practice.

(3 of 16 on Right Effort)

Following Craving is Wrong Effort

Having spoken to so many meditators over a long time, I notice that most of their effort is wrong effort. They want to follow their craving, so whatever effort they make is wrong.

(2 of 16 on Right Effort)

Happiness is a Byproduct of Wisdom

If we meditate because we want to gain happiness, then greed is present. True happiness, however we may experience it, can only come about as a byproduct of wisdom. When we have wisdom, everything falls into place.

(1 of 16 on Right Effort)

The Goal of Practice is Wisdom

The goal of mindfulness practice is the development of wisdom. However, we don't want to be yearning for wisdom. We need to just enjoy abiding in mindfulness knowing full well its benefits.

Maintain Just Enough Light Awareness

The effort that is required to meditate should just be the right amount, enough to maintain a light awareness of the six sense objects as continuously as possible.

Persevere Without Expectation

Viriya—right effort—is the spiritual faculty of patience and perseverance and having no expectations from the practice.

Two Steps to Feel Better

In daily life if things aren't going your way and you are agitated, investigate why and then try to change your attitude; instantly you can feel better. The mind has become steady once more. Samma samadhi is always there.

Continuous Right View → Stability

When there is right view and continuity, the mind will always remain stable.

Don't Be Attached to Quiet Mind

If we think that it's better to practice when the mind is quiet, then we will always find it difficult to practice when the mind is not quiet; we are then at a disadvantage because this is attachment.

Quiet and Unquiet Mind Are Both Objects

A quiet mind is something we can be aware of; it is an object. An unquiet mind is also an object. So from the meditation point of view, as objects they are equal.

Stability of Mind is Always There

The type of samadhi I would like you to understand and experience is exactly what the word means, stability of mind—a stability of mind that is already there and is revealed because there is a more open awareness and right view.

Right Awareness Collects Data

Right awareness collects data, and when the information is complete, wisdom will arise.

Two Kinds of Samadhi

There are two kinds of samadhi: one that comes from concentrating on one object exclusively, and the samadhi that is born of right view, right attitude, and right thought.

Knowing Many Things at Once

When you're in the right balance, you might be looking at something, but you know other things as well. They impinge on your awareness.

Know You Have a Mind

By being aware, you can begin to know you have a mind.

Gentle Awareness Requires No Personal Effort

Personal effort feels like you can only be aware or lost in the work you are trying to do. But with gentle awareness, although not continuous in the beginning, it soon gains momentum to become natural and continuous. It really feels like you're aware while doing everything; you are actually living in this awareness.

"What I See, I Cannot Be"

There is a saying that sums up the awareness of objects very well: "What I see, I cannot be." In other words: "You either have feelings, or they have you."

Only One Question: Is There Identification or Not?

In meditation, when investigating the mind, it is only important to recognize when there is identification with an object and when there is not.

Meditator vs Non-Meditator

When a car passes by, what differentiates

the meditator from the non-meditator?

The meditator knows both that the car passed by and knows the experience of seeing, feeling, hearing, and interpreting the experience, thoughts, or thinking mind, and so forth (some or all, as the case may be).

The non-meditator just knows a car passing by.

The Intention to Be Aware is Enough

Don't be too concerned if you lose awareness. If the intention to be aware is present, then that is enough; the mind will always return to awareness, thus establishing momentum.

Reside in Bare Awareness

The innate nature of our mind is wakefulness, where nothing is created; there are no conditions, just bare awareness; we can reside in this.

We Forget What is Right

Sati means to remember, recognize, not to forget. What do you forget? What is wholesome; what is right.

Residing in the Flow of Nature

Awareness is remembering, not forgetting what it is to be aware, just simply knowing that you are aware.

The awareness we are seeking is unprompted. We are not digging for it; we are simply residing in the ebb and flow of nature itself.

Wisdom is the Goal

Wisdom is what this practice is about.

Take Care of the Wisdom You Have

If the defilements get so much as a toe in the door, they can leave you penniless. So please—take care of what wisdom you have and nurture it.

Experientially Understand Wisdom

Once wisdom has been experientially understood, then there is no need to call on it as much because it becomes a part of your overall right view.

Insights Are Not Permanent

A word of warning: an insight is not permanent. It only lasts for the moment that it arises. What does remain alive is its potential and its quality; its imprint on our minds is its legacy.

Look at Life As it Is

We must first look at "what is" and understand it; we must look at life as it is and come into intimate contact with it.

Be Open to Wisdom Not Yet Realized

It is not enough to be satisfied with the wisdom we have; we must have faith and the openness to receive the wisdom that is not yet realized.

Wisdom is Elusive and Hard-Earned

Wisdom is what this practice is about. It is the elusive and hard-earned quality of mind we so desperately try to achieve.

Meditation Attends to Life

Meditation is really the only sensible approach to our reality and the problems that can arise from living. We can use it as an escape or avoidance from life, or we can use it as a practice to attend to life.

What is Our Relationship to Reality?

First, we must ask ourselves: what is our relationship to reality? What is our understanding of life?

Trying to Create Something is Greed

Don't try to create anything; trying to create something is greed.

All Thoughts of "Me" Fuel Emotions

All thoughts that you identify with as being "me" or "mine" actually fuel the emotions.

Emotions are Never "Yours"

Emotions are never "your" emotions; everybody experiences them.

Be Knowingly Aware

No matter what posture you are in, if your mind is aware with understanding, you are meditating.

Don't Focus, Pay Attention

Don't try to "focus," "concentrate" or "penetrate." Instead, "observe," "watch," "be aware," "pay attention."

Mindfulness Comes with Relaxation

The more relaxed you are, the easier it is to develop mindfulness.

Learn How to Relax

If you can't observe, don't force yourself to do it. Learn how to relax, how to be comfortable.

Mindfulness is About Understanding

Mindfulness meditation is not about forcing but about understanding.

Know the Nature of Liking and Disliking

True equanimity results from understanding the nature of liking and disliking through observation and investigation.

True Equanimity Towards Pain

Understanding the difference between true equanimity towards pain, and being able to bear pain through forceful effort, is really important.

Look at Mental Discomfort at a Subtle Level

When you look at a mental discomfort at a subtle level you may reach a point when your mind feels completely equanimous.

Watch Subtle Mental Discomfort Change

If you see a subtle mental discomfort, watch it change: does it increase or decrease?

Turn Attention Towards Mental Resistance

As soon as you recognize mental resistance or discomfort, turn your attention to that feeling.

Wisdom Momentum vs Defilement Momentum

Either there is momentum on the wisdom side, or there will be momentum on the defilement side.

If We Can't Accept, We Can't Learn

If we can't accept, we can't learn.

Three Ways to Know the Truth

There are three ways of knowing the Buddha/the Truth:

- *To see with the eyes*
- *To reflect through imagination*
- *To understand with wisdom*

(Shwe Oo Min)

Wanting a Result is Greed

*Wanting to understand is wisdom,
wanting a result is greed.*

Thoughts Arise, That's All

*We say the mind "wanders," but in fact it doesn't
go anywhere. Thoughts arise, that's all. The only
problem is we think they shouldn't.*

Good Conditions Allow Good Qualities to Arise

*Meditation is cultivating good qualities in the mind. It's
making conditions right so that good qualities can arise.*

Think of Everything as Natural

*When we can think of things as being natural, as being
what they are supposed to be, then we don't react towards
what is happening with attraction or aversion. When
we are practicing the Dhamma, this right view
is very, very important.*

Right View Does Not React

*When right view is present the mind does not react,
and it therefore retains its stability; that is samadhi.*

Interest Comes Naturally With Awareness

*When you are aware, wisdom unfolds naturally,
and there is still more interest.*

Wisdom Will Not Die

The person will die but the wisdom will not die. (Shwe Oo Min)

Interest is Natural Effort

*People usually try to find a balance between
effort and relaxation by using more or less effort.*

But if there is interest, effort is already present.

Balance Relaxation and Interest

The balance you have to find is the balance between relaxation and interest.

There is Wisdom in Interest

Interest is using wisdom; there is a wisdom quality to interest.

It's Not Important for Pain to Disappear

It is not important for aches and pains to disappear. You want to learn about the mind and body processes that arise and pass away in the presence of these aches and pains.

The Mind Will Know its Limits

If you are aware of whatever you are doing, the mind will know its own limits.

Wise Reflection is More Accurate Than Perception

*"When a wise person thinks about something, it is more accurate than if you actually ran there to look at it."
(Shwe Oo Min)*

If You Understand the Mind, You Understand the World

If you really understand the mind, you understand the world.

Object-Based vs Awareness-Based Meditation

There is the object and there is the knowing. The Buddha taught many, many methods of practicing. There are practices that go from the object, and there are practices that go from the knowing.

The Snoring Yogi

*Yogi: In the Dhamma Hall I heard this noise of groaning and snoring. I waited for quite some time thinking, 'Why is this person not waking up?' And then suddenly I realized it was me!**

Recognize That Every Moment is Changing

Recognize that every moment is changing. If we think "this is still happening," with the idea that the same thing continues to happen, then that's wrong view already.

Every Moment is Fresh

The mind's tendency is to like new things. It wants variety it wants freshness. One thing to remember is that no moment is the same as the old. Every moment is fresh.

Don't Grasp, Don't Push Away

Do not grasp and do not push away. (Shwe Oo Min)

The Happiness of Insight

People say they want to practice because they want to be happy. I feel a bit alarmed because they only understand pleasurable, emotional happiness. They don't understand jhanic happiness or the happiness of an insight.

One Thing Makes Meditation a Lot Easier

It is vitally important to understand what an object is: whatever we know is an object. Remember this and recognize it. It makes meditation a whole lot easier.

Is the Mind Energetic?

Watch the mind that is aware. Is it working? How is it aware? Keep an eye on it. See whether it's energetic.

Both Like and Dislike Cause Attachment

Attachment happens not because you just like something but also if you are afraid of something, or dislike something,

there is attachment because of that emotion.

Always Check the Quality of Your Mind

Check the quality of your mind all the time.

Confusion and Doubt are Delusion

Confusion and doubt are delusion in the knowing mind. Being lost in thought is also delusion because there is no knowing mind.

The Fires of Defilement Will Get You

The fire on your stove won't get you. It's the fires of the defilements that will get you. (Shwe Oo Min)

Insight Makes Things Feel Clear

When you have an insight, things feel very clear. What has become clear feels very clear, and in that moment you are aware of what was not clear before.

Mindfulness Near Death is Important

When we are near to death we see images of where we are going, and if we are going somewhere unwholesome fear is bound to arise. The practice of mindfulness is very important at that time.

Being Fully Conscious Near Death is Ideal

Being fully conscious and unafraid when you are about to die is an ideal situation. It means the likelihood of going to a better life, another human life, a life where you are able to practice Dhamma is greater.

We Cannot Experience "Body"

We can't really know the body. We can only think of the body but we cannot experience "body." We experience the feeling of the elements—earth, water, heat and air.

Defilements Take Concepts as Objects

*Every defiled mind pays attention to concept
but not every time you pay attention
to concept is a defilement.*

Nature is the Reality of Your Experience

Nature is the reality of your experience.

Allow Agitation to Be There and Investigate

*Instead of trying to make agitation go away, allow
it to be there. So long as it's there you can investigate
the nature of agitation. When it's not there you
can't investigate the nature of agitation.*

Use "What Is This?" to Pick Up Nature

*Usually when we think, "What is this?", we think
of concept. In practice when we ask, "What
is this?", we want to pick up nature.*

Chicken You Cannot Eat!

*What you can experience directly is reality. That's
why we can't eat chicken. Sweet you can
eat; chicken you cannot eat!*

Wisdom Takes Reality as Its Object

*Defilement takes concept as its object;
wisdom takes reality as its object.*

Greed Sees Only What It Wants to See

*Wisdom understands that seeing is happening;
greed only sees what it wants to look at.*

Delusion Believes in Concepts

Defilements believe in concepts and delusion believes in concepts. But as we continue practicing the mind begins to realize the experience itself, the reality of the experience.

Awareness is Pure

Every moment of awareness is a moment of purity. (Shwe Oo Min)

We Need to Observe Anger

When we suppress our outward anger, in our actions or words, the anger remains inside. That's the anger that we need to observe.

Anger is Never Beneficial

Is it necessary to get angry? I used to think so. But when I'd been observing my mind for a long time I realized there was nothing about anger that was beneficial in any way.

Wanting Only Good is a Defilement

Wanting only what's good is a defilement.

Meditation Should Be a Source of Joy

Meditation should be a source of joy. We should find it interesting and joyful. It should be an exploration, it should be fun!

Consciously Relaxing Tension is Meditation

There is never tension only in the mind. It will always be translated into tension in some part of the body. If you consciously relax those tensions, it's a kind of meditation.

Check Often: Are You Getting Tense and Why?

Throughout the day, check whether you are getting tense or whether you are relaxed. Any tension is an indication that you are developing some defilement. Either you are wanting something,

disliking something, or are feeling confused about something.

Is the Mind Pure or Not?

You can't experience the Dhamma through reading or listening to others. Try it now, and you will understand now. Ask yourself, "Is the mind pure or not?" Just look. (Shwe Oo Min)

Experiment With Thinking, Feeling and Pain

For as long as you can tolerate a pain you might want to learn from it. When the pain is there, what does the mind think? How does that thinking make the mind feel? How does the thinking affect the feeling and vice versa? It becomes an experiment.

A Door, a Noise, and Right View

Say somebody opens the door and it's noisy, and you think, "Why is that person making noise?" That's wrong view. If you think, "There's a sound, I am conscious of it," that's right view.

Use All Six Sense Doors to Develop Awareness

When a person uses the experiences at all six sense doors to develop awareness, stability of mind, wisdom and so on, you call that person a meditator or a Dhamma person.

Meditation is Learning About Yourself

Meditation is very interesting, because you are learning about yourself. You want to know more about yourself.

Awareness + Right View → Stable Mind

*Persistence—sustaining awareness—
together with Right View naturally
make the mind stable.*

Are You Afraid to Open Your Eyes?

Some yogis have told me that they are afraid to open their eyes after a sitting meditation session. I ask why, and they say, "Because when I open my eyes my samadhi is gone." That's not very good samadhi.

The Light of Wisdom

Be aware until the light of wisdom appears!

** A weekly quote from Shwe Oo Min,
Sayadaw U Tejaniya's teacher*

Choose to Be Conscious of Knowing

*Seeing is happening, sight is happening. Can you choose not to see when your eyes are open?
You can choose to be conscious of it.*

Dhamma vs Defilements

Dhamma and defilements are always engaging in a tug-of-war.

Don't Consciously Choose Unconsciousness

Don't allow your mind not to be aware. It might do this by itself, but don't consciously allow your mind not to be aware.

Any Time is Dhamma Time

Any time is Dhamma time. Don't forget yourself—even in the toilet!

Peace is Not the Goal

Peace itself is not the goal. If peace is the goal then when you can't achieve peace by meditating, you won't know what to do. When the goal is to understand, you can try to understand suffering too.

You Don't Have to Choose What to Be Aware Of

If you are walking, you might just be conscious of the whole form moving. You don't have to concentrate on the sole of the

foot or the tip of your head, or anything like that. You don't have to choose specifically what to be aware of.

Watch Any Experience Just As It Is

We meditate to develop Right View. This cannot be achieved by the ego. Meditation must proceed naturally, by watching any experience just as it is. This is the way to develop Right View.

Interest in Experience is Wisdom at Work

A simple thing like interest is a characteristic of wisdom. When you are conscious of something in your experience and you become interested in it, your own wisdom is already at work.

Be Aware That You Are Seeing

You can bring Dhamma into daily life by being aware that you are seeing. Then you will be meditating with your eyes open.

It's Easy to Be Aware

It's easy to be aware, because all we can truly be aware of is our six senses.

Try to Make Every Moment Positive

We need to try to make what's in the mind every moment be something positive, because if it's not positive it's going to be negative.

Place is a Concept

Never try to locate the mind. Place is a concept.

Accept and Observe Sleepiness

It is perfectly natural to become sleepy. If you feel bad about sleepiness it means you have an aversion towards it and you will try to resist it. This is a wrong attitude. Simply recognize and accept sleepiness. As long as you observe

sleepiness with the right attitude, you are meditating.

"How Are You Practicing?"

In an interview, Sayadaw U Tejaniya once recalled how he learned to meditate as a child from his teacher, Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw:

"Sayadaw would only ask me, 'How are you practicing?' He would never ask 'What happened?' This is very important. I feel there is a difference with other teachers. Based on my experience, many teachers ask, 'What happened?' He never asked that way."

Think, Speak and Act With Wisdom

When we think, speak or act with defilements we will find ourselves again and again in samsara—the cycle of suffering. In the same way, when we think, speak or act with wisdom we will find our way out of samsara.

Don't Force the Practice

If the mind is dissatisfied with the practice it is likely that you want something. You might then try to force the practice. This is not helpful.

You Can't See Reality With Wrong View

You cannot see reality if you have wrong view.

Thoughts Are Just Thoughts

When you start practicing you have to keep reminding yourself that thoughts are just thoughts, feelings just feelings. As you become more experienced you will gradually understand the truth of this.

Wisdom and Awareness Arise Together

In the beginning wisdom comes a little later than awareness. Over time, however, through practice,

when you have developed wisdom, it arises simultaneously with awareness.

Just Sit and Watch What is Happening

Be simple. Just sit and watch what is happening. Is it difficult to know what you are doing right now?

With Awareness Happiness Abounds

If you seek a happy life, always be aware. When you maintain awareness, the mind remains clear and happiness abounds.

Awareness of Awareness is Meditation

If you are aware of your awareness, you are meditating.

True Understanding is Experiential

Beware of jumping to conclusions when you have an experience that seems to match the theory. Once you truly understand something experientially, you will see the vast difference between your initial interpretation of the theory and actual understanding.

Be Mindful, Then Investigate

In the beginning, you start off by just being mindful. Once you become skilled in consistently bringing the mind to the present moment, you can then start to observe and investigate what you are aware of.

Step Back and Watch

Vipassana steps back to see things more clearly; whereas samatha dives in and gets absorbed in the object. Stepping back and watching allows understanding to arise.

Understand Conditions, Then Work on Cause

If you become mature in your practice, you will be able to handle difficult situations simply because you understand the conditions behind them. Understanding the conditions enables you to work on the cause.

Awareness of Awareness Will Sustain Momentum

Once awareness gains momentum, being aware of the awareness will sustain the momentum.

No Awareness → No Wisdom

Without awareness, there can be no wisdom and life becomes meaningless. Only with awareness is there wisdom; then life becomes fulfilling. (Shwe Oo Min)

Remind Yourself to Be Aware

Simply reminding yourself to be in the present moment is all the effort you need to be mindful.

You Must Not Leave the Mind Alone

Right mindfulness is not forgetting to be aware of the right object; right effort is to persevere; right concentration is stillness or stability of mind. You need to remember and understand that you cannot leave the mind alone. It needs to be watched consistently.

Do Not Be Led by Greed

Do not be led by greed.

This is Not "Me," This is Nature

Try to accept things the way they are and try to see that 'this is not me,' that this is just nature at work. You need to acquire this kind of wisdom first. It is this wisdom that can eradicate the defilements.

Don't Avoid Objects, Avoid Entanglement

Do not try to avoid objects or experiences, try to avoid getting entangled in defilements.

Objects Are Useful in Vipassana

In vipassana the object serves as a means to help us develop right awareness, concentration and wisdom.

The Mind Will Know Its Limits

If you are aware of whatever you are doing, the mind will know its own limits.

Don't Identity With Thoughts and Feelings

As long as you keep identifying with your thoughts and feelings—i.e., if you keep clinging to the view ‘I am thinking’ or ‘I am feeling’—you will not become able to see things as they are.

Good and Bad Experiences are Okay

You should not be concerned whether you have good or bad experiences. You should only be concerned about your attitude towards these experiences.

Don't Get Attached to Solitude

If you become attached to solitude without being aware of it you will easily become agitated when your solitude is threatened.

Be Continuously Aware of Relaxation

If you are continuously aware of your state of relaxation you will become even more relaxed.

Recognize Positive States of Mind

When you are in a positive frame of mind, it is important to recognize it. Recognition tends to strengthen this wholesome state of mind.

Recognize Wrong Attitude

Only if the mind recognizes a wrong attitude can it switch to the right attitude.

Make Attachment Your Primary Object

When there is attachment or aversion in the mind, always make that your primary object of observation.

Sit Back and Just Watch

Throughout our life we habitually seek and grasp. To sit back and just watch this happening is difficult. However, this sitting back and just watching is essential to become able to see and understand these habits.

Wisdom Turns Poison Into Medicine

A wise and skillful person can turn poison into medicine. A skilled meditator can transform hindrances into understanding.

Watch Difficult Emotions

Only when you are ready and able to watch difficult emotions are you able to learn from them.

When Speaking Be Aware of Your Intentions

When you learn to talk with awareness in a relaxed manner, mindful of your intentions, your way of talking will become less emotional.

Don't Try to Get Rid of Thoughts

When you try to get rid of thoughts you are actually trying to control them rather than learning to understand them.

Take Time to Learn About Greed

Take time to learn a little about greed. Pay attention to its characteristics. If you keep falling for greed, you will never understand its nature.

Expectations Are a Form of Resistance

When expectations arise in the mind, learn to see their

nature. Whenever you feel any resistance to the way things are, you can be sure that you have expectations.

There is Such a Thing as Healthy Desire

Lobha is an unwholesome volition, a defilement. Chanda is a wholesome volition, an expression of wisdom.

Are You Relaxed? Check Your Facial Sensations First

If you are aware of your facial sensations during your sitting you will be able to know whether you are relaxed or not. When you are focusing too much it will show on your face. When a person is really relaxed, the face is very clear, soft and calm.

Awareness Without Wisdom is Possible

Whenever you have wisdom you are aware; but just because you are aware does not necessarily mean you have wisdom.

The Work of Wisdom

The work of awareness is just to know. The work of wisdom is to differentiate between what is skillful and unskillful.

Don't Identify With Objects

When you observe something, don't identify with it; don't think of it as 'I' or 'mine.' Accept it simply as something to know, to observe, and to understand.

Be Aware of Whatever Comes Your Way

Looking for something which we think we are supposed to see is not mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness meditation is just being aware of whatever comes your way.

Don't Indulge in Peacefulness

Be aware of peacefulness. Be aware of the awareness of peacefulness. Doing so allows you to check whether or not you are indulging in it, getting attached to it, or are still aware.

You Are Responsible for Your Mind

If you do not look after your garden it will overgrow with weeds. If you do not watch your mind, defilements will grow and multiply. The mind does not belong to you but you are responsible for it.

Detach and Accept

When things are good, learn how to detach from them. When things are not good, learn how to accept them.

Right Thought Calms Body and Mind

Applying the right thought—reminding yourself that ‘this is not me, this is the nature of this emotion’—calms the mind and the body.

The Purpose of Calm is to Observe

The purpose of calming the mind and the body is to enable you to observe.

Whose Mind is the Wholesome Mind?

The practice is to understand what a wholesome mind is and what an unwholesome mind is, to really know for yourself. Whose mind is the wholesome mind? Whose mind is the unwholesome mind? Is it your mind?

Replace Anger With Compassion

When through observing our anger we truly understand the suffering that it always causes us, it will become easy to feel compassion whenever we are confronted with an angry person.

Wisdom Decisions vs Delusion Decisions

Whenever the mind decides that a certain object, experience or person is not good, it reacts in a negative way; whenever it decides it is good, it reacts in a positive way. Once you can see these judgements you need to further investigate: Is this evaluation based on wisdom or on delusion?

How To Deal With Angry Customers

YOGI:

In my work I often have to deal with very demanding and sometimes very angry and aggressive customers. I would appreciate any advice on how to deal with such situations.

SUT:

Every time you are confronted with an angry or demanding customer, check to see how your mind feels. Their greed and aversion is their problem, you need to see whether there is greed and aversion in your mind. When the object is positive the mind tends to react in a positive way and when it is negative it tends to react in a negative way. As understanding matures, the mind becomes less and less reactive.

Wisdom Never Believes

Wisdom never believes. Wisdom always investigates.

Recognize Enjoyment With Right Attitude

Feeding your enjoyment, trying to get more and more is one extreme, suppressing it is the other extreme. The Buddha told us to take the middle way. Recognize the enjoyment with the right attitude. A feeling is just a feeling, enjoyment is just enjoyment.

Big Understandings Have a Life of Their Own

Bigger understandings have a life of their own.

Continuous Awareness Makes the Mind Calm

As awareness becomes more continuous, the mind becomes calmer and you will begin to understand which issues are important and which are not.

Understand Anger Don't Try to Get Rid of It

Once you have set a direction for the mind, then all the succeeding minds will follow that lead. If there is anger and you decide to investigate this emotion, you are setting the mind in the right direction. If, however, you decide to try to get rid of this anger, you are directing the mind wrongly.

Always Examine the Mind

Always examine the mind, why is it doing this, how does it feel?

Paying the Price for Nibbana

There is no reason why you should stumble into Nibbana. You have to pay the price. Only when the conditions are fulfilled, will the effect come about. Be patient and work steadily.

Awareness is a Full-Time Job

We have to keep a tag on the mind, always be aware of what is going on and keep working on it. It is a full-time job.

50/50 Awareness

YOGI:

I try to maintain the internal awareness but when the awareness wants to go out, it affects that awareness.

SUT:

The outside is important but so are you. Why not be aware of both? Why not go for 50/50?

Keep Awareness of What's Happening "In Here"

When you are not really interested in what is going on 'in here,' and the attention is all 'outside,' thoughts and emotions will come unnoticed and things will build up.

Intentionally Practice in a Simple Way

We need to learn to remain in an open and relaxed state of just noticing what is going on; we need to intentionally practice in a simple way.

Don't Stultify Practice with Eagerness

When we practice with a super-conscious kind of mindfulness, when we always tell ourselves that now we are going to be mindful, we will distort the picture and our experience will be kind of stultified.

The Natural Flow of Awareness

If we can get in touch with the natural flow of awareness, working with the awareness that is, we can be mindful in an easy and natural way.

A More Natural Awareness

What we need to do is to learn to practice a more natural awareness and to avoid the kind of very purposeful, very intense awareness.

Awareness Is Already There

You need to focus a little to be aware of the body, but this is not necessary to be aware of the mind. Awareness is a mental activity, it is already there, and you don't need to do anything.

Don't Try to Focus on Awareness

Trying to focus on awareness is counter-productive.

Awareness is Already Happening

Awareness is happening naturally all the time.

What is the Mind Aware of Now?

Ask yourself often: "What is the mind aware of now?"

Just Be Natural and Aware

Just be natural and be aware of what the mind knows.

Never Decide Based on Like or Dislike

Never decide because you like or dislike something.

There's No Need to Think

If there are no defilements in your mind and if you have awareness and understanding, there is no need to think.

The Effort of Wisdom

You need to apply wisdom to keep the mind alert and interested. Trying to get the mind more interested in what is happening is 'wisdom effort.'

Notice the Impact of Posture on Awareness

Try to notice the difference in energy needed to remain aware in different postures.

Pay Attention to the Observing Mind

When alertness fades, it indicates that there is lack of right effort. You need to pay more attention to the observing mind.

Striving Towards a Specific Result is Greed

A mind which is striving towards a goal, which is focused on achieving a certain result, is motivated by greed.

Understanding Brings Peace to the Mind

Understanding what is happening will bring peace to the mind. Once you understand the preciousness of this process, you will feel joy and you will always be interested in looking deeper and deeper.

Don't Get Carried Away by Thinking

Thinking is an essential activity of the mind. We just need to be careful not to get involved, not to get carried away by the thinking or planning mind.

Curiosity is an Expression of Wisdom

Curiosity is an expression of wisdom.

Ask Questions Only When You Really Want to Know

When you ask questions of the mind, you need to ask the sorts of questions you are really interested in. Only when you really want to know, will the mind become interested.

Ask Why the Mind is Not Interested

YOGI:

The mind does not seem to be interested. What can I do?

SUT:

Ask the mind why it is not interested!

Take Care of Your Mind First

"You have to take care of your mind first, and then you can relate to others."

The Mind Wants to Get Sucked In

YOGI:

The world 'out there' is so different from a retreat situation and I always very quickly get pulled into things.

SUT:

Why do you allow yourself to get pulled in? Nobody is really pulling us in; this mind wants to get sucked in.

Balancing Outside and Inside Attention

If you focus all attention 'inwards' you cannot interact with the 'outside', if you put it all 'outside' you cannot know yourself. You need to learn to do both, and this takes practice.

After a Point There's No Effort to Practice

Bigger understandings have a life of their own, they have more power. At this stage, wisdom begins to have a life of its own. It can happen that the practice becomes so easy that it will keep going even if we are not making any effort to practice.

Look Repeatedly, From Many Angles

What is going on in the mind will seem rather chaotic at first. You need to look at the same issues repeatedly and from different angles.

Setting the Mind in the Right Direction

If there is anger and you decide to investigate this emotion you are setting the mind in the right direction. If, however, you decide to try to get rid of this anger, you are directing the mind wrongly.

Vipassana Is Not Just Sitting and Watching

Vipassana is not just a process of sitting and watching. In such a situation you need to remind yourself of the right view towards what is happening. You need to acknowledge that it is happening and accept it—as it is. Then you examine what is happening and try to learn from it, try to understand the nature of this kind of mind, try to understand how it works.

Nibbana by Accident is Impossible

A yogi once asked me whether it was possible to suddenly enter nibbana by accident. That's impossible. You have to pay the price. Only when the

conditions are fulfilled, the effect will come about. Be patient and work steadily. You will know when you are very far away, and you will also know when you are getting nearer.

With Right Understanding, Just Wait and Watch

Usually we start off by trying to observe. Then, after we have been given—and have understood—the right information, we just wait and watch.

Awareness Alone is Not Enough

*Awareness alone is not enough! Having a desire to really understand what is going on is much more important than just trying to be aware.
We practice mindfulness meditation because we want to understand.*

Don't Just Sit There and Expect Results

You need to learn from what you are doing, not just sit there and expect results. You need to be aware of and learn from what is happening right now, you need to look at the process of meditation itself.

Stay With the Mind that Is Aware

Yogi:

What's the best thing to do when the mind becomes really quiet?

SUT:

Don't try to look into the quietness but stay with the mind that is aware.

Two Ways to Deal with Depression (1 of 2)

There are two ways to deal with depression:

#2:

The most effective way to deal with this mental activity is to observe it in order to understand its causes and conditions. Only once these are really understood, will the mind be free of depression.

Two Ways to Deal With Depression (2 of 2)

There are two ways to deal with depression:

#1:

To begin with you might have to practice samatha meditation in order to develop samadhi. As samadhi increases, depression will decrease.

But even though the depression might totally lift for a while, it will always arise anew when the samadhi is gone and you are again confronted with the causes for depression.

Investigate Depression as a Mental Activity

YOGI:

How should we deal with depression?

SUT:

You need to investigate depression as a mental activity. You need to understand what triggers off a depression and observe the effects it has.

Use a Neutral Object as a Base

When you experience aversion, recognize it and then change to a neutral object like the breath or some physical sensation. Watch this for a while to calm the mind, then look at the aversion again for a while— just keep going back and forth.

Introduce the Question, Let the Mind Go from There

Investigate how the mind is working. Do you know the awareness? Is it still present? Is awareness static or is it new in every moment? There is no need to find the answers! Just introduce the questions, give the mind something to work with, encourage it to take an interest in what is happening.

Go To the Mind that is Aware

Don't stay with the object or the experience but go to the mind that is aware of the object or the experience. If we stay with this awareness and continue to recognize its presence, it will grow stronger.

Awareness of Awareness

You not only want to be aware that the mind is quiet but also of the mind which is aware of that quietness.

Samadhi Can Outpace Wisdom

What often happens to people who practice a lot is that samadhi grows but wisdom does not keep up. We need to investigate; we need to use our wisdom.

Make the Mind the Object of Awareness

Once we have a measure of calmness and balance of mind, we should ask ourselves questions. Am I clearly aware of what is going on in the mind? What does the mind know about the object and the mind? We make the mind the object of awareness.

Observe the Activities of the Mind

The more skillful you are at observing the activities of the mind, the easier it will be for you to see why your state of mind is changing.

See the Cause of Sleepiness

You need to see the cause of sleepiness in the present moment, not think of a story that could be behind it. You want to know what has happened in the mind that is making it sleepy now.

Don't See Sleepiness as a Problem

If you think of sleepiness as a problem, your mind will wonder why you are feeling sleepy. It will start thinking about the past and get you into trouble.

Understand Causes and Effects

To the extent that wisdom understands causes and effects, it knows how to work on the causes and conditions.

In Samadhi, Ethics are Pure

If you have samadhi (a still, calm mind) in this very moment, your sila (ethical conduct) will be pure.

Don't Think About the Past!

You cannot change the past. Don't think about the past!

Just Recognize What is Happening

The practice of vipassana is not trying to do anything or make anything happen. Just recognize what is happening. That's all, very simple!

Accept Anything That Happens As It Is

If you have the right view, you will accept anything that happens as it is.

Actively Remember Good Mind States

When you experience good mind states, actively remember them. Remind yourself that you are experiencing a good mind state, that good mind states are possible, that this is how a good mind state feels. In this way you reinforce the understanding of the good states you experience. This will help your mind to remember it next time you are feeling low. It will more easily remember positive experiences.

Choose Carefully What You Apply in Your Practice

It is good to acquire a lot of knowledge. But the personal needs of yogis are very different, so you must choose carefully what you apply in your own practice.

Every Posture Should Be Relaxed

YOGI:

Should every posture be relaxed?

SUT:

Yes. If you can be both relaxed and alert while lying down, you can bring this state of mind into every posture, into every movement. If you fall asleep, you know that you still need to do some tuning.

Let Wisdom Make the Decision

Make it a habit to watch out for any emotional disturbances. When you can keep your mind clear of them, when there is no eagerness to get things done, wisdom can come in and make the decision.

With Awareness and Understanding, No Need to Think

YOGI:

How can I learn to make decisions more quickly?

SUT:

Do you need to make decisions quickly or correctly? Is it more important to be fast or right? If there are now defilements in your mind and if you have awareness and understanding, there is no need to think. The mind knows what to do because you are ready.

Wanting or Not Wanting is Not Important

Whether or not you want to do something is not important. Just ask yourself whether you need to do it.

Don't Get Carried Away by Thinking

We just need to be careful not to get involved, not to get carried away by the thinking or planning mind.

Awareness of the Mind is Subtle Work

Becoming aware of the mind at work takes a lot of practice; it is not an ordinary knowing, it is a very subtle understanding process.

The Mind Always Interacts With the Body

The mind is neither in the body nor out of the body but the mind is always connected to the body. It is always interacting with the body.

Keep an Eye on Feelings

When we keep an eye on feelings they cannot grow, they cannot become more intense.

Don't Focus on Objects!

YOGI:

What is the best way to watch the activities of the mind?

SUT:

Don't focus on any objects! Only if you don't focus can you notice the mind. When you wear glasses but are not looking at anything, you will easily notice that the glasses are there. However, when you are looking at something, you will not notice the glasses. The nature of the mind is similar. It either focuses "outwards" or—when it is not focusing—it very naturally retreats "inwards." Only if you don't focus outwards can the mind be aware of itself.

Trying to Understand Intellectually is Not Real

Don't ask yourself questions if that makes you feel agitated. Just trying to understand intellectually is not real!

The Mind Becomes More and More Apparent

When we start watching the mind, it seems elusive because we are not used to observing it. But once we have some practice in watching the mind, it becomes more and more apparent. It feels more and more palpable—in a way just as if you were observing body sensations.

Do You Complain or Meditate?

YOGI: I am finding the heat unbearable these days. SUT: So what do you do? Complain or meditate?

Keep an Eye on Desire

Remind yourself that desire is just a natural phenomenon. It is not your greed. This will create a little distance to it and allow you to observe it more objectively. Also try to watch the intensity of the desire—does it increase or decrease? If you can observe this, you could ask yourself why it decreases or increases.

Don't Watch the Object of Desire, Watch Desire Itself

If desire arises because of a particular object, you should stop observing that object. It is not a dhamma object; it is an object of desire. The object you need to watch in such a situation is desire itself. Watch the feeling that comes with the desire.

Recognize What's Happening, But Don't Get Involved

*YOGI: How can I drop such defilements in order to be really meditating?
SUT: Don't try to drop it! Recognize that there is desire, that's enough. You just want to recognize what's happening, you don't want to get involved.*

With Wisdom There is Never Frustration

When wisdom is present there will never be frustration, disappointment, or depression because the goal has not yet been reached. Since there is a real understanding, it knows that just by keeping on the path it will eventually get there. Greed, on the other hand, will always be disappointed as long as it has not reached its goal.

Wisdom Desires

Wisdom desires things, but wisdom has a different motivation (than greed). It understands the true benefit of something and therefore it moves towards that. It is very different from greed or lust.

With Joy and Interest You Are Doing Fine

As long as you find joy and interest in the practice, you are doing fine.

If You Understand the Mind, You Understand the World

Life is a reflection of the quality of the mind. If you really understand the mind, you understand the world.

Meditation and Prayer

YOGI:

How important are prayers — in comparison to meditation?

SUT:

Meditation is about being aware with the right understanding. You can be aware of the fact that praying is happening. So praying and meditation can happen at the same time.

Don't Pay Too Much Attention to Experiences

Don't pay too much attention to the experiences you have during meditation. But do make an effort to keep watching the mind. If your attention is more on the mind, you will more easily notice whenever any form of greed sneaks in.

With Awareness There is Never Boredom

When awareness is really in the here and now, the mind never gets bored.

A Complicated Mind Blocks Wisdom

A complicated mind—a mind that thinks, expects, and plans—blocks off wisdom.

Keep The Mind Simple

Only when the mind is simple can wisdom develop.

Inside and Outside Are Concepts

Inside and outside are concepts.

The Mind Does Its Own Work

When you do any investigation, you must always remember that the mind is doing its own work. If you identify with this process, it becomes very complicated. Just recognize that the mind is doing these things, that the mind is making certain choices. Then it becomes easy to observe and investigate how the mind works.

Awareness and Wisdom Work Together

The function of awareness is to recognize everything that is happening in the mind. Wisdom decides which issues need to be dealt with.

A Sense of Wanting is the Mind Trying to Manipulate

If there is a sense of wanting some result in your investigation other than wanting to understand—such as wanting a particular result—the mind is manipulating the situation. Whenever you get this impression, you need to check your attitude to see whether the mind is actually trying to do this.

Investigation Wants to Know in an Open Way

Investigation just wants to know in an open way, wants to know what exactly is going on. It does not want to manipulate things.

Patiently Watch Impatience

Patiently watch impatience.

Observe, Don't Participate, in Emotion

Whenever you are experiencing an emotion, ask yourself: “Am I going to feel the emotion or be aware of the emotion?” In other words, are you going to watch it as an uninvolved observer or are you going to participate in the emotion?

Just Watch the Confusion

YOGI:

Sometimes my mind feels very confused and I don't know what to do.

SUT:

Just watch the confusion.

Don't Even Try to Meditate

YOGI:

Whenever my mind is confused, I stop doing things, keep to myself and wait for the mind to calm down.

SUT:

There cannot be any wisdom as long as you are confused. If you try to think of solutions when in a confused state of mind, you will only get confused answers. Don't try to do anything, don't even try to meditate.

Attitude is Commentary in Your Mind

YOGI:

I don't really understand what attitude means.

SUT:

It is the commentary in your mind that judges or evaluates whatever you are relating to. Say, you see some food on the table and your automatic reaction is 'ooohhh'. What is the attitude behind this reaction? It's obvious, isn't it? In such moments you actually express your attitude. Our attitudes will always express themselves in some way.

It's More Important to Feel Than Name Your Emotions

YOGI:

I often find it very difficult to name my attitude or my emotions. I can feel whether they are positive or negative though. Is it sufficient to be aware of that?

SUT:

Yes, it is. It is not so important whether you can name your attitude or not.

Expand the Mind to Know More Objects

You have to be patient; this process takes time to unfold. First you need to practice awareness in order to gather a lot of data. The mind will then put this data together into different streams of information, and eventually this process will bring about knowledge. It is therefore essential that you allow the mind to expand, to become aware of more and more objects. If it stays on one object only, it cannot gather much data and awareness and wisdom cannot grow.

There's a Natural Expansion of Awareness

There is a natural progression in the growth of awareness. You might start off with just one object, say the breath. After a while you will become aware of several objects in the body. Then you will notice how you are feeling — while being aware of all these objects in the body. Later on you will become able not only to be aware of objects and feelings but also of the mind that is aware plus of the attitude that is behind this awareness. Once you are able to see this whole picture, you will begin to understand how all these objects affect each other. This is understanding, this is wisdom.

Expanded Awareness is Moving Towards Vipassana

When you allow yourself to know many objects, you are moving towards vipassana. When you keep bringing your attention to a main object, you are doing more of a samatha kind of practice. If you want your awareness and wisdom to grow, you need to allow the mind to know more things.

Allow the Mind to Relax and Open Up

It is OK to start with one object to establish awareness and concentration, but then we should allow the mind to relax and open up.

Being Aware of Several Objects is Awareness Getting Stronger

Yogis often feel uncomfortable when they notice that the mind is aware of several objects, and they then try to force it to be aware of their main object only. You need to remind yourself that it is natural for a mind that is stable and has some continuity of awareness to become aware of several objects. It means that awareness is getting stronger.

The Mind Naturally Takes Objects

YOGI:

Could you explain this whole process of opening up, of allowing oneself to become more and more receptive to what's happening and to understand why it's happening?

SUT:

The mind naturally takes objects and that's Dhamma at work. Interfering with this process and deliberately focusing the mind here and there is

personal effort. If you find it difficult to let the mind take whatever object it chooses, if this is confusing, you can bring it to a main object. But don't get attached to this object; use it as a safe place to go to but also allow the mind to go elsewhere. Allow the mind to know several objects.

Returning to the Breath is Sometimes Useful

To keep bringing one's attention to the breath can be useful for beginners and when the mind needs calming down. But I encourage all yogis to remain aware of whatever happens, of whatever the mind naturally takes an interest in.

Personal Effort vs Dhamma Doing Its Job

YOGI:

Can you explain the difference between what is usually called personal effort and what you call 'Dhamma doing its job'?

SUT:

I'll give you a simple example: Let's assume you are doing mindfulness of breathing and the mind's attention strays elsewhere. Will you bring awareness to the breath or will you just let it go with the flow? Bringing it to the breath is personal effort, letting it go with the flow is Dhamma at work.

Object and Mind Happen Together

YOGI:

Would you say that just waiting and watching is the same as what you call 'not going to the object but letting the object come to you'?

SUT:

Yes, but even the use of the word 'come' is not quite correct since in fact the objects are already there; object and mind happen together.

Personal Efforts Gets Things Started but Ebbs at the End

Usually we start off by trying to observe. Then, after we have been given — and have understood — the right information, we just wait and watch. Lastly, when mindfulness has gained momentum, 'we' don't need to do anything anymore. The mind knows what to do. At this stage there is no more personal effort.

Just Practice Continuously

If you just practice continuously, understanding will come.

Switch from Doing to Recognizing

I would like yogis to get to the point where they realize that without focusing or paying attention, the nature of knowing is happening. I would like yogis, especially people who have been practicing for years, to just recognize that this is going on. They are too busy thinking they are practicing. They need to switch from doing to recognizing.

Just Doing What is Necessary

We always need to remember the difference between personal exertion and Dhamma taking over. As long as we are striving, as long as we are trying, we believe that 'we' are the ones that produce the input that creates the result. But when Dhamma takes over, there is no trying to get anywhere, there is just a doing of what is necessary.

Awareness of Awareness Creates Good Karma

Is kamma being created when we are working with awareness, when we are aware of awareness?

SUT:

You could say so, good kamma.

Real Understanding is Not Intellectual Understanding

YOGI:

How will I know when wisdom arises?

SUT:

You will see that very clearly. You will have an experience of 'ah, now I understand.' This is real understanding, not just intellectual understanding. You won't have to ask anyone, you will know.

Only in Non-Doing Can We See Non-Self

Only when we don't do anything can we see the non-doing, the non-self.

Pay Attention to the Thought Component of Emotions

YOGI:

What do I do when I am confronted by strong feelings of worry, anxiety, or fear? How do I observe them?

SUT:

Observe how such emotions make you feel. Do they make you feel hot, tense, tight, etc.? Also pay attention to the thoughts that you are having and how the thoughts and the way you feel affect each other. Don't get lost in the story or get carried away by how you are feeling. Look at how the mind is working. You will learn how thoughts influence your feelings and how feelings influence your thoughts. You will recognize certain harmful patterns, and this will enable the mind to let go.

Ask: "What is Most Important to Pay Attention to Now?"

Once awareness is established, the mind will naturally be aware of many things. At this stage a choice can be made. You can ask yourself: "What is more important to pay attention to now?" You will, however, need to check the mind that is observing. Wisdom has to make the choice, not "you." You have to check to see whether there is any greed, expectation, aversion or rejection. You might also have to remind yourself that the object is not important, that you need to look at the mind.

In Vipassana the Mind Becomes More Receptive

Becoming aware of many things is a problem for samatha meditation, but for vipassana meditation it means that the mind has become more receptive, that there is more awareness.

Be Aware You Are Aware

You need to recognize that you are aware. Don't observe the objects; just keep checking whether awareness is present. As your awareness becomes stronger, it will automatically be able to see more objects. It is like a good satellite dish; the better the dish and the receiver, the more channels you can receive.

Relax and See Awareness is Already There

Don't try hard to look for awareness; relax and see that it is already there. We find being aware of the mind difficult only because we lack practice.

Experienced yogis find that being aware of the mind is just as straightforward as being aware of the body.

Awareness is a Full-Time Job

We need to keep watching the mind all the time. We have to keep a tag on the mind, always be aware of what is going on and keep working on it. It is a full-time job.

Having Zero Tension is Not Easy

When the mind is interested in knowing something, there is already effort. But be patient with yourself; to have zero tension is not easy."

See the Difference Between Mind and Body

Can you clearly see the difference between the nature of the mind and the body, between physical and mental processes?

When the Mind is Quiet, There is Work to Be Done

When the mind becomes quieter, there is a lot of work left to do. You have to start investigating at that time.

In Quiet the Mind is Ready

When the mind becomes quiet it does not mean that there is nothing to do — the mind has just become ready!

Notice the Quality of Mind in Different Postures

Try to notice the difference in energy needed to remain aware in different postures. When you are walking, the mind is fairly busy and aware of many different objects. When you sit, the mind has much less to do and therefore you need to learn to 'tune' the mind to remain bright and alert in this position.

Pay More Attention to the Observing Mind

YOGI: I normally begin sitting meditation with a sense of clarity but then it regularly changes into a dull sort of mind state. What am I doing wrong?

SUT: When alertness fades it indicates that there is a lack of right effort. You need to pay more attention to the observing mind. Watch the quality of the mind that is working to be aware, and notice when it changes.

Don't Identify With Effort

It is very important to have the right information before we start practicing. Don't identify with the effort, but instead recognize that what is doing the work is effort plus whatever other qualities of mind are involved. These qualities are at work, not 'I.'

Awareness Replaces Not Knowing With Knowing

The moment we become aware, we replace not knowing with knowing. Only when we know can we understand and develop an interest in what is happening. Understanding what is happening will bring peace to the mind. Once you understand the preciousness of this process, you will feel joy and you will always be interested in looking deeper and deeper.