

Contemplative Lab Manual-Buddhist Meditation & the Modern World

Index

[Index](#)

[I. General Foundations of Meditation Practice](#)

[1. The Inner Attitudes](#)

- [i. Non-judging](#)
- [ii. Patience](#)
- [iii. Beginner's Mind](#)
- [iv. Trust](#)
- [v. Non-striving](#)
- [vi. Acceptance](#)
- [vii. Letting Go](#)

[2. Outer Orientations \(Postures & Gazes\)](#)

[i. Classic Sitting Posture](#)

[The Practices](#)

[Overview](#)

[1. Breath Meditations](#)

[Breathing Exercise/Sitting with the Breath](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions](#)

[Alternative Instructions](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[John Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and](#)

[Sitting with the Breath and Body as a Whole](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions \(FCL 58, 73\)](#)

[Alternative Instructions](#)

[Full Body Breathing \(Eva Natanya\)](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[IV.3. The Body Scan](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions \(Full Catastrophe of Living, 77-97 overall, but 95-97 in particular\)](#)

[Things to Watch For](#)

[Alternative Instructions](#)

[The Body Scan as part of sitting Meditation \(EN\)](#)

[The Body Scan as a transition between Walking Meditation and Sitting Meditation. \(EN\)](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions \(FCL, 116\)](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[4.2.5. Sound Meditation](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions \(FCL, 73\)](#)

[Detailed Instructions](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[4.2.6. Sitting with Thoughts and Feelings](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions \(FCL, 73\)](#)

[Alternative Instructions](#)

[The Anchor in the Stream](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[4.2.7. Inquiry/Deconstruction Meditation](#)

[Instructions](#)

[4.2.8. Care Meditation](#)

[Alternative Practice from Full Catastrophe Living](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions \(FCL, p. 182\)](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[4.2.9-10. Active Visualization](#)

[Overview](#)

[Practices](#)

[4.2.9a Self as Other & Other as Self](#)

[\(Note: What follows is another example of this type of practice; each of you can create a scenario that means something to you personally.\)](#)

[4.2.9b Inspiring Identities](#)

[4.2.10b Letters visualization](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[4.2.11. Body Work](#)

[Overview](#)

[Specific Instructions](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[4.2.13. Deep Relaxation and Open Monitoring](#)

[Overview](#)

[Instructions](#)

[T.A. Notes for the Practice](#)

[Texts and Resources](#)

[V. Points of Difficulty/Student's FAQs](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Drowsiness](#)

["External" Distractions](#)

[Overactive thinking](#)

[Physical pain and discomfort](#)

[Emotional Volatility](#)

I. General Foundations of Meditation Practice

1. Inner Orientations

Rather than approach our meditation practice with the mindset that we need to somehow
FIX THIS SENTENCE FRAGMENT

i. Non-judging

When we begin practicing meditation and paying attention to the activity of our own mind, it is common to discover and to be surprised by the fact that we are constantly generating judgments about our experience. Almost everything we see is labeled and categorized by the mind as "good," "bad," "irrelevant," "boring," etc. These judgments are often very useful and necessary but, because they are largely automatic and unconscious, they can lock us into mechanical reactions that hinder our relationships with others, prevent us from achieving our goals, and cause us stress and anxiety.

In our meditation practice, we cultivate non-judging by giving ourselves permission to simply observe these judgments without needing to judge the judging. Soon we will notice how these judgments have a particular emotional quality that "hooks" us and through the practice of allowing ourselves to be an impartial observer to our experience, we develop a greater ability to un-hook from these unconscious judgments, allowing us to act more intentionally and effectively.

ii. Patience

Patience is a form of wisdom. It demonstrates that we understand and accept the fact that sometimes things must unfold in their own time. In cultivating patience, we intentionally remind ourselves that there is no need to be impatient with ourselves because we find the mind judging all the time or because we are tense or frustrated or agitated, or because we don't seem to be making "progress" in our meditation practice. Instead we simply give ourselves room and permission to have these experiences.

Practicing meditation is much like tending a garden: on the one hand, it is necessary to put in effort to plant the right seeds, to water the ground, to weed the garden regularly and so on. But we also recognize that the benefits of meditation practice, like flowers or vegetable plants, grow in their own time. Sometimes it looks like nothing is happening - like the time between when a seed is planted and the sprout appears. Yet, a good gardener knows that the seed will eventually sprout and continues to water and weed the ground around the seed.

In our meditation practice, we cultivate patience by allowing ourselves to give up the need to control every aspect of our experience. We simply make the intention to follow the instructions attentively allowing the flowers to blossom in their own time.

iii. Beginner's Mind

The richness of present-moment experience is the richness of life itself. Too often we let our thinking and our beliefs about what we "know" prevent us from seeing things as they are. Beginner's mind is the willingness and ability to see everything as if for the first time. An open, "beginner's" mind allows us to be receptive to new possibilities and prevents us from getting stuck in the rut of our own expertise, which often fools us into thinking we "know" something before we even experience it. No moment or experience is the same as any other; each is unique and contains unique possibilities, which make up the rich fabric of life. As Ferris Bueller said: "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

In our meditation practice we cultivate a beginners mind by allowing ourselves to be open and curious about our experience in the present moment. We bring our attention to the details of this flow of experience in order to see and experience our lives more directly.

iv. Trust

Developing a basic trust in yourself and your feelings is an integral part of meditation training. From the time we are young children we are socialized to accept and act in accord with structures of external authority. The constant imperative to act according to the dictates of our parents, teachers, political and religious leaders, and so on, often leaves us with little confidence in our own ability to make healthy and effective decisions for ourselves. In meditation practice, we seek to connect directly with our own deeper sources of wisdom, empathy, and intuition, giving us the confidence to take responsibility for our

own lives.

In our meditation practice, we intentionally practice trust every time we decide to persevere in our practice even when we feel confused, bored, agitated, or frustrated. By simply sitting with difficult feelings and allowing them to come and go, we gradually develop inner strength and confidence in our ability to deal with adversity. At the same time, we practice being kind to ourselves, trusting our intuitions and feelings about when we need to simply relax.

v. Non-striving

Almost everything we do, we do for a purpose – to get something or somewhere. But in meditation this attitude can be an obstacle because meditation is different from all other human activities. Although it takes energy and effort of a certain kind, ultimately, meditation is more about “non-doing” than doing.

An apt metaphor is the practice of balancing the point of a large rock on another rock. To be successful, you must use a lot of effort to initially pick up the rock and place it on the other rock. This is similar to the initial effort and intention required to start a meditation practice – to learn the basic techniques, to put aside time to practice, etc. But after the rock is initially placed on the foundation rock, balancing it requires rather less effort and more patience and intuitive awareness. You must slowly rotate and move the rock to find the position in which the weight of the rock is balanced. In doing this, the trick is to have neither too much effort and control (pushing the rock around forcefully will not help) nor too little control or effort (taking your hands off the rock will result in it falling down). Find the point of balance is not a matter of effort or striving but simply a matter of staying engaged and aware until you happen to move the rock to a position of equipoise or balance. When this happens, the force of gravity, which was the force you had been working against to prevent the rock from falling, now becomes the force that holds it in place. In this way, meditation requires a very different kind of effort than we are used to in our other activities and pursuits.

In our meditation practice we practice non-striving by reminding ourselves that during our meditation, we are simply giving ourselves permission to follow the instructions without attachment to any particular result. When thoughts and feelings arise about “success” or “failure,” we simply bring our awareness back to the object of focus without judging or feeling the need to change the thoughts.

vi. Acceptance

“The Dude abides.” - Jeff “the Dude” Lebowski

Acceptance means seeing things as they actually are in the present. In our daily lives we often waste a lot of energy denying and resisting what is already a fact. We often find it very difficult to tolerate the inevitable gap between how we would like things to be and how they actually are. This resistance to the actual conditions of our lives are they exist in

the present is often the source of debilitating anxiety, anger, frustration, and self-hatred, which, ironically, makes it very difficult to act productively and effectively.

Acceptance does not mean that you have to like everything or that you have to take a passive attitude toward everything. It does not involve abandoning your principles and values. It does not mean that you are satisfied with things as they are or that you are resigned to tolerating things as they “have to be.” Acceptance in the context of meditation practice simply means that we make the intention to abide in our moment to moment experience without the constant overlay of judgments and projections. Acceptance means making a firm and intentional decision to side with life, rather than some imagined version of what our life “should” be. Ironically, this ability to accept and fully inhabit our experience greatly empowers us to make positive changes by providing us with the confidence and wisdom required to actually make the positive changes that we so desire.

In our meditation practice, we cultivate acceptance by giving ourselves permission to experience whatever comes up without the need to escape, change, modify, theorize, or hold onto our experiences. Whenever we notice that we are resisting our situation, we bring our awareness back to the breath and give ourselves permission to simply relax into the experience of breathing.

vii. Letting Go

When we start paying attention to our inner experience, we rapidly discover that there are certain thoughts, feelings, and situations that the mind seems to want to hold onto. If they are pleasant, we try to prolong them and return to them again and again. If they are unpleasant we try to get rid of or prevent them from happening. This attachment and aversion is natural and beneficial when it is directed towards tangible objects such as food when we are hungry or fear of a bus speeding towards us. The problem is that the mind often cannot distinguish between the real and the imagined and, thus, much of our experience is colored with a pervasive need to grasp onto things that we like or to escape from things we find unpleasant. Much of meditation practice involves practicing letting go of our habitual tendency to grasp onto or escape from our experiences. Because grasping and escaping are so pervasive and habitual, this will take time.

In our meditation practice, we practice letting go by simply noticing when we have become “hooked” on a thought or sensation and giving ourselves permission to un-hook from that need to grasp or escape, gently bringing our awareness back to the object of focus (breath, etc). Sometimes, the need to grasp or escape is so strong that we find that we are unable to un-hook from the thought or feeling, or that when we do un-hook, the mind gets hooked on it again almost immediately. The attractiveness of the need to grasp or escape is the mind’s way of saying to us, “pay attention! This is important!” Therefore, instead of fighting with our minds, we make this command to pay attention, itself, the object of our attention. Instead of focusing on the thought or feeling that is hooking us, we examine the specific contours of this need to grasp or escape as it exists in the moment.

2. Outer Orientations (Postures & Gazes)

i. Classic Sitting Posture

“Sitting meditation” is the heart of our formal meditation practice. To practice sitting, we make a special time and place for “non-doing.” We consciously adopt an alert and relaxed body posture so that we can feel relatively relaxed and comfortable without moving.

Adopting and maintaining an erect sitting posture may, at first, seem difficult and uncomfortable but with practice you will find that this position is actually very relaxing. The erect sitting posture provides an optimal balance of relaxation and mental clarity. While lying down may be more relaxing, it often leads to mental dullness and sleepiness.

There are three main variations of the sitting meditation posture: Cross-legged, Equestrian, and Chair-sitting (illustrated in Kabat-Zinn *Full Catastrophe Living* on p. 59). In all of these, the main points of the posture are:

1) Back straight, shoulders relaxed: Good posture involves bringing the various areas of the pelvis, spine, shoulders, and head into alignment in order to create the most comfortable and effective posture for cultivating mental calm and clarity. Because most of us grew up hunched over desks or computers, our posture will likely tend to hunch forward, the front of our bodies “collapsing” and compressing and the back of our shoulders, neck, and upper back straining with the weight that usually would be simply stacked comfortably on the spine.

Each of the following adjustments works to facilitate the next adjustment, resulting in a straighter, more comfortable posture.

Hips higher than the knees – this is accomplished by using a cushion or cushions of appropriate height. In sitting meditation, you should use as much height as you need to allow the knees to rest on the ground, which is facilitated by:

Pelvis tilted slightly forward – this is done by sitting near the front end of the cushion or, in a chair, putting some low blocks under the rear legs of the chair. Tilting the pelvis forward helps to create:

Natural curve in the lower back – the spine is naturally curved inwards at the lumbar spine (lower back). Maintaining this natural curve takes stress off the back muscles and creates the foundation for:

Upper back straight with chest open and shoulders relaxed – this opens up the breathing and allows the spine to take most of the weight of the upper torso, taking pressure off the muscles in the upper back and shoulders. This position, with the back erect, the chest open and shoulders relaxed helps to cultivate inner attitudes of self-reliance, self-acceptance, confidence, and alert attention that are so important to meditation practice and in life in general.

Hands placed on the thighs or knees or folded in the lap – this allows the shoulder and neck to relax.

Chin tucked slightly in – this brings the head into balance on top of the spine, taking pressure off the neck muscles.

2) Mouth lightly closed: the tip of the tongue lightly touching the roof of the mouth. This allows saliva to be swallowed naturally. Closing the mouth prevents the unpleasant experience of bugs flying into the mouth!

3) The Gaze: Eyes gently closed or slightly open with the gaze cast on the ground 4-6 feet in front of you. Closing the eyes helps to direct our awareness inward to the various sensations of breath, body, and thoughts and feelings. However, if you are tired and are struggling to stay awake, it can help to keep the eyes slightly open. With the eyes open, it is important to keep the gaze soft and still, not “staring” or allowing the gaze to wander. Some meditation techniques, such as visualizations, require the eyes to be closed while others, such as focusing on an external object, require the eyes to be open.

4) Leg position: While the upper body posture is largely the same for all sitting meditation postures, there are many variations on the position of the legs. For our purposes, we can say that there are three main leg positions: cross-legged, equestrian, and chair-sitting. The main points of all three of these are that they provide a solid foundation for sitting in stillness and that they facilitate a straight spine. Because most of us grew up sitting in chairs rather than on the floor, sitting cross-legged may initially be difficult. The important thing is to try to find a position that allows for a straight posture as detailed above. Many people who are new to sitting meditation find that the equestrian posture is ideal in that it provides more height (facilitating an erect posture comfortably) and puts less strain on the hips and knees than the cross-legged position.

3. Place

TBA.

II. The Practices

Overview

The following section provides instructions for the specific contemplative practices that we will be doing in the Contemplative Lab. Each practice is introduced and basic instructions provided as well as a range of alternative instructions and a list of texts and sources from anything the class readings that relate to the practice. These instructions are provided only as a reference and a supplement to the personal instruction that you will receive in the Contemplative Lab and it is not recommended that you engage in these practices without the guidance of a qualified meditation instructor.

For each practice this manual will outline:

1) **Introduction to the Practice and Basic Instructions:** Brief Introduction to the practice followed by comprehensive yet concise instructions for each practice taken primarily from Kabat-Zinn's *Full Catastrophe Living*.

2) **Alternative Instructions from the Contemplative Lab instructors.**

3) **Texts and Resources:** The main textual source(s) for the instructions as well as other texts from the course readings that relate to the practice.

1. Concentration & Mindfulness Exercises

Breathing Exercise/Sitting with the Breath (4.2.1a)

Overview

We call the heart of the formal meditation practice "sitting meditation" or simply "sitting." As with breathing, sitting is not foreign to anyone. We all sit, nothing special about that. But mindful sitting is different from ordinary sitting in the same way that mindful breathing is different from ordinary breathing. The difference, of course, is your awareness.

To practice sitting, we make a special time and place for non-doing. We consciously adopt an alert and relaxed body posture so that we can feel relatively comfortable without moving, and then we reside with calm acceptance in the present without trying to fill it with

It helps a lot to adopt an erect and dignified posture, with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically. This allows the breath to flow most easily. It is also the physical counterpart of the inner attitudes of self-reliance, self-acceptance, and alert attention that we are cultivating.

Before beginning the practice it is useful to remind yourself of the foundational attitudes, consciously giving yourself **Permission** to **relax** and do the practice with an attitude of **curiosity** and **non-judgment**.

Instructions

Breathing Exercise (*FCL*, p. 58, or in 2013 edition, pp. 52-53)

Exercise 1:

1. Assume a comfortable posture lying on your back or sitting. If you are sitting, keep the spine straight and let your shoulders drop.
2. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.

3. Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the inbreath and fall or recede on the outbreath.
4. Keep the focus on your breathing, “being with” each inbreath for its full duration and with each outbreath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing.
5. Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out.
6. If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times then your job is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.
7. Practice this exercise for fifteen minutes at a convenient time every day, whether you feel like it or not, for one week and see how it feels to incorporate a disciplined meditation practice into your life. Be aware of how it feels to spend some time each day just being with your breath without having to *do* anything.

Exercise 2:

1. Tune in to your breathing at different times during the day, feeling the belly go through one or two risings and fallings.
2. Become aware of your thoughts and feelings at these moments, just observing them without judging them or yourself.
3. At the same time, be aware of any changes in the way you are seeing things and feeling about yourself.

Sitting with the Breath (4.2.1b)

(*FCL*, p. 72, or in 2013 edition, p. 71)

1. Continue to practice awareness of your breathing in a comfortable but erect sitting posture for at least ten minutes at least once a day.
2. Each time you notice that your mind is no longer on your breath, just see where it is. Then let go and come back to your belly and to your breathing.
3. Over time try extending the time you sit until you can do it for thirty minutes or more. But remember, when you are really in the present, there is no time, so clock time is not as important as your willingness to pay attention and let go from moment to moment.

Alternative Instructions

Consciously relax by taking a few deep breaths and remind yourself of the “ground” of the practice – that you are giving yourself *permission* to simply be present with whatever comes up with an attitude of curiosity and non-judgment.

Gently bring your attention to the process of breathing. Notice how the chest or belly rises and expands with each inhale and falls with each exhale. There is no need to try to alter the quality of the breath – simply breathe in the way that feels most comfortable. Enjoy the breath. Relax into it.

When the mind wanders to other objects such as distracting sounds, thoughts, etc, simply bring the attention back to the breath. There is nothing “wrong” with the mind wandering (moving, wandering, thinking, planning, is the job of the mind). If the mind wanders 100 times during your 15 minute session, you have done a wonderful job since this means that you have brought the mind back to the breath 100 times. Good job!

You may find it helpful to count the breath, going back to “1” when your mind wanders or when you reach “10.”

When you first begin this practice you will probably find that it is very difficult to keep your focus on the breath and that trying to do so for long periods of time can be exhausting and frustrating. In this case, it can be useful to relax the attention every few minutes, letting the mind wander at will for a minute or two before bringing the attention back to the breath. (Chris Hiebert)

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn, Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and

Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (Chapters 1-4 pp. 17-74, **58, 73**)

(Buddhist Meditation)

“The Stilling of Thoughts, the Vitakkasanthana Sutra”, in Rupert Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. pp. 152-155. [PDF: “Gethin - Sayings of the Buddha”]

“Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness,” in John Strong, translator and editor, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*. Boston: Wadsworth, 2008. pp. 128-132. [PDF: “Strong - The Experience of Buddhism - Selections”]

Ashvagosha, ‘How to Meditate,’ from *Handsome Nanda*, in John Strong, translator and editor, *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*. Boston: Wadsworth, 2008. pp. 132-134. [PDF: “Strong - The Experience of Buddhism - Selections”]

Bhikkhu Bodhi, Translator and Editor, *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2005. Chapter 7, "Mastering the Mind," pp. 257-298.

Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, pp. 85-117, 117-191. [PDF: "Buddhaghosa 1991 - Path of Purification"]

David Germano and Gregory Hillis, "Buddhist Meditation." In *Encyclopedia of*

Religion, Lindsay Jones, ed., 2nd edition. 2004. volume 2, pp. 1284-1290. [PDF: "Germano and Hillis - Buddhist Meditation"]

Kamalashila, "The Stages of Meditation," in Stephen Beyer, Editor and Translator, *The Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations*. Belmont, California: Dickenson, 1974. pp. 99-115. [PDF: The Stages of Meditation from Beyer - The Buddhist Experience pp 99-115"]

Sarah Shaw, *Buddhist Meditation: An Anthology of Texts from Pāli Sources*. London: Routledge, 2006. Selections.

(Secular/Scientific)

Alberto Chiesa, Raffaella Calati, and Alessandro Serretti, "Does mindfulness training improve cognitive abilities? A systematic review of neuropsychological findings," *Clinical Psychology Review* 31 (2011): 449--464. [PDF: Chiesa - Does Mindfulness Training Improve Cognitive Abilities? - A Review"]

Davidson, Richard and Sharon Begley, *The Emotional Life of Your Brain*. New York: Hudson Street Press, 2012.

Jean L. Kristeller, "Mindfulness Meditation," in Paul M. Lehrer, Robert L. Woolfolk, and Wesley E. Sime, Editors, *Principles and Practice of Stress Management*, Third Edition. New York: Guilford Press, 2007. pp. 393-427. [PDF: Lehrer - Principles and Practices of Stress Management - Selection"]

National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine, "Meditation," <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/meditation>. National Institutes of Health: "Mindfulness Matters: Can Living in the Moment Improve Your Health?" January 2012. <http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/issue/jan2012/feature2>

Sitting with the Breath and Body as a Whole (4.2.2)

Overview

TBA

Instructions (FCL 58, 73)

Assume a comfortable posture lying on your back or sitting. If you are sitting, keep the spine straight and let your shoulders drop.

Close your eyes if it feels comfortable.

Bring your attention to your belly, feeling it rise or expand gently on the inbreath and fall or recede on the outbreath.

Keep the focus on your breathing, “being with” each inbreath for its full duration and with each outbreath for its full duration, as if you were riding the waves of your own breathing. get it “right,” it is more helpful to view our meditation sessions as a time when we don’t need to worry about getting anything “right.” Rather, we simply give ourselves **Permission** to **relax** and do the practice with an attitude of **curiosity** and **non-judgment**. During meditation, when distracting thoughts or strong feelings arise, our “job” is simply to recognize them while non-judgmentally remembering the instructions and gently bringing our attention back to our object of awareness. By practicing simply being present with our experience, we gradually develop more of an ability to respond positively and constructively to difficult situations and experiences.

Jon Kabat-Zinn lists seven foundational attitudes of mindfulness practice which are to be consciously cultivated when you practice (*Full Catastrophe Living*, pp. 33-40, or in 2013 edition, 21-31). In a sense, these attitudes are, for him, the starting point, the method, and the result of meditation practice.

Every time you notice that your mind has wandered off the breath, notice what it was that took you away and then gently bring your attention back to your belly and the feeling of the breath coming in and out. attention on the breath, try expanding the field of your awareness "around" your breathing and "around" your belly to include a sense of your body as a whole as you are sitting.

Maintain this awareness of the body sitting and breathing, and when the mind wanders, bring it back to sitting and breathing.

Alternative Instructions

Full Body Breathing (Eva Natanya)

Begin with meditation on the breath as before.

Expand the sensation of the breath to other parts of the body. Consciously “move” the breath through the whole body, starting from the nostrils, and moving the through head, chest, arms, legs, and all the way to fingers and tips of toes and then back up the limbs to the nostrils.

At first, do these circuits slowly, expanding scope of awareness on each breath, watching wherever sensations arise.

gradually progress to a rhythm where you can make a light, full circuit of the body in each cycle of inhalation and exhalation.

Move from a perception of the “parts” of the body to experiencing the whole body as a single unit. Feel the breath in this unified body and feel the body and the breath as a single unit.

Then, relax and let your focus return just to the nostrils. Take a few crystal clear breaths here before opening the eyes.

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (Chapters 4-5: pp 59-91, 73)

(Also see section 4.2.1.3. for further sources)

The Body Scan: Mindfulness of Body (4.2.3)

Overview

The Body Scan is an effective technique for developing both concentration and flexibility of attention simultaneously. It involves lying on your back and moving your mind through the different regions of your body.

The idea in scanning your body is to actually *feel* each region you focus on and linger there with your mind right *on* it or *in* it. You breathe *into* and out *from* each region a few times and then let go of it in your mind's eye as your attention moves on to the next region. As you let go of the sensations you find in each region and of any of the thoughts and inner images you may have found associated with it, the muscles in that region literally let go too, lengthening and releasing much of the tension they have accumulated. It helps if you can

Move the awareness back to the breath or other object of focus.

Feel or imagine that the tension in your body and the feelings of fatigue associated with it are *flowing out* on each outbreath and that, on each inbreath, you are breathing in energy, vitality, and relaxation. (FCL, 76-7)

Breathe into each part of the body as you move through it, consciously releasing and dissolving any tension or painful sensations with the breath.

In the body scan we bring moment-to-moment, non-judgmental attention to the body just as it is, bringing awareness to body sensations. These sensations may be readily noticeable, such as sensations of pressure where the body is in contact with the mat, or may be quite subtle, such as the awareness of the position of the parts of the body with respect to the whole. There is no right way to feel, nothing to fix, just noticing and accepting whatever sensation (or lack of sensation) presents itself. This practice begins to integrate our sense of the mind and the body, which are sometimes separate. As James Joyce wrote of Mr. Duffy ("A Painful Case"), "He lived a little distance from his body." – something that can easily happen to any of us when we spend too much time dwelling on where we aren't. Doing the body scan, we also notice our mental reactions to paying attention to various parts of the body, practicing non-judging with our thinking and emotions, and acceptance of the way things are with our body.

Instructions (Full Catastrophe of Living, 77-97 overall, but 95-97 in particular)

The body scan can be done in any position, but the standard position is to lie down on your back in a comfortable place, such as on a foam pad on the floor or on your bed (but remember that for this use, you are aiming to "fall awake," not fall asleep). Make sure that you will be warm enough. You might want to cover yourself with a blanket or do it in a sleeping bag if the room is cold.

We first direct attention to the body as a whole, relaxing the body as much as possible. We then direct attention to specific regions of the body systematically, and finally return to awareness of the entire body. It's that simple. Take at least 20 minutes to scan through toe to head (or head to toe) with attention, more if you scan left and right limbs separately. If you only have a few minutes, you can just scan briefly through any noticeable sensations.

Allow your eyes to gently close.

Feel the rising and falling of your belly with each inbreath and outbreath.

Take a few moments to feel your body as a "whole," from head to toe, the "envelope" of your skin, the sensations associated with touch in the places you are in contact with the floor or the bed.

Bring your attention to the toes of the left foot. As you direct your attention to them, see if you can "direct," or channel, your breathing to them as well, so that it feels as if you are breathing in to your toes and out from your toes. It may take a while for you to get the hang of this. It may help to just imagine your breath traveling down the body from your nose into the lungs and then continuing through the abdomen and down the left leg all the way to the toes and then back again and out through your nose.

Allow yourself to feel any and all sensations from your toes, perhaps distinguishing between them and watching the flux of sensations in this region. If you don't feel anything at the moment, that is fine too. Just allow yourself to feel "not feeling anything."

When you are ready to leave the toes and move on, take a deeper, more intentional breath in all the way down to the toes and, on the outbreath, allow them to "dissolve" in your "mind's eye." Stay with your breathing for a few breaths at least, and then move on in turn to the sole of the foot, the heel, the top of the foot, and then the ankle, continuing to breathe in to and out from each region as you observe the sensations that you are experiencing, and then letting go of it and moving on.

As with the awareness of breathing exercises (Chapter 3) and the sitting meditation practices (Chapter 4), bring your mind back to the breath and to the region you are focusing on each time you notice that your attention has wandered off.

Move the awareness through all the various parts of the body, starting with the toes of the left foot and slowly move up the foot and leg, feeling the sensations as you go and directing the breath into and out from the different regions. From the pelvis, we go to the toes of the right foot and move up the right leg back to the pelvis. From there, we move up through the torso, through the low back and abdomen, the upper back and chest, and the shoulders.

Then we go to the fingers of both hands and move up simultaneously in both arms, returning to the shoulders. Then we move through the neck and throat, and finally all the regions of the face, the back of the head, and the top of the head.

When you reach the top of the head, imagine that you are breathing through an imaginary "hole" in the very top of the head, as if you were a whale with a blowhole.

Let your breathing move through the entire body from one end to the other, as if it were flowing in through the top of the head and out through the toes, and then in through the toes and out through the top of the head.

As we complete the body scan, we let ourselves dwell in silence and stillness, in an awareness that may have by this point gone beyond the body altogether. After a time, when we feel ready to, we return to our body, to a sense of it as a whole. We feel it as solid again. We move our hands and feet intentionally. We might also massage the face and rock a little from side to side before opening our eyes and returning to the activities of the day. In this way, as described in the body of this chapter, continue to move slowly up your left leg and through the rest of your body as you maintain the focus on the breath and on the feeling of the particular regions as you come to them, breathe with them, and let go of them.

Practice the body scan at least once a day. It helps to use the practice tape in the beginning so that the pace is slow enough and to help you remember the instructions accurately.

Remember that the body scan is the first formal mindfulness practice that our patients engage in intensively and that they do it forty-five minutes per day, six days per week for at least two weeks straight in the beginning of their training.

If you have trouble staying awake, try doing the body scan with your eyes open.

Things to Watch For

In any formal practice, it is inevitable that at some point your awareness will wander off into thinking. This is not a problem, it is just the nature of the mind. Whenever you notice that your attention is not on the practice, simply recognize that you are thinking, gently let it go, and return to the practice. If this happens during a guided scan, just return to the guidance. If you are doing the scan on your own, return to the region you were last paying attention to. Losing focus is not a failure, it is simply another opportunity to cultivate the new habit of coming back to the present moment. It is not necessary to “finish” or “accomplish” the scan. If you are doing an unguided scan and you find that after 20 minutes you haven’t made it past the knees, that’s OK. Remember there is nowhere to go and nothing to strive for. Coming back to paying attention to what is present in each moment, over and over, is the only “goal”.

It is not unusual to feel sleepy or to actually fall asleep when first trying this practice, especially if you have been sleep-deprived or stressed out. If this happens to you, your body is probably trying to tell you something. (Corollary- if you are having trouble getting to sleep, try a body scan!). However, when doing formal practice, the intention is to maintain a relaxed alertness. Sleepiness can be minimized by lying in the corpse pose, lying on the floor, not the bed, and if that isn’t enough, by opening the eyes.

The Body Scan as part of sitting Meditation (EN)

A variation of the Body Scan can also be used in sitting meditation as a method to overcome agitation and/or dullness (aware of breath but zoning out) and to improve the quality of mental awareness.

Instructions:

Assume a comfortable sitting posture and bring the awareness to the breath in nostrils.

Check in with the quality of concentration; is it sleepy or agitated?

Now bring the breath to different parts of the body - consciously feeling the breath moving in and out of the specific body part with each inhale and exhale. Beginning with the toes, and then moving through the middle foot, ankles, calves, knees, thighs, hips, hands, fingertips, along the length of the arm to the elbow, the whole arm, shoulders, collarbone, chest, and abdomen.

- Pause here at the abdomen and pull the navel in towards the spine to stabilize the stomach muscles. (Ask students to notice how much their posture might have changed).

Without disturbing your sense of stillness, very gently adjust and straighten your posture.

Return the awareness to the sensation of the breath in the nostris for a few very crystal clear breaths.

The Body Scan as a transition between Walking Meditation and Sitting Meditation. (EN)

Instructions:

Come to your seated meditation posture, and simply sit with the breath for a few moments as you settle into stillness.

Bring your attention to the sensations in your body, being aware of any tingling sensations in the feet and legs from walking, then rotate the awareness through the body starting with the toes, and moving through the middle foot, ankles, calves, knees thighs, hands, arms.

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (Chapter 5, pp. 75-93, 92-3)

Walking Meditation (4.2.4)***Overview***

Usually we walk for a reason. The most common one is that we want to go from one place to another and walking is how we can best do it. Of course the mind tends to think about where it wants to go and what it is going to do there and it presses the body into service to deliver it there, so to speak. So we could say that often the body is really the chauffeur of the mind, willingly (or reluctantly) transporting it and doing its bidding. If the mind is in a hurry, then the body rushes. If the mind is attracted to something it finds interesting, then the head turns and your body may change direction or stop. And of course, thoughts of all kinds are cascading through the mind just as they are when you are sitting and breathing. All this happens without the least awareness.

Walking meditation involves intentionally attending to the experience of walking itself. It involves focusing on the sensations in your feet or your legs or, alternatively, feeling your whole body moving. You can also integrate awareness of your breathing with the experience of walking. (FCL 114-15)

Instructions (FCL, 116)

To begin walking as a formal meditation practice, you should make the specific intention to do it for a period of time, say ten minutes, in a place where you can walk slowly back and forth in a lane.

To keep mindfulness strong, it's a good idea to focus your attention on one aspect of your walking rather than changing it all the time. So if you have decided to pay attention to your feet, then you should stay with your feet for that entire walking period, rather than changing to the breath or the legs or the full gait.

Since it looks weird to other people to walk back and forth without any apparent purpose, especially if you are doing it slowly, you should do it someplace where you will not be observed, such as your bedroom or living room. Choose a pace that maximizes your ability to pay attention. This might differ from one time to another, but in general it should be slower than your normal pace of walking.

Once you have practiced walking mindfully as a formal exercise and you have some experience of what is involved, you will find that you can easily practice a more informal mindfulness of walking in many different circumstances. For instance when you park your car and go into stores to do errands or shopping, that is a good occasion to try walking to where you are going with a continuity of awareness.

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (Chapter 7: pp 114-19, **116**)

(Also see section 4.2.1.3. for further sources)

Sound Meditation (4.2.5)

Overview

TBA

Instructions (FCL, 73)

1. Begin with the instructions for sitting with the breath, allowing the awareness to simply settle on the breath.
2. If you feel like it, try just listening to sound when you meditate. This does not mean listening *for* sounds, rather just hearing what is here to be heard, moment by moment, without judging or thinking about them. Just hearing them as pure sound. And hearing the silences within and between sounds as well.
3. You can practice this with music, too, hearing each note as it comes and the spaces between notes. Try breathing the sounds into your body and letting them flow out again on the outbreath. Imagine that your body is transparent to sounds; that they can move in and out of your body through the pores of your skin.

Detailed Instructions

Begin with the practice of sitting with the breath, moving on to sitting with the breath in the body, followed by an awareness of the breath in the nostrils.

Then, move attention to ears. Let go of body awareness and turn all your focus to whatever sounds you hear.

Watch how mind moves from one set of sounds to another, don't try to stop this at first, just watch yourself doing it; how long do you stay on one sound before moving to another?

Then drop the labels; just hear different qualities of sound, but forget about naming them.

Find one tone of sound you are most attracted to, go deeper into it. Try to hear subtler rhythms within it, listen closely for the beginning and ends of vibrations.

Then, relax and let awareness draw inwards; listen for the sounds of your own body, yet still without moving at all. Can you hear the sound of your clothes as you breathe? Can you hear the sound of your breath moving through your nose (different from feeling it)? Even if you cannot hear, just try. Then try to hear your heartbeat inside your chest.

(Continue from here into **Sitting with Thoughts and Feelings**.)

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (71, 73)

Kyle Gann, *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. pp. 134-148.

Sitting with Thoughts and Feelings (4.2.6)

Overview

TBA.

Instructions (FCL, 73)

Follow the Instructions for Sitting with the Breath and Sitting with the Breath and the Body as a Whole. After a few minutes, when your attention is relatively stable on the breath, try shifting your awareness to the process of thinking itself. Let go of the breath and just watch thoughts come into and leave the field of your attention.

Try to perceive them as "events" in your mind.

Note their content and their charge while, if possible, not being drawn into thinking about them, or thinking the next thought, but just maintaining the "frame" through which you are observing the process of thought.

Note that an individual thought does not last long. It is impermanent. If it comes, it will go. Be aware of this.

Note how some thoughts keep coming back.

Note those thoughts that are "I," "me," or "mine" thoughts, observing carefully how "you," the non-judging observer, feel about them.

Note it when the mind creates a "self" to be preoccupied with how well or how badly your life is going.

Note thoughts about the past and thoughts about the future.

Note thoughts that are about greed, wanting, grasping, clinging.

Note thoughts that are about anger, disliking, hatred, aversion, rejection.

Note feelings and moods as they come and go.

Note what feelings are associated with different thought contents.

If you get lost in all this, just go back to your breathing.

This exercise requires great concentration and should only be done for short periods of time, like two to three minutes per sitting in the early stages.

The Anchor in the Stream Variation

Begin by **"anchoring" your awareness in the breath** and gently bringing the awareness back to the breath when you notice it has wandered.

When you feel that you have gained some measure of calm and stability you can then **expand your awareness to include awareness of sensations in the body**, beginning with sitting with an awareness of the breath and the body as a single unit. You can also bring your awareness to any strong sensations in the body, examining them closely, noticing the particular qualities of the sensation (pressure, heat, whether the sensation is steady or changing, etc).

At some point in the meditation, **bring your awareness to your thoughts and feelings as they exist in the moment**. "Look" at them closely. Notice how there is an automatic tendency to identify strongly with your thoughts, to get "hooked" by them. Notice how and when you get hooked by the thoughts. When you notice this, practice "unhooking" from them, using the calm center you have established as a home base from which to calmly view the stream of thoughts and feelings that are flowing by. If and when you find that you are getting lost in this practice, simply come back to your "anchor," your "calm center" of breath-awareness meditation.

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (67-70, **73-4**)

Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, *Clarifying the Natural State: A Principal Guidance Manual for Mahamudra*. Eric Pema Kunsang, translator. Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2001. (Vipassāna: pp. 26-39)

Tsongkhapa, “Medium-Length Transcendent Insight,” in Robert A. E. Thurman, Editor and Translator, *Essential Tibetan Buddhism*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. pp. 176-202

(Also see section 4.2.1.3. for further sources)

2. Insight-Inquiry-Deconstruction Meditation

Self-Inquiry Meditation (4.2.7)

Begin as in other meditations, setting up a conducive posture, followed by several minutes of meditation on the sensation of breath at the nostrils.

Once you have a clear picture of the sensations of the breath, following closely the sequence of movements, pulsations, temperatures, and so forth, that are arising, allow a little part of your awareness to “step back” from the experience of just watching.

Then begin to notice how you are picturing your experience of “breath.”

- Are you forming a mental image of “nose”?
- Or lips? Or air?
- Have you ever seen your own nose directly?
- How are you putting together several different pictures you have seen over and over again – some from the “outside,” as in a mirror, and some from the inside, as you draw interior shapes according to your sensations – to form a somewhat consistent picture that goes along with the words “my nose”?
- What is this thing made of, anyway?
- Is it just a bunch of sensations?
- Or is it more truly what it looks like to others?
- But if its real identity is what it looks like to others, have you ever experienced your own nose?
- And do others call this thing on your face “my nose”? No. So does it really have a nature of being “my nose”?

You may be thinking this reflection is pretty silly by now, but how about if you applied it to your whole face? Have you ever seen your whole face at once? Or your whole body, all in one moment? What happens when you put different kinds of sensations together – visual, tactile, auditory (i.e., the sound of your breathing), and call all of that “one thing,” i.e., “my body”? Can you ever see your whole body at once?

Are the connections random? How do you decide exactly where your breath has left your body, and when it is passing into the outside world? Is it just because you can’t feel it

anymore? What if you could feel the air passing two feet in front of you? Would it still be “you” then?

Please feel free to follow these or similar reflections on your own. Keep asking how your mind puts together different images in order to constitute an object to which your mind then attaches a label. Some of these labels might be very, very important to you, like “my

If your mind wanders away from the breath a thousand times then your job is simply to bring it back to the breath every time, no matter what it becomes preoccupied with.

When your practice feels strong in the sense that you can maintain some continuity of face.” But what if it were just your mind that creates those labels? Why don’t other people attach the same labels to things you happen to care about very much?

How would it change your perspective on life if you were to notice the process by which you drop a label onto a group of parts – i.e., a group of sensations, experiences, stories, etc.?

Once you reach some clarity in this meditation – not necessarily a “conclusion,” but at least some taste of understanding something you had not understood before, try to rest quietly with that thought, without letting yourself get distracted off to other thoughts, with the same kind of relaxed, focused attention you have been cultivating so far just on the sensation of the breath.

Try to see if it is possible to focus on the content of a single “thought” or “insight” with the same kind of undistracted attention that you may already have found it possible to give to a passive sensation like breathing.

3. Care Meditations

Compassion Meditation (4.2.8)

Instructions

Posture: Begin with posture as usual, checking grounded seat, length of spine, navel pressed gently towards the back, shoulders even, neck long and head centered, eyes relaxed, jaw released, forming slight smile.

Purifying breaths: Take three deep cleansing breaths, each time feeling as though crystal clear air enters and fills your body on the in-breath, sweeping up with it all the stale air, fatigue, or stress, and then releasing that through the nostrils on the out-breath as though smoke or toxicity is being expelled.

After a few full body breaths like this, begin to watch the rising and falling of the chest, then listen for the heartbeat, and try to feel the energetic and emotional center of the heart, in the middle of your back, just in front of the spine.

Opening Consideration: Consider how the boundaries between self and other are fluid, and relate to our feelings of isolation vs. connectedness. Consider compassion, a powerful force of realignment in this regard, as a value you may want to explore more deeply.

Recollecting a Person you Care for: Then let go of your body as a central object of awareness and bring to mind a person you love or care about and feel close to (family people, both those you care about and those you don't care for).

Monitoring Negativity: Notice, however, when you come to someone towards whom you feel resistance towards this wish for their joy. Notice where this feeling of dislike or resentment limits your wish for *their* happiness, and consider why. Pause with this person, and look into *their* eyes. Has this person done negative things to you? Have you done negative things to them? Notice, label, and proceed without judgment, and without indulging yourself in negative emotions.

Working through Negativity: Try to see that they also want to be free of pain, and long for happiness. Try to extend the same feeling of love towards that person as you have already generated towards your friend. Realize you don't have to agree with someone or their actions to feel compassion for them. Intentionally cultivate feelings of generosity, understanding, and compassion toward this person, letting go of your feelings of resentment and dislike for that person and reminding yourself instead to see that person as a whole being, as deserving of love and compassion, as having feelings, as someone who feels pain and anxiety, someone who is suffering. Let go of your own anger, resentment, hurt, righteousness, and any other emotional force preventing you from caring. If you find that impossible to do fully, explore the possibilities of beginning to let go, and note there is more work to do in the future.

Then notice the sensations in the emotional center of your heart, and feel that vibration rippling out into the world. Expand that feeling of boundless love as far as your imagination can take you.

Letting go: Then let go of all the visualizations and come back to your physical body, letting your breath rise to the surface and opening your eyes.

Final Consideration: reflect, finally, about carrying these considerations and care into your day.

(Please note: if strong emotional expressions such as tears or laughter come up during this meditation, let them come, but try not to be distracted by it. Bring your mind back to the content of the meditation that brought forth the emotion; don't let the emotion itself take over. Also, don't worry if your mind feels flooded by thoughts and images now, in contrast to the mindfulness meditations; you will know what images nourish the intent of the meditation, and which ones will become distractions. Try to stay in the present moment with the feelings of compassion and love, not getting caught up in the memories or reveries that triggered them. If it helps to mentally repeat a phrase such as "May you be free of pain," "May you have every joy," this is fine, to keep the mind focused, but not necessary at this point.)

Compassion Meditation Variant from *Full Catastrophe Living*

Overview

Healing energy can be directed toward others and toward your relationships as well as toward your own body. This is a very effective way of healing yourself, because the process of generating strong feelings of empathy, compassion, and love toward others has its own purifying effect on the mind. When such strong positive feelings are invoked in a mind that has become relatively calm and stable through intensive meditation practice, these feelings can then be effectively directed toward others.

When practiced regularly, loving-kindness meditation has a softening effect on the heart. It can help you to be kinder to yourself and to others in your own mind, to see all beings as deserving of kindness and compassion, so that, even if disputes do arise, your mind can see clearly and your heart does not close down and become lost in self-serving yet ultimately self-destructive negative feeling states. (*FCL*, p. 182)

Instructions (FCL, p. 182)

Begin by stabilizing the mind and calming it with mindfulness of breathing.

Consciously invoke feelings of love and kindness toward ourselves, perhaps by saying inwardly to ourselves "May I be free from anger, may I be free from hatred; may I be filled with compassion, may I feel kindness toward myself."

Visualize a particular person you care about. We can visualize that person in our mind's eye or hold the feeling of the person in our heart as we wish that person well: "May he or she be happy, may he (she) be free from pain and suffering, may he (she) experience love and joy." We may then include others we know and love: parents, children, friends.

Then we identify a person we may have a particularly difficult time with, perhaps someone we do not like to feel sympathy for. We intentionally cultivate feelings of kindness, generosity, and compassion toward this person, letting go of our feelings of resentment and dislike for that person and reminding ourselves instead to see that person as a whole being, as deserving of love and kindness, as having feelings, as someone who feels pain and anxiety, someone who is suffering. If that person has caused us harm, we purposefully forgive him or her in our heart, letting go of our own anger and resentment and hurt, letting go of our feelings of righteousness, of our justifications for our lack of empathy. We also ask that that person forgive us if we have caused him or her hurt, knowingly or unknowingly. This can be done with people whether they are alive or have already died, and there can be a strong release of long-carried negative emotions as you ask for forgiveness and forgive them. It is a profound process of coming to terms in your own heart and mind with the way things are in this moment, a deep letting go of past feelings and hurt.

Continue to direct loving-kindness to others, perhaps those who we feel may be in need of positive energy, who are not as fortunate as we are.

Then we can expand our scope still further, radiating our feelings of loving-kindness to all people who are suffering, oppressed, in need of kindness and caring. The meditation can be carried even further, expanding the field of loving-kindness out from our own heart in all directions until it includes all life on the planet, not just people, and the living planet itself if we like.

Finally we return to our own body, we come back to the breathing, and end cradling our feelings of warmth and generosity and love for all beings in our own hearts.

Texts and Resources

John Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta, 2009 [1st edition 1990]. (182-84)

4. Visualizations

Active Visualization

Overview

These practices represent a fundamental shift in contemplative orientation. In the previous practices (sitting with the breath, body, feelings, and sound, body scan, and walking meditation) the imperative has been to be mindful - to simply “be with” our experiences. With these next practices we, instead, seek to modify our experience in some fundamental way. The compassion meditations of the previous week introduced visualization as a powerful way to modify our affective states and deeper motivational orientation. The active visualizations detailed below begin with the visualization techniques used in compassion meditation, where we visualize being present with others, and expand on these techniques. In the following practices, we will begin to turn this creative gaze inward, investigating ways of actively re-imagining ourselves and our ways of being in the world. Compassion should serve as the indispensable foundation of all of these practices of active visualization. In teaching the following practices, we should consider the following questions:

How can we encounter another person who is suffering in a way that is honest and open, and yet not be overwhelmed by that suffering?

How can we combine breath, posture, and visualization to tap into our own openness without being overwhelmed?

How should we go about creating a moral framework for imaginative work?

How can we use contemplative practice to inquire into our own motivations and the emotional responses that arise in our relations with others?

How do we go about re-imagining our sense of self?

With rational inquiry, you can disclose certain things, but you get to a wall. How can you get beyond that wall to the murky depths of yourself? Poetry, imagery, somatic work, etc.?

Practices

The points below summarize the main elements and inquiries of the practices. See the Alternative Instructions for specific and detailed instructions:

Self as Other & Other as Self (4.2.9a)

Once you have settled into meditation by following the breath for a few minutes, think of someone you care about deeply, and who is undergoing some particular hardship right now.

Imagine yourself going to the place where that person would be right now, but you are invisible, simply witnessing whatever you think that person is experiencing.

Reflect upon how it would make you feel if you could take their suffering away from them, as easily as you could remove a coat from someone's back. But what if you then had to experience the same suffering yourself? Would you hesitate? Think carefully about the boundaries of your care, what you want and don't want. Do you think suffering is something that should be removed, without anyone having to experience the problem? Is this even possible? How might your inquiry into the nature of suffering, the nature of self and other, the nature of how things work in this world, help you to act in a way that is genuinely beneficial to others?

Then you can visualize the pain this person is undergoing -- whether it be physical, mental, emotional, or all of the above -- taking the symbolic form of a black viscous liquid substance inside their body, something like ink or tar.

Become very aware of your breath, and start to imagine that on each inhalation, you begin to draw this dark substance from the extremities of this person's body towards their heart, forming a little ball there. Then as you continue to breathe, see this ball of negativity drawn up in front of that person's spine, and out of their nostrils. Pay particular attention to the moment this suffering exits their body completely.

Then see this ball of black substance hanging midair in front of your own face (you are still invisible to your friend). Reflect whether, if you could actually do it, you would have the courage to take this suffering into yourself.

Then you can visualize a beautiful flower sitting open inside your own heart: this would represent the gentle beauty of your feelings of determined compassion.

Inside the flower, you can picture a brilliant, crystal clear diamond, shining as if with its own piercingly bright light. This represents your deeper and deeper inquiry into the nature of how things work.

Then (if and only if you genuinely want to), you can visualize that on your next inhalation, you draw the ball of suffering into yourself, but instantly it strikes the diamond at your heart, and in a single explosion of light -- like a supernova -- all the dark matter is instantly pulverized and dissolved. See your whole body fill with brilliant light, pouring out of the diamond in your heart.

Then look back to the person you care about so much. Imagine that they are completely free of the problem that was weighing on their mind and body. See the look of relief and hope and joy that might appear in their face.

Then you can imagine that the light coming from within you shines out and carries to the other person everything positive they could want in life. Make it specific to this person; send exactly what you know they want and need right now. You can also extrapolate and give them things they had not even wished for yet.

Finally, absorb the whole visualization back into your heart, and rest a little bit, reflecting on how you yourself feel now.

(Note: What follows is another example of this type of practice; each of you can create a scenario that means something to you personally.)

Begin by sitting with the breath in the body for a few minutes until you feel the mind and body starting to settle into an awareness of sitting and breathing.

Then, maintaining this awareness of the body and the breath, and with the eyes closed, visualize yourself sitting on a small flat area at the top of the highest mountain in the world and all around you is blackness. Then the sun begins to rise and you begin to see the landscape stretching off in all directions. You see valleys, cities, oceans; the entire world is laid out before you and the sun is shining on your face.

Then you hear the scrape of footsteps coming up the mountain and soon a little child appears and sits down in front of you. You realize that this child is you when you were 5. And now you realize that this is you on the morning of your first day at kindergarten and you are very anxious and don't want to go.

Simply sit with this child and visualize taking in their worry and sending back love and reassurance. Soon the child seems to feel much better and then gets up to happily go to school.

Visualize the love and reassurance that you sent to the child radiating out from yourself on the top of the mountain, until it eventually fills the whole world. Ride out with this love and compassion, see it flowing through valleys and cities and forests, purifying and relieving all the suffering in all of these places.

Inspiring Identities (4.2.9b)

Over the course of this practice, three elements are crucial:

1. **Emotional identification:** What does it mean to identify with this paradigmatic figure?
1. **Visual clarity:** How stable, clear, and vivid, is your visualization?
2. **Understanding:** How do the qualities you admire in this personality -- goodness, courage, compassion, strength, understanding, and so on -- shine through in the particular features and tones of their face, body, posture, and clothing?

Start your meditation by settling into your own posture, observing your breath at the nostrils, checking the clarity of your focus on this particular day, expanding sensations of breath through the body, and breathing into the heart area, in the middle of the back, just in front of the spine.

Check in with your current motivation for meditation, as it has evolved at this point in the term. Reflect upon how your meditation of taking away suffering was only imagined. What if you could find someone who could help you learn how to actually effect positive changes in your own and other people's lives?

Then, think of someone you admire deeply, whether someone living presently or long ago, whether you know him or her personally or have only read about this person. Choose someone or something you would like to emulate; the person should represent some principle you would like to emulate or incarnate.

Invite this person to sit in front of you, right opposite you, and imagine that his or her presence is very real. Begin with general shape of the form, tone of skin, hair, clothing, settling especially on this person's eyes. See all the good qualities you think of in this role model reflected there. Try to feel some awe and admiration, and respect.

Then, as though you were to meet him or her in person, think of what you might like to offer in greeting: it could be something you have done in your life that was inspired by this person's example, inspiration, or teaching. Or else something you still hope to do. What is the best thing you've ever done in your life? How would you offer it?

Then think of something that happened recently, perhaps, that you weren't so proud of. Perhaps you know you hurt someone, or there was a misunderstanding which isn't quite rectified yet. How would you tell the story to this person you admire? Think of how they might guide you to bring healing to the situation.

Then recognize if there is something you would like to improve in yourself, something you wish to change, that you feel this person could teach or help you with if you could meet and spend time with him or her.

Then imagine you are asking for that help and guidance. Look into this person's eyes and see how much they love you, even if you have never met them.

Reflect: How do you think it might affect you if you were to develop a vivid relationship with this person in meditation, even if you could never meet him or her "in real life"?

When you are ready, you can dissolve the whole visualization into your heart again, and finish the meditation.

Identification with a paradigmatic figure (4.2.10a)

Begin with the meditation described above.

Instead of dissolving the visualization at the end, see now that the figure becomes very small, a tiny image made of light, hovering in space just in front of your eyes. If you feel right doing so, you can ask this person to come and sit in the space above your head, a very bright and clear image of all the qualities you see and respect in them.

If your mind is still fresh to continue, you can go on from here without a break. Otherwise, if you have time to do a little walking meditation in between, as we did in class, then come back and pick up right where you left off, with the figure above your head.

Imagine what it would be like to admire this person so much that you wanted to feel what it would be like to become them, even just for a few minutes.

To do this role-playing exercise, you can first let go of the image of your body and mind as you currently experience that, and see vast blue sky in all directions (as in the letter visualization.)

Continue to see the tiny figure of light hovering in that empty space, and then see this figure become larger and fill the space your usual body was sitting in.

Try to feel what it would be like to be inside this person's body: the shape and weight, skin tone and posture. Focus especially on your new eyes: what would it feel like to look out on the world with this kind of goodness, compassion and bright, piercing intelligence?

Enactment scenarios: Then imagine a single scene you might engage in *as this person*. Imagine activities you do as this person. What do you DO as this figure that exemplifies what this role model represents to you? How would you relate to even one other person, and what might you be able to do for them? Would you offer a life-changing word of advice or teaching, or perhaps be able to heal someone of their suffering or illness? Don't be limited by what you normally think of as "yourself" -- you are your role model now.

Then come back to the image of inhabiting this person's body and eyes. Then see this figure made of light, getting very small again and hovering in midair.

Then come back to your normal body, and if you wish, continue to feel the presence of this exemplary person above your head as you open your eyes and finish the meditation.

Letters visualization (4.2.10b)

Visualize yourself as a letter, a light letter, chose it yourself, travelling through space, but also consider possible emotional or ethical or cognitive content.

Conjoin with keeping in mind the sound of the letter.

Conjoin with semantic associations of the letter.

Think about associations of the shape of the letter with meaning, and how it might relate to you and your situation, emotions, personality etc. (the curves of c, etc.)

Make suggestions for what they could do with self-as-letter visualization.

The challenge: how do you visualize, or map, your body. Letters are one way to imagine the form of one's body.

Texts and Resources

(Buddhist)

Pema Karpo, "The Process of Generation of the Wishing Gem of the Ear-Whispered Teachings," in Stephen Beyer, Editor and Translator, *The Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations*. Belmont, California: Dickenson, 1974. pp. 140-153. [PDF: Beyer - The Buddhist Experience"]

Padmasambhava, "Vajrayana Mind Training: The Unexcelled Mind Training of Secret Mantra, Instructions on Practicing a Deity with Attributes," in

Dakini Teachings: A Collection of Padmasambhava's Advice to the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal. Eric Pema Kunsang, translator. Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, . pp. 113-134. [PDF: "Padmasambhava – Vajrayana Mind Training - Dakini Teachings"]

"Method for Visualizing Tara [as She Who Protects Us against] the Eight Great Perils." Lois O. Gómez, "Two Tantric Meditations: Visualizing the Deity." in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995. pp. 318-327.

Elizabeth English, *Vajrayogini: Her Visualizations, Rituals, and Forms*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2002. Translation of the evocation ritual pp. 109-224.

"Recollecting the Buddha," in Edward Conze, editor and translator, *Buddhist Meditation*. Mineola, NY: Dover Books, 2003 (1st edition 1969). pp. 45-52. (Early Indian precedent for deity yoga practice)

David Germano, "The Elements, Insanity, and Lettered Subjectivity," in Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. pp. 313-322. member, friend, etc.), someone you have also seen experiencing significant pain, either now or in the past. (Don't spend too much time trying to decide which person to meditate on; whoever comes to you, just pick that person and go with it. The point is not to find the person you love most, but rather to get a taste of the feeling of sincere compassionate love as it arises naturally for you. You can try meditating on different people on different days, to see how the feeling changes, but it might be beneficial to go deeper with the experience

of one person by meditating on them several days in a row.)

See that person sitting in front of you as if in the present moment (but don't worry if the visualization is not clear; the point is to get a sense of that person's presence, as on the telephone. If you can connect with one feature clearly, such as their eyes or the sound of their voice, this will be enough.)

Recollecting Sadness & Compassion: Recall what it has felt like to see that person undergoing pain, whether illness, an injury, grief, fear, disappointment, frustration, etc.

Try to get the essence of what it feels like to see someone you love in pain, and to want to see an end to that pain, and to wish you could do something to stop it, even if that feels impossible at the moment. Feel what it is to look into their eyes, or hear their voice, and just sit with them, offering your compassion in the present moment. Hold that feeling clearly in your heart for a few moments.

Letting go: Then take a deep breath and let go of that feeling (later one can visualize actually taking pain away, but don't try this yet.)

Recollecting Joy: Then see this same person the happiest you have ever seen them (Again, don't get caught up in the details of a memory; rather access enough specifics to get to the essence of the feeling of this person's joy, and then bring it into the present moment.) Just sit for a few moments basking in that joy with them, letting their joy fill you with celebration, and smile.

Then recall a gift you have worked to prepare for this person in the past, and begin to imagine what it would be like if you could give them everything they have ever wanted, with no practical limits. Let the feeling build, adding specifics of what you think would make this person happy, free, healthy, fulfilled, at peace.

Allow your mind to expand past this room, imagining what it would be like to give someone you love infinite happiness, without them ever having to experience pain again.

The Spreading of Joy: Let the feeling spread to other people you know, more and more, as though sweeping the geographical location you are familiar with, bringing to mind specific [PDF: Lopez - Religions of Tibet in Practice"]

"The Great Collection of the Teachings on the Noble Practice of Severing the Demons, Perfection of Wisdom." Giacomella Orofino, "The Great Wisdom Mother and the Gcod Tradition," in David White, Editor., *Tantra in Practice*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2000. pp. 396-416, esp. 412-416. [PDF: "Machik Labdron - Severing the Demons"] (on Machik Labdrön)

(Secular/Scientific)

Maria Kozhevnikov, et. al., "The Enhancement of Visuospatial Processing Efficiency Through Buddhist Deity Meditation", *Psychological Science* 20/5 (2009): 645-653. [PDF:

“Kozhevnikov - Enhancement of Visuospatial Processing Efficiency Through Buddhist Deity Meditation”]

Ellen J. Langer, *On Becoming an Artist: Reinventing Yourself through Mindful Creativity*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006.

Matthieu Ricard, “Buddhist Perspectives on Mental Imagery,” in Anne Harrington and Arthur Zajonc, Editors, *The Dalai Lama at MIT*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008 [1st. edition 2006]. pp. 69-90. [PDF: Ricard - Buddhist Perspectives]

Steven Ungerleider, *Mental Training for Peak Performance: Top Athletes Reveal the Mind Exercises they Use to Excel*. Rodale, 2005. Esp. Chapter 8, “Improve Your Game with Guided Imagery,” and Chapter 9, “Use Visual Rehearsal to Fine-Tune Your Style.”

5. Body Work (4.2.11.)

Body Elemental Mapping

Overview

What is the body? How do we know our body? How do we conceptualize it? How do we experience it? Beyond simple observation, contemplative practice can be used to explore the body, and to generate specific experiences.

Contemplative practice offers multiple and diverse methods of exploring the body, discovering its distinctiveness, and opening ourselves to its intelligence and its organization. In exploring unfamiliar terrain we will soon become lost without a map to guide and structure our exploration. In exploring the body, we must ask ourselves how we want to represent the body - how we want to *map* it. Without such a representation, we have no clear way to start.

But of course, we must remember that “map is not territory.” Mapping always involves making choices, which embed values and perspectives into the map. In this, as in any mapping project, we should ask ourselves, how the categories and the representations we use for mapping influence where we travel, and how we understand and interact with our destinations.

Mapping the body is a journey of discovery, not just passive monitoring of random impulses, and thus we expect new encounters and new knowledge.

Also, beyond the representations or the methods we chose to map the body, there is the question of *narration* - how do we narrate the exploration of the body? Like a tour book, or an aural guide to a museum collection, this narration is not just a mapping of space, but also a mapping of time and of sequence. Thus, we have narratives of development, which frame the body in very specific ways, shaping our values and expectations

One way of mapping the body is experiencing the body in terms of the five elements sequentially: visualizing body in terms of those five elements in the following sequence Earth, Water, Fire, Wind, Space. (elements correspond to physical “properties”, mental “states” and emotional “moods” - possible use to balance moods and experiences as they fluctuate). This is about developing a kind of *literacy of the body* and of the self. Before we begin this journey of discovery, we begin with a process of asking questions about why we would want to explore this place and interact with it.

Specific Instructions

Chris Hiebert’s Notes

Hatha yoga postures, synchronized with the breath:

- standing with body and breath awareness
- standing stretch, forward bend, back stretch, twist.

Breath Exercises - kapalbhati (bellows breath), Alternate nostril breathing.

Visualizing the body and mental space as the 5 elements:

- Earth (solidity) as a mountain, carved out of a single piece of oak
- Water (fluidity) as a river, flowing
- Fire (heat, dynamism), as fire, electricity
- Wind (lightness, omnidirectional movement)
- Space (openness, vastness) the body and mind as the night sky with thoughts and sensations as the stars.

Eva Natanya’s Notes:

Begin with light stretching, arms overhead and then clasped behind back, forward bend parallel to floor, then relax into stretch with head to knees. Straighten carefully and attentively, either with totally straight back, or rolling through all the vertebrae (being sure not to put undue pressure on lower back by bending knees if necessary.)

Then begin sharp exhalations of breath through the nostrils (Sanskrit: *kapalabhati*, or “Shining Skull” breath), counting up to 20 or so. (Have tissues available :-) Breathe normally for a moment to relax.

Then, exhale through mouth with audible “haaa” sound, leaning over thighs, press navel towards spine in the silence, release the stomach, straighten up, then exhale the rest of the breath. (Try not to inhale at all during contraction of the stomach.) This is called “*uddiyana bandha*,” a necessary preparation for learning a cleansing practice called “*nauli*”. Repeat 3

or 4 times.

Then, sit down in meditation posture, with left hand on knee or thigh in *chin mudra* (first finger and thumb touching).

Hold right forefinger to right nostril and gently exhale through left nostril, inhale, then switch finger so the back of the index finger is gently pressing the left nostril.

Exhale through the right, inhale, then switch the finger to right nostril in the pause between breaths, before exhaling through the left again. Do about ten cycles like this, not more.

Then, begin formal meditation right away from here, watching sensations of breath carefully in both nostrils, how they may have changed as a result of the exercise.

Gradually bring awareness to heart, check in on your motivation, and recall the image of the person you have been visualizing as a role model (or choose someone who particularly inspires you to explore the inner landscape of the body.)

See this person hovering in the space above the crown of your head, in a tiny image. (If you have more time, you can repeat the meditation from last week, with the person sitting in front of you first, but for this week it is okay to start where that meditation left off.)

Begin to feel your whole body as though it were made *only* of the “earth element”: solid, weighty, unmoving, like a stone or a mountain. Be very still to experience this sensation throughout your limbs, torso, and head.

Let go of the solidity and try to feel all the “water element” in your body: liquids flowing through your veins, flooding your cells, and so on. Then let go all the boundaries of tissues and see your body as a single lake of water, watching the currents and eddies of movement flowing within it. Only the thin outline of your skin holds in this water.

Let go of that image and try to feel the “fire element”: this is heat, but especially electricity, all the billions of electrical impulses and ion flows energizing your body at every moment. If you feel more and more tingling sensations, this is good, just try to follow them through all parts of you. It is okay to visualize them as sparks of light, too.

Let go of the heat and begin to feel just the “wind element”: light and moving, as though you are light as a wisp of cotton and just watching the breezes of breath pass through your empty body, contained only by your skin.

Then, let even this air begin to still itself, until you are like a clear, blue sky on a day with no wind. Totally still, just feel yourself as simple location, the unique space in the universe taken up by your dimensions.

Stay like this as long as you can hold the feeling; then review the image of your whole body made of sky, with your inspiring role model in the air above your head.

If you still feel fresh and ready to continue, you may quietly visualize the “central channel” for a few minutes as described in class. Otherwise wait until next week for more details.

Nick Trautz’s notes

The contemplative body

I started with a little talk about the yogic body. I emphasized that the yogic physiology, found in many contemplative systems and usually including the model of channels and energy, is a way to intentionally work with bodily experience. Because it is a way to think about bodily sensation and experiences of flow (aerodynamic and hydraulic to use David’s terminology) the question of it not being physiologically “real” is not particularly problematic.

Meditation Instructions:

Begin with some simple sequence of stretching exercises (The following sequence was designed by Patabi Jois for sitting meditation):

Raising the arms upward (sun)

A forward bend (offering),

Step forward and raise the arms (warrior) on both sides,

Bends in each direction (four directions),

A sideways or twisting bend with arms spread (garuda),

“Gather the mind” with arms raised into putting palms together in front of chest

Open standing.

Do this sequence three times. (Remind the students to use this kind of posture/movement as an opportunity to practice mindfulness, bringing attention to the movements and sensations of the body).

Now, sit comfortably and bring the awareness to the breath, allowing yourself to relax. After a few minutes of sitting with the breath, perform the following breathing exercises:

Expel a long semi forceful breath from one nostril, visualizing it as dark;

Hold the breath out for a moment and then inhale with both nostrils into lower abdomen visualizing as light and luminous.

Hold for a moment and then exhale from other nostril in same manner.

Hold, inhale, hold, both nostrils, hold, and finally a deep inhale into abdomen, followed by a long hold before gently releasing into normal breathing.

Do a couple of minutes of normal breathing, simply sitting with the breath.

Repeat the breathing sequence once or twice more.

(Explained that the gap between breaths is a potent time to look directly at the mind.)

Now, settle back into simply sitting with the breath. (the students are given the option of lying down, or sitting. Most chose to lie down.)

Elements visualization - connecting to different qualities of the body. (I mentioned that this practice involves mixing imagination and sensation, and that the two are brought together.)

First, experience the solidity of the body - feel, see, and understand all the places and ways that the body is solid. make that sense of solidity the object of mindfulness (if you got distracted in discursive thinking, gently come back to the sensation of solidity in the body).

Expand that sense of solidity to fill out the whole body such that the entire body is understood or visualized to be solid, stable, firm. Remain with this feeling of solidity for a minute or two.

Imagine the solidity melting into a liquidity, understanding the body as liquid, Feel a sense of flow throughout the body's interior.

Now, feel the body as being made of electricity.

Feel the body as wind for a minute or two.

Then, visualize the body as a shell containing the sky itself - empty, bright, still. Little cracks begin to appear in the body and little by little the shell body falls away, and the interior space mixes with exterior space, and your awareness rests in total space.

Gently come up to a seated meditation posture and sit in silence for a few minutes. It is important to come out of these kinds of meditations gently and to notice their experience of the world and their bodily sensations as you end the session.

Texts and Resources

Shamarpa Chokyi Wangchuk, "The Quintessence of Nectar: Instructions for the Practice of the Six Dharmas of Naropa," in Peter Alan Roberts, Translator and Editor, *Mahamudra and Related Instructions: Core Teachings of the Kagyu Schools*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2011. pp. 333-372. [PDF: Shamarpa - The Six Dharas of Naropa"]

Tsongkhapa, "A Practice Manual on the Six Yogas of Naropa: Taking the Practice in Hand," in Glenn Mullin, translator, *The Practice of the Six Yogas of Naropa*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2006 [1st. edition 1997]. pp. 93-135.

Bodily Interior Explorations (4.2.12.)

Same as previous week. Add in-class gazing exercise in pairs.

6. Deep Relaxation and Open Monitoring

Choiceless Awareness

Overview

TBA

Instructions

Full Catastrophe Living, pp. 74

1. Follow the instructions for:

a) Sitting with the breath

b) Sitting with sound

c) Sitting with thoughts and feelings

d) Choiceless Awareness: Finally, just sit. Don't hold on to anything, don't look for anything. Practice being completely open and receptive to whatever comes into the field of awareness, letting it all come and go, watching, witnessing in stillness.

Conclusion: 4 minutes on how to bring this into the day.

see people, events, and remind yourself of the choiceless awareness

ask yourself how to integrate that into what you are feeling and doing in each of those contexts

Notes for the Practice

N/A

Texts and Resources

"Marina Abramovic" [interview], in Jacquelyn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob, editors, *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004. pp. 165-175. [PDF - "Baas and Jacob – Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art - Selections"]

7. Practices of Spontaneity

TBA

III. Points of Difficulty/Student's FAQs

FAQs

Q: Can I use a candle flame or something other than the breath (mantra) as object of meditation?

A: No, not here, that's a different meditation. (ENR)

Q: Can I put music on while meditating?

A: No, the aim is to discover inner quiet,

Q: What about random dream images floating through?

A: That's being on the verge of sleep. See antidotes below. (ENR)

Drowsiness

Some antidotes to sleepiness: straighten back, take a few deep breaths, (avoid head-rolls or any gross movement except as very last resort), then try seeing breath as very light and bright like sunlight on the snow -- not quite a visualization, but learning that it does not have to be "dark inside", even when focusing primarily on tactile sensations. (ENR)

"External" Distractions

If you become distracted from the breath by outer sounds, draw those sounds into the sensation of the breath, as though it's all one flow of energy. Let sounds feed your attention, not distract from it - acknowledge the sounds, and let them go, as something in the periphery. (like being on a cell phone conversation while walking and seeing something going on in the street -- you notice it, but don't lose track of what you or your friend are saying in the conversation. Same with keeping primary focus on the breath.) (ENR)

Some students expressed the difficulty of finding appropriate physical and mental space to practice. Some students report a sense of guilt about "doing nothing" or embarrassment at being seen. (this was an opportunity to talk about cultural and institutional acceptance of contemplation). (NT)

Overactive thinking

The tendency when being a meditation practice is to view thoughts as enemies, i.e. the point of meditation is not thinking. We should try to be gentle in noticing when the mind has wandered and returning to the breath. Thoughts can be very obvious or subtle. Perhaps

boredom is a thought. Don't judge thoughts, simply notice and come back. Remind the students that the practice is not about drowning out senses, just noticing the way that the mind reacts to them. What can be learned from experiencing our inability to hold the mind steady for any amount of time? (NT)

When you first begin this practice you will probably find that it is very difficult to keep your focus on the breath and that trying to do so for long periods of time can be exhausting and frustrating. In this case, it can be useful to relax the attention every few minutes, letting the mind wander at will for a minute or two before bringing the attention back to the breath. (CH)

Physical pain and discomfort

Some pain in back or legs (even legs "falling asleep") is very normal. If not a medical issue you've had in the past, then feel courage to just get through it. Discover immense benefit of learning how to get through an itch by watching it and not moving...then someday you can watch an intense emotion rise, stay and subside in just the same way. (ENR)

If feeling physical pain, simply notice the quality and return to breath. Some posture adjustment is ok. (NT)

Emotional Volatility

A certain level of destabilization is normal and understandable considering meditation's orientation towards dismembering mental and physical habituations. Thus, you need to be sensible in working with your emotional texture - perhaps less meditation or a more relaxed approach to meditation could be helpful. It may also be that other resources may be needed to deal with psychological issues that meditation is perhaps not equipped to address (especially in a non-intensive, deinstitutionalized environment such as this course). It can be very beneficial to reflect on the role of vulnerability in contemplation and consider how meditation is fundamentally different from conventional modes of learning, which do not recommend emotional exposure as a key aspect of the learning process. (NT)

Try to strike a balance between *Intentional effort* and *Non-judgmental awareness* and if feelings of failure or frustration arise, to simply recognize those feelings and remember that these mindfulness practices are simply about giving oneself *permission* to follow the instructions without the need for any particular result. (as an instructor, it is important to constantly encourage and remind students that they are doing well in the practice even if they feel frustrated or feel that they are "failing" at the practice.) (CH)

The purpose of all the contemplative practices that we are teaching in the lab is to cultivate *positive* and *beneficial* states of mind. (Although, the practice of meditation is sometimes a struggle - as truly transformative activities often are). Therefore, you should discontinue any meditative practice that consistently brings up extreme feelings of anxiety, disillusionment, or undue stress. (CH)