

Practice Note: Balance during Meditation

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on February 29, 2012

I feel that my meditation practice is a balance between doing and not doing. Every person has a different balance, and we all have to find our own balance. When you have a sense of that balance – finding that balance, staying close to it, being mindful of it – it can help with staying present in your meditation.

If it's only about doing – about being responsible for the meditation, trying, actively engaged – then the busyness and the agitated activity of the mind tend to keep going – reinforcing the sense of the doer, the one who's doing, the one who's the agent. But if it's only a matter of not doing anything at all, then that can lead to complacency, falling asleep, or being too accepting of what is, and letting the mind wander off.

An analogy for this balance would be like floating on your back in water, as in a lake. There's a lot of not doing in floating. You have to stop a lot, but you also have to stay mindful and present, moving just enough to keep your body flat and your arms out, just enough to

stay there and not tip to one side or the other. You have to keep your head in the right position, so there's balance. You can't lose your mindfulness when you are floating. You can't just forget where you are and completely disappear. You have to stay mindful, but it can also be very relaxing. You don't have to do a lot. If you start getting caught up in trying to do things, then you may find yourself uncomfortable with it all. How do we float?

[Cell phone sound:] It's so easy to forget to turn off our cell phones when we come here. [The sound continues.] This could keep happening, and every time it happens, we could all be grateful, and take it as a reminder to turn ours off next time.

Hopefully you can find the right balance here as you float on the present moment – not too active, not too inactive – but just staying in the present moment, floating in the present moment, keeping enough attention to be here in the present, not trying too hard, not trying too little.

Thank you.