

Meditation in Ordinary Daily Life

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Bhikkhu Bodhidhamma

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The Buddha's Basic Advice:

In the Discourse on How to Establish Mindfulness, there is the following section on Clear Comprehension:

A meditator when moving forward or backward is clearly aware of what they are doing; when looking ahead or behind, clearly aware of what they are doing; when bending, stretching ... when carrying things, clearly aware of what they are doing; when eating, drinking, chewing, savouring ... when passing stools or urine ... when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep and waking up ... when speaking or staying silent, they clearly aware of what they are doing.

That is, whatever the meditator is doing, that is what they must be mindful of.

In other words, the sitting meditation is only a part of the practice as a whole. The Buddha wanted us to develop a meditative life. To know what we are doing at all times. A life of fulltime awareness. The danger for meditators is to raise the sitting meditation practice to the position of a magical ritual as if all we needed to do was a little sitting in the morning and in the evening (perhaps) and liberation from suffering is assured. Too often meditators think sitting meditation is the be-all and end-all of the Path. I once met a meditator because of this. He had been tremendously ardent, spending months in intensive meditation only to come out and live the 'good life'. After years of this so-called practice, achieving very little in terms of inner peace, he had achieved little but sorrow and despair. He felt the five years of so he had spent on the meditation practice had been a great waste. So, it is this dependence on meditation sitting as the one and only practice that leads to disillusionment and disappointment. Eventually the meditator may abandon the practice altogether as useless! So sitting meditation is only part of the Buddha's path, though undoubtedly necessary.

The Middle Path

The rules that guide the monastic life show clearly that the Buddha wasn't teaching simply a meditation practice but a way of life, a way of living day to day. The Middle Path is a description of how life as a whole

should be led by someone eager to attain liberation from all suffering. This Middle Path in its broader aspect means not to fall prey to sensual pleasure, not to over-indulge in sensual delights. Nor should we believe that self-mortification such as long fasts will bring us anywhere nearer the goal. Moderation in all things! Secondly, that we should be careful not to transgress the basic moral laws for this produces harmful affects for us and for others. Thirdly, that we should make great effort to improve ourselves by the practice of the Perfections. This is all put as the Four Great Efforts of the Eightfold Noble Path - to eradicate existing unwholesome habits and practices, and not to allow any new ones to establish themselves; to introduce new wholesome ways of thinking and behaving and to develop what wholesomeness we already have.

Starting the Day

As an aid to this growth and as a part of the meditation, we need to bring Right Awareness and Right Concentration right into our daily lives. This is what a lot of meditators find very difficult and confusing. So, let us see what meditation in daily life might mean. The day really begins with how we have slept for we often wake with the mind that fell asleep. If I'm depressed or angry before I go to sleep, sure enough the same emotions will overtake me when I wake or soon after. Therefore, we need to fall asleep in a meditative way so that at least any negative frames of mind are weakened and positive ones reinforced. So we should try to go to sleep with the mind in meditation. Just gently placing the attention on the process of breathing or observing the sensations in the body caused by our state of mind. Alternatively, a good practice is to review the whole body, starting at the top of the head and slowly working our way down to the tips of the toes, observing all the sensations on or in the body. Alternatively, following the instructions on how to practise Metta, put a loving thought in the heart mind and repeat over and over again. At some time, it is also important to make a firm resolution to wake with the alarm, to set the mind to wake up. The alarm is only an aid. So that when we wake, we can sit up quickly and observe the mind, catching the first mood of the day and developing that watchful attitude. Once the mind is clear, we can make the next firm resolution not to let a moment of the day pass in mindlessness. All effort will be put into achieving continuity of awareness. Resolute determination plays a significant part in the meditative life. It is, in fact a Perfection to be developed. We don't have to become neurotic over breaking them. We need to see such resolutions as attempts to recondition the mind. Remember the Buddha's teaching that will is Kamma. We need to strengthen the will, to make it strong enough to carry through our skilful decisions. For instance, getting up that little bit earlier to do the regulation forty minutes or better one hour meditation is very difficult at first, but if we persevere a new habit will be established. You may also find as so many meditators do that the more mindfulness is maintained, the less sleep is needed. So we start the day with a decision to develop continuous awareness. We resolve, we determine to do it and eventually we will achieve it to a fairly high degree.

Deliberately Purposefully Intentionally

What form does continual awareness take? Firstly it is awareness of all the tasks we normally complete in

a day, especially the normal ones, the habitual ones. The ones we would normally do on automatic pilot. These range from brushing the teeth, to drinking a cup of tea, to routine tasks at work. Anything manual and physical needs to be done with awareness. Done deliberately, purposefully, intentionally. Even closing drawers, opening cupboards should be done as if for the first time. A good technique to bring mindfulness to bear in our mundane tasks is to do them just a little more slowly and with careful deliberation. Another is to repeat the action that was done mindlessly. This sort of practice brings calmness and equanimity into our lives. This is more easily done if we approach all actions and tasks as if they were ceremonies, as if we were doing them clearly aware of what they are doing in front of someone we respected. I often like to imagine the Buddha himself just sitting somewhere unobtrusively in the room. How mindful I'd be if he really were!

Ceremony

Drinking tea is a national habit if not neurosis, but it can so easily be turned into a real meaningful act. Instead of rushing through the preparation, filling the kettle up with the tap full on, splashing water everywhere, banging the kettle down, plugging it in, grabbing the cup and saucer, banging the cupboard door shut. Same routine at the fridge for the milk. Pouring the boiling water into the pot as quickly as possible. Tapping your fingers, eating cake, gulping it down while we wait for it to brew. And then, what we've been longing for all along, in two short gulps the tea's gone. Our minds here, there and everywhere. Not actually tasting a drop. Two, three cups go down and not a single drop is truly tasted. The whole fandango is finished off with a hurried wash up. No wonder we forget whether we've had a cup of tea or not! Doing all this mindfully, deliberately, carefully, taking one's time, drinking the tea as if for the first time in our lives, lifts this ordinary mundane activity into a meditative exercise which not only increases our mindfulness, but fills that moment with order and beauty. In Japanese culture, this sort of idea produced the famous and beautiful Tea Ceremony, but it runs like a motif through a lot of how the Japanese behave, even to the ceremonial bowing before martial arts. To us, it might seem a little over the top, but if we do ceremonise our lives, we shall see it beautifies all our actions.

The Art of Listening

The second area we need to look at in our daily activities is our relationships and communication with other people. Again it is especially the usual, the ordinary, the habitual communication that needs to be de-robotised and made meaningful. We have to observe how we are communicating with our spouse, children, friends, people at work, neighbours, and compare this to the attentiveness we devote to what the boss says or to the diagnosis of the doctor. We need to cultivate the art of listening.

When we listen attentively, giving our whole attention to what is said, we also become aware of the opinions and conditioned responses in our own minds. Sometimes we can achieve a concentration in our listening so that these are subdued. For listening to someone means to hear what they're saying as if for the first time. If this is really happening, there will always be a break before a response while the mind

assimilates what has been said and thinks of an answer.

Too often our conversations are fencing matches. My concern is to get the other to acknowledge what 'I' am saying and to get 'that' person to agree with 'me'. The other person is doing exactly the same. There's no listening to what the other is actually saying, only as to how it affects 'my' position in the so-called 'discussion'. No wonder there are so many misunderstandings and mistaken assumptions.

When we converse with each other, there's no need to respond immediately. What is really needed is to be truly aware of what the other is saying. In counselling, there's a technique used by a counsellor to show the client that they have understood what's been said. To show the client they've really been listening and also to find out whether in fact they've understood the client's situation. At the end of the client's complaint or explanation, the counsellor will say something like: 'so what you're saying is...' It is always a wonderful moment when the client's face brightens up and relaxes.

Finally, someone who's really listening to what they're saying. Someone who's understood. We communicate to understand each other. To know each other better. At deeper levels, it's sharing experiences, supporting and comforting. This is all impossible for someone who can't listen. Such a person always starts from the wrong premise and usually puts a foot in it. Listening is an art and the base line of any relationship. People, who can't listen, can't relate. To listen properly is to be fully aware of what the other is saying and feeling.

Creating Space 1

The next important practice, once we are clear of what it generally means to be aware in our daily activities and relationships, is to create a space. Our society with its accent on time passing, punctuality and dead lines, creates a rush, a race. Everyone's running every which way. Everyone's speeding. If you can do four jobs at once, that's good. Five, that's better. No wonder there's so much pressure about, so much stress. So much straining. No wonder the greatest killers are heart failure, blood pressure, strokes and so on.

According to Buddhist psychology, only one consciousness arises at one time. The human mind is capable of doing only one thing at a time. You can't be conscious of two things at the same time. We think we are. When we sit in the cinema, we seem to experience all the five senses at once. We see the film. We hear the music and dialogue. We taste the ice cream, smell the smoke and feel uncomfortable in our seats. We seem to be in a bath of sensual pleasure all at once. But actually, each consciousness, arising at vast speeds no doubt, is aware of only one thing, one incoming sense data at one time. I am either seeing the film, or hearing the sound track or eating the ice cream and so on. But such is the speed of consciousness and such is the higher power of the mind to relate and integrate all this that I believe it is all happening altogether, all at once. But we have been fooled, just like the celluloid film tricks us into believing we are seeing one continuous action and not a set of individual frames. So the important rule to establish in the meditative life is to do one deliberate action at a time.

Of course, there are many things that have now become automatic, such as walking. Here we are discussing those actions that take deliberation, that have to be done with a certain amount of awareness or thinking. Walking is normally automatic, but it isn't if we're crossing a high, narrow mountain ridge. Then we are very much aware of how we are walking. And if when this walking ought to be a conscious activity, we decide to look at the scenery, we shouldn't be surprised to fall off. Here we are concerned with deliberate action, actions that need our attention.

In the morning, for instance, we might find ourselves eating our muesli and cornflakes, talking to the family and reading the gas bill all at once. No wonder we feel confused. That things are getting on top of us. At work or at leisure, it is good to organise the tasks ahead, but accept limitations, accept the reality of what's actually happening. Don't be confused by thoughts of what ought to be happening.

Suppose the day is very busy and full of interruptions. If we now view these interruptions not as disturbances and nuisances, but simply accept them as the next thing to be done, we shall free ourselves of a lot of anger and frustration and stress. Suppose I'm doing some written work, filling out forms or something and someone approaches me for information. When they 'interrupt' me, with 'excuse me' all I need say is, 'I'll be with you in a moment'. In that moment, I recollect where I am with the work I'm doing. To be aware is to remember. Then I turn to the questioner and devote myself to that request. Once the request is answered, I note I have completed that task and go back to the written work where I have left a marker. No disturbance. No anger. No stress. Just moving from one job to another, creating a small space to recollect. If the person approaching is full of stress and bother, I don't become involved in that. I keep my attention to the problem and reassure the person.

It's the same in a family of children, all jumping up and down for attention, just when poor old mum and dad were looking for a bit of peace and quiet. What an opportunity to train! This way of working, one job at a time with a small space in between, makes for concentration and efficiency.

Creating Space 2

This small space has also another important function. It stops the accumulation of emotional states. Missing that alarm in the morning and over sleeping, Jack suddenly wakes up and realises he's going to be late. Panic. From that moment there's a world-shattering rush to get to work on time. The morning wash at top speed, water and soap suds everywhere. The breakfast is shovelled in, scalding tea gulped with a yelp. Jack then legs it to the bus stop and spends the ride tapping his fingers and biting his lip. Or driving like a madman, swearing at friend and foe, prepared to run over man, woman and child, cats and dogs. Finally, he arrives at work. Is that the end of the panic? Of course not! Whether he's late or early, he has set the pace for the day. The whole day becomes a frenetic onslaught with rush, anger, frustration, anxiety, stress and so on. At the end of the day, his only comfort a bottle of aspirin or worse!. All this has now, of course, stopped. For Jack is an expert meditator. Now when he's late, he notices the sense of panic and anxiety. But he doesn't respond. He talks himself out of rushing, accepting the fact he's late. He puts effort

into concentrating on what he's doing. He may move faster, but not wilder. When he gets to work late he accepts this fact and realises that from now on there's no need to keep up the faster pace. He relaxes back into his normal routine. No anxiety, no frustration, no angry outbursts, no rush, no stress. This technique of letting our reactions to events subside is of paramount importance if we want to cultivate a general state of calmness. This technique is enhanced by self reflection.

Self-reflection

This is the process of self-monitoring throughout the day. But not the self-monitoring of a Big Brother, full of do's and don'ts and oughts and shouldn'ts, but of a nurse who is caring for their patients. It is simply a matter of recording the state of play and deciding on action to remedy or enhance the situation. Just as a nurse takes a constant temperature reading and acts appropriately. This is another way of stopping emotions and moods from snowballing.

Now Jill, Jack's wife, got to work this morning, early enough, but feeling tired and depressed. As soon as she walks in, her boss says something she didn't like at all. She gets angry about it. All morning she is alternately, depressed, tired or angry. She is angry about being depressed and depressed about being tired and tired of being angry. When she goes for a break, everything irritates her. She's really miserable and her colleagues ignore her. Now sitting on her own, depression is fuelled with self-pity. Her only consolation is to go home, shout at Jack, and the kids, kick the cat and lock herself into a room, sulk and in really bad times take Prozac!

Jill, however, is now an expert meditator too. She has learnt the technique of living with moods and emotions, of existing peacefully with them. She develops a friendly attitude towards them, one of acceptance. She still suffers from depression, but now she acknowledges it as a fact, as a result of past conditioning. She tries to feel it as it really is. She decides that though the depression is going to hang about, probably make her less efficient, her energy and attention will be directed to the job in hand, to communicating with people, to raising the will to be helpful, open and friendly. By doing this she knows the depression won't dominate her life. She knows there won't be reactions to it, like anger and self-pity and anxiety. It may remain all day, all week, all month, all year, but her attitude to it now is as to physical pain, backache or headache. She's not going to let it hijack her life. She knows these sorts of attitudes are allowing the depression to lose steam, to lose energy. She knows she is reconditioning herself, re-educating herself. It's hard work. It's painful. But every so often she feels that the depressions are passing away just that little bit quicker, that they are never quite so deep, that she is no longer so suffocated by them. The moods, once so solid, now seem more soft. She feels a general lifting towards calmness, peace and joy.

The Inward Glance

Unfortunately, the Buddha neither discovered nor offered a quick magic cure. It's all hard persistent work. Jill knows that this technique, based on awareness, has to be regular and constant. She trains herself into the habit of the inward glance. Moving from room to room means opening and shutting doors. In that

small moment, that break in closing the door, she pauses to look inwards, take stock and lets go of whatever mood was built up in the room she's left. She clears her heart and mind, returns to an equilibrium. Walking down corridors and up stairs, during tea breaks and natural breaks, she sees in them all occasions for this gentle self-monitoring. This continual effort to let go of negative states of mind. This continual effort to establish self-awareness. And then the turning outwards to being aware of all that is around. Jill knows now from personal experience that keeping this awareness, making these sorts of decisions, leads to equanimity and clarity of mind. Her depressions come and go, but she's no longer depressed by them. In time even her depressions will pass away.

The Diary

An extension of this continual process of self-monitoring which is simply a way of being in touch with ourselves and of getting to know ourselves better is to keep a diary. There are many ways to keep a diary, but the purpose of keeping this diary is to heighten one's self-knowledge and to use it to encourage oneself in spiritual training. Writing can often get things off your chest. Writing about an occasion that upset us, we can ask, what was it that actually got me upset. Why did it do so? Was it a rational response? Did the response help the other, the situation, me? What would be a better response in the future?

For instance, I knew someone who was having problems with his child. He talked about how unruly and angry the child was. As he talked he happened to mention that he often got quite angry with the child. When we discussed it, it occurred to us that maybe the child was simply reacting to his anger and even modelling himself on his father's behaviour, as any dutiful child should! A lot of the problems passed when he changed his behaviour. Perhaps if he had kept a diary, he might have been able to make this connection between the child's behaviour and his own before it became a problem.

The Tough Nut

Now that we have established as it were, a basic disposition towards daily life, we can be more proactive. We can take the offensive. We can search for techniques which will enhance our lives the more. The first one is to tackle the Tough Nut. Everyone has a habit or personality trait they would dearly love to lose. It could be a strong habit such as smoking or a social nuisance such as a loud voice or always opinionating. The first is to make the resolution to change. Then we need to use our self-observation techniques and here a diary is very useful in order to observe when, where and with whom the habit is likely to occur. As we come to know the occasions of the habit, we can form strategies, firstly so that we are not overcome by the habit and secondly so that we can undermine its hold on us.

My father used to be a heavy smoker, forty cigarettes a day and the full-blooded, thick tar stuff. He used to sing in a choir, but had to stop for continual sore throats. The doctor even then (this is over sixty years ago mind!) advised him to stop smoking if he wanted a long singing life. He did. And he hit the habit where it hurt most. The one cigarette most difficult to abandon was the one after lunch when he would sit and relax and perhaps doze. Since he came home for lunch, he decided instead of smoking and instead of getting

irritable with others, he'd take it out on the piano. Not only has he never smoked since, but he also became a dab hand at the piano. This is positive action. It hurts. We've got to work at it. But it does work!

What are the factors involved? Firstly that insight into the harm of any particular habit. Then the resolute determination to change. Then the strategy. And most important, the prize! Always make sure there's a present at the end. My father returned to the choir he loved.

Developing Goodwill

But it's not only against our negative side we must take the offensive, we need also to put energy into the better sides of our personalities. Firstly we need to set the mind onto positive from the first moment of the day. After the morning meditation practice, Metta should be practiced. Metta means goodwill, benevolence, open-heartedness, kindness, care: a universal, impartial love. Again it is by making this inner decision, talking to oneself, suggesting to oneself a better way to be, convincing oneself, that the ground for resolute determination is established. By setting the mind at goodwill, once negative states have been allowed to pass, that goodwill will automatically arise. This goodwill then stands as barrier to any habitual negative responses such as anger. It allows the heart to feel things from the other's point of view.

Now in this practice, it is very important to be able to offer love to oneself. At first most people think this is selfish. But actually it's self-care. It's the difference between cooking a well-balanced meal for oneself, and spending £50 on a beef Stroganoff à la nouvelle cuisine. Knowing the difference between self-care and self-indulgence is crucial to undercutting any feelings of hate we might have towards ourselves. Just as we can care and comfort others, so we can care and comfort ourselves. Just as we encourage and support others, so we should encourage and support ourselves. In this vein, it is good practice to take one of the Perfections as a special practice.

Maybe it's patience. I'm impatient with others and myself. I'm easily irritated and angered. So let this be my special practice. As we develop one Perfection, we shall discover that the whole personality is affected and all the other Perfections are also enhanced. Since our personalities and relationships are all interdependent and interrelated, this bettering of me inside myself will begin to better my relationships with others, allowing others in turn to develop their relationship towards me.

Inclining towards Nibbana

So far we have talked on a psychological and social level. But how does all this lead to spiritual insight, to the experience of the supramundane, of what there is beyond the psychological and the social, beyond the body and mind? This whole process, this continual effort is all to do with purifying the mind. When the mind is pure, the Spiritual Faculties can emerge and intuitive knowledge arise. These faculties are confidence, effort, concentration, awareness and wisdom. In fact, these faculties can come together at any time whatsoever. That momentary concentration of these factors, when they are all balanced is known as *Khanika Samadhi*. It is a well-known phenomena in the scriptures.

A laywoman became Sotapanna on intuiting anicca, transience, in the crackling of her baking bread. Ananda, the Buddha's attendant, attained arahatship, while placing his head on the pillow to go to sleep. A modern meditation teacher intuited anicca, the fundamental impermanence of the universe, while watching a dog pass by. This moment is beyond our personal control. It simply happens when all the conditions are ripe. We don't have to worry about it at all. It will arise of its own at any time, while doing anything. The Nibbanic experience is beyond conditions and arises when the factors conducive to its arising are mature. We cannot make it happen anymore than we can make ourselves forget something. It happens naturally as a consequence of all our endeavours to train in the Perfections and to remain mindful.

In this connection, let me add that to be aware and alert is not necessarily to be self-aware. In Insight Vipassana Meditation, once the concentration is high, all we know is the process of the breath. Up until that moment we were aware of ourselves being the objective observers. When that objective observer vanishes, and all we know is the process of breath, then that is the sort of pure awareness we need to achieve insight. This can't be brought about by an act of will. The observer cannot make itself vanish. It happens quite naturally once the concentration and focus are developed enough.

So it is in ordinary daily life. I might be doing a mental task, such as writing a letter or physical task, such as mowing the lawn. At first, since I'm trying to do the jobs mindfully, I might be aware of myself. But as I give myself to the task, I lose this self-awareness, awareness of a 'me'. Sometimes when we've done a job, we're amazed at how time has flown. It seems to have gone like a shot. We end up cutting the whole lawn or writing the whole letter perfectly and without once being actually aware of a 'me' doing them. They were just done. This is a highly developed state of concentrated awareness and it is in such moments as these that the Factors of Enlightenment can become developed and balanced enough to give insight. No-one can manufacture this moment, because the 'one' means that self, that ego which is lost in such moments. So don't try, just do!

At the End of the Day

So now we are at the end of the day. A good practice is to spend some time before falling asleep in bringing the whole day to mind. Here, the diary is useful. Note all the times when mindfulness was lost - when, where and with whom. See if anything can be done to put right any unfortunate consequences of mindlessness if there are any. If nothing can be done, then accept the consequences totally. What's the point of worry and sorrow? Acceptance is all that is needed and of course, the resolution not let such a thing happen again.

Recall moments of mindfulness, of joy, of friendliness, of handling a tricky situation well. Congratulate yourself. Then bring tomorrow to mind and determine to continue your efforts.

Finally, in bed, go to sleep with the mind rested, contented on having done your best. What more can be asked. And gently follow the breathing.

The Joy of Practice

So there we have it. The meditative life! Our objective, full-time awareness, supported by the techniques of creating space, self recollection, positive action and, of course, our sitting meditation which now comes into its true role of training the mind to develop effort, concentration and mindfulness.

It is recommended to practise vipassana early morning in order to establish our centre for the day and in the evening to allow any unwholesome emotions to be defused. Forty-five minutes will do. An hour is better. But even ten minutes is better than none. These silent times will nurture the whole day with their quiet awareness.

When we live the meditative life, our view of living changes. To live is to experience. Life is no longer a sequence of successes and failures. Life is no longer loaded with the heavy judgements of good and bad, right and wrong. Since now we see life as experience, we are looking at what is healthy, wholesome, skilful and getting away from the unhealthy, the unwholesome, the unskilful. We need to be athletes, training for the real marathon - life itself. For most of us over 70 years and over difficult terrain! What is more, each moment is not just the training, but the testing ground too.

The Buddha asked us to be an island unto ourselves, a refuge unto ourselves. He wanted us to take the Dhamma, the Teaching, the Truth as our refuge. We have within each of us the potential to achieve the highest peace and joy. Not simply the joy and peace of a meditative life, but that peace beyond peace - Nibbana.

His final advice was:

Everything is transient, work diligently for your liberation.

Life is passing!

No time to fuff about!

Our goals must be set.

All that's left is work.

So we'd better get on with it!

This is the real work of our lives.

The work of our own true liberation.

those meditators who delight in ever present mindfulness

and look with fear upon heedlessness

are not liable to fall into unskilful behaviour

they are in the presence of Nibbana!

DAILYLIFECARE

AIMS

Establish Satipanya in Sitting Meditation.

Establish Satipanya in Ordinary Daily Life.

Develop the Perfections.

OBJECTIVES

Full-time Awareness

Be mindful of all activities, especially the habitual

- eating, toiletry, routine tasks

Do things a little slower and more deliberately

Be attentive to all communication, especially the usual

- partner, children, fellow workers

: no need to respond immediately

: when really listening, a pause occurs naturally

Sitting Meditation – Morning

Put real effort into the Vipassana

- especially the opening attempt to be concentrated

Be sure to spend at least five minutes developing Metta

Before you get up:

acknowledge any negative attitudes

resolve not to allow them to hijack you

develop positive attitudes especially to the disliked

choose a negative mental attitude or state you are going to 'letgo of throughout the day

choose a Perfection or virtue you wish to work on throughout the day

e.g. practice patience towards some one

Creating Space

Do one job at a time

e.g. reading the mail in the morning, do it attentively and make deliberate decisions about it rather than eating your muesli and talking to the family while you turn blue over the gas bill

leads to –concentration

Pause between every task or event

do a task or what you can do of it completely stop! mentally put the finished task aside create, if only for a moment, silence allow the mind to settle look within and know the mental state then bring the mind to the new task

Make a conscious intention Then do it.

leads to –efficiency

After an event, allow the reaction to subside

e.g. if you miss the alarm and get up late watch your reaction of anxiety and haste

if the reaction continues throughout the day, just know it is there and carry on attentively

leads to -calmness

Self - Recollection

use the inward glance to know what state of mind you are in and then respond a continual self-monitoring stops moods and emotions from snowballing

find regular times in the day to practice this

opening and closing of doors walking along corridors, up stairs tea-break and natural breaks

leads to -equanimity and clarity of mind

The Tough Nut

everyone has a particular habit or personality trait they would like to change or eradicate

study it as it occurs - when, where, with whom find strategies to cope so you are not highjacked

Positive Attitude

Metta meditation, not just at sitting timewait for negative moods to pass then direct Metta to the object, person or self

constantly set your intention at 'goodwill'

Khanika Samadhi

This is a moment to moment state of concentrated intuitive awareness- Satipanya - which is able to perceive ultimate realities. It can come at any time as it did to one of the disciples of the Buddha who, while attending to the bread in the oven, intuited the characteristic of transience - anicca - in the crackling. We can't make this happen. It happens naturally. It is the happy outcome of our effort to remain simply mindful. When we are fully concentrated on our work and have lost all 'self' awareness, this also has great potential for spiritual insight.

END OF THE DAY

Sitting Meditation – evening

make a special effort especially after a hard day important in order to let go of the day's accumulations and ensure restful sleep

Use a diary for reflection write what comes to mind for 15 min. every evening don't think about what you are going to write just 'splurge' and then put it away

don't read it after you have finished

at the end of a week, read all the writings and draw your own conclusions

recall moments of mindlessness note when, where, and with whom note if anything can be done to put right any unfortunate consequences determine to do so if nothing can be done accept the consequences totally

recall moments of mindfulness successes in dealing with tricky situations and with negative states

congratulate yourself!

At bedtime

determine to fulfill your goals tomorrow determine to wake with the alarm maintain mindfulness from that moment onwards put your mind upon the breath or body sensations or practice Metta

P U J A

Buddham pujemi

Dhammam pujemi

Sangham pujemi

I bow to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha

VANDANA

HOMAGE

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa!

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa!

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa!

Homage the Blessed, Noble and the Fully Self-Enlightened One!

TISARANA

THE THREE REFUGES

Buddham saranam gacchami

I go to the Buddha as my Refuge

Dhammam saranam gacchami

I go to the Dhamma as my Refuge

Sangham saranam gacchami

I go to the Sangha as my Refuge

Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami...(repeat)

For the second time I go the Buddha.... as my Refuge

Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami....(repeat)

For the third time..... as my Refuge

PANCA SILA

THE FIVE TRAINING RULES

Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami

I undertake the training rule to abstain from killing any livingbeing

Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami

I undertake the training rule not to take that which is not freely given

Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami

I undertake the training rule to abstain from sexual misconduct

Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami

I undertake the training rule to abstain from wrong speech

Sura meraya majja pamadatthana

veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami

I undertake the training rule not to take substances that cloud the mind

Vipassana Gatha

VIPASSANA VERSES

All conditioned things are impermanent

When this is perceived with wisdom

One becomes disenchanted with what cannot satisfy

Just this is the Path of Purification.

All conditioned things are unsatisfactory

When this is perceived with wisdom

One becomes disenchanted with what cannot satisfy

Just this is the Path of Purification.

All conditioned things and the Unconditioned are insubstantial

When this is perceived with wisdom

One becomes disenchanted with what cannot satisfy

Just this is the Path of Purification.

Those meditators who delight in ever-present mindfulness

And look with fear upon heedlessness

Are not liable to fall into unskillful behaviour

They are in the presence of Nibbana.

All conditioned things have the nature to decay.

Work diligently for your liberation.

[Last words of the Buddha - Parinibbana Sutta] I determine to make this day a day of moment to moment mindfulness. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu! (Well-done!) Metta Goodwill Offer worldly and spiritual blessing to: someone whom you have warm regard for those who are near and dear friends, people at work, neighbours ... oneself Having established metta, begin to radiate it outwards to: all those in the room/house all in the surround the whole country all people on earth Putting a phrase in one's heart which most expresses the quality you wish to develop and share, radiate it outwards to all beings in all directions. VIPASSANA GUIDELINES Whatever the sitting posture, it should be comfortable and fulfill three conditions - an energised spine with its natural curvature, the rest of the body relaxed and the head poised on top. The hands are placed on the lap and the eyes are gently closed. Then the attention is fixed on the process of breathing - just the normal and natural breath. It is the sensations at the abdomen caused by breathing which are to be observed. And a noting word is used to focus the thinking mind onto these sensations. As the abdomen rises, the word 'rising' is repeated. As it falls, 'falling'. And in the gap before the in-breath begins again, a feeling in the body is felt and observed, using the noting word 'touching'. When the mind is somewhat steady, the attention should be allowed to observe whatever draws it within the field of awareness - sensations and feelings, moods and emotions, mental images and thoughts. Using a simple word to note and without any interference whatsoever, all these passing phenomena are to be directly experienced and carefully observed. Should the mind wander, let it be brought back gently but firmly to observe sensations at the abdomen in order to cultivate a sharp attentiveness. In this way, right awareness with intuitive intelligence - SATIPANYA - becomes established. This bare attentiveness — simply watching all that arises and passes away This choiceless awareness — that does not control or manipulate This impartial observation — that does not judge or question This intuitive introspection — fully experiencing each physical, emotional and mental event as it really is, leads to the realization that everything is impermanent and insubstantial and that to identify with or to become attached to anything whatsoever, will bring dissatisfaction. These VIPASSANA-INSIGHTS into the Three Characteristics of Existence, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self - ANICCA, DUKKHA, ANATTA - lead to the complete liberation from all suffering, the experience of the Unborn, the Unbecome, the Uncreated, the Unconditioned; Refuge, Harbour and Home; Perfect Contentment and Peace. Those who are mindful are in the presence of Nibbana. The Buddha SADHU! SADHU! SADHU! ESTABLISHING SATIPANYA. Posture Sit comfortably. Energise the spine. Sit tall. Let the rest of the body relax. The head gently poised on top. Natural easy breathing. If you change posture in a sitting, do so mindfully, slowly, noting all the movements, or it will disturb your concentration. If you find yourself sagging, put more energy into the spine. If the neck or back begins to ache, check the posture, but also that you're not putting 'wrong effort'

into the practice, causing tension. You may use a cushion or a meditation stool, but only those with physical problems should use a chair.. Breathing Process Observe the rising and falling of the abdomen. Should you be concentrating elsewhere e.g. at the nostrils, please make sure you receive instruction. Concentrate on the exact beginning of the inbreath, stay steady throughout the whole middle process and catch the exact end. Concentrate on the exact beginning of the outbreath, stay steady throughout the whole middle process and catch the exact end. In the gap before the inbreath begins, become aware of a particular feeling or the feeling of the whole posture and again concentrate on the abdomen as soon as the inbreath starts again.. Feelings and Sensations of the Body Do not search for them. Allow them, whether from the outside (such as hearing) or from the inside to draw your attention and observe them with the same acute, energetic watchfulness with which you observe the sensations caused by the breath process, using appropriate noting words.. Emotions and Moods These are felt in the body as feelings. As with all sensations, note and observe them carefully.. Wandering: Talking: Fantasising Mind As soon as you wake from a daydream, acknowledge it with a noting word and plunge into the body and see if you can feel the emotion which is causing the restlessness of mind. If it is too subtle to catch, then resolve to stay with the breath process. If the whole day is spent doing this, it is not wasted. This is the training we must do with calm but firm perseverance.. Walking Meditation Use the first 15 minutes or so as exercise, walking as fast as you wish, noting - left ... right. Then begin to walk slowly, noting- lifting ... moving ... lowering. Continue to slow down, noting- lifting ... moving ... lowering ... placing. Return to the sitting posture at a speed that will not undermine the strength of concentration you've developed. Attention is to be placed on the feelings in the foot. And don't forget to note the intention to walk and turn. If you are going very slow indeed, note - intending to step - before each step.. Daily Activity It is very important indeed to keep up continuity of practice and to note your intention before doing anything is a powerful aid. Then complete the action slowly and deliberately. The slower you go, the more you will notice. This technique is a great aid to concentration and mindfulness. Practice this all the time, even when opening and closing doors, during toiletry and while eating. Moment to moment awareness is the secret of success. The Mahasi Sayadaw Discourse on Metta- Good-will If you are wise and want to reach the state of peace, you should behave like this: You should be upright, responsible, gentle and humble. You should be easily contented and need only a few things. You should not always be busy. You should have the right sort of work. Your senses should be controlled and you should be modest. You should not be exclusively attached to only a few people. You should not do the slightest thing that a wise person could blame you for. You should always be thinking: May all beings be happy. Whatever living beings there are, be they weak or strong, big or small, large or slender, living nearby or far away, those who have already been born and those who have yet to be born, May all beings without exception be happy. You should not tell lies to each other. Do not think that anyone anywhere is of no value. Do not wish harm to anyone, not even when you are angry. Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, So you should let the warmth of your heart go out to all beings. Let your thoughts of love go through the whole world with no ill-will and no hate. Whether you are standing, walking, sitting or lying down, So long as you are awake you should develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is the noblest way to live. And if you do not fall into bad

ways, but live well and develop insight, and are no longer attached to all the desires of the senses, then truly you will never need to be reborn in this world again. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

THE TEN PERFECTIONS AND AFFIRMATIONS

1. May I be generous and be of service to others. (dana)
2. May I be morally correct and self-disciplined. (sila)
3. May I not be selfish and possessive but selfless and sacrificing. (nekkhamma)
4. May I be wise and be able to give others the benefit of my understanding. (panna)
5. May I be willing and energetic. (viriya)
6. May I be patient and quick to forgive. (khanti)
7. May I always be truthful. (sacca)
8. May I be resolute and keep my word (adhitthana)
9. May I be friendly, joyful and compassionate. (metta)
10. May I be calm and peaceful. (upekkha)

NOTES

Gift of Dhamma No other gift excels the gift of Dhamma. Give generously that others may benefit. Tapes and publications are made possible by generous donations. If you wish to support such Dhamma projects, please contact or send donations to:

I determine to make this day

a day of moment to moment mindfulness.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

(Well-done!)

Metta

Goodwill

Offer worldly and spiritual blessing to: someone whom you have warm regard for those who are near and dear friends, people at work, neighbours ... oneself

Having established metta, begin to radiate it outwards to: all those in the room/house all in the surround the whole country all people on earth

Putting a phrase in one's heart which most expresses the quality you wish to develop and share, radiate it outwards to all beings in all directions.

VIPASSANA GUIDELINES

Whatever the sitting posture, it should be comfortable and fulfill three conditions - an energised spine with its natural curvature, the rest of the body relaxed and the head poised on top. The hands are placed on the lap and the eyes are gently closed.

Then the attention is fixed on the process of breathing - just the normal and natural breath. It is the sensations at the abdomen caused by breathing which are to be observed. And a noting word is used to focus the thinking mind onto these sensations. As the abdomen rises, the word 'rising' is repeated. As it falls, 'falling'. And in the gap before the in-breath begins again, a feeling in the body is felt and observed, using the noting word 'touching'.

When the mind is somewhat steady, the attention should be allowed to observe whatever draws it within

the field of awareness - sensations and feelings, moods and emotions, mental images and thoughts. Using a simple word to note and without any interference whatsoever, all these passing phenomena are to be directly experienced and carefully observed. Should the mind wander, let it be brought back gently but firmly to observe sensations at the abdomen in order to cultivate a sharp attentiveness.

In this way, right awareness with intuitive intelligence - SATIPANYA - becomes established.

This bare attentiveness — simply watching all that arises and passes away

This choiceless awareness — that does not control or manipulate

This impartial observation — that does not judge or question

This intuitive introspection — fully experiencing each physical, emotional and mental event as it really is, leads to the realization that everything is impermanent and insubstantial and that to identify with or to become attached to anything whatsoever, will bring dissatisfaction.

These VIPASSANA-INSIGHTS into the Three Characteristics of Existence, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self - ANICCA, DUKKHA, ANATTA - lead to the complete liberation from all suffering, the experience of the Unborn, the Unbecome, the Uncreated, the Unconditioned; Refuge, Harbour and Home; Perfect Contentment and Peace.

Those who are mindful are in the presence of Nibbana.

The Buddha

SADHU! SADHU! SADHU!

ESTABLISHING SATIPANYA

. Posture

Sit comfortably. Energise the spine. Sit tall. Let the rest of the body relax. The head gently poised on top. Natural easy breathing. If you change posture in a sitting, do so mindfully, slowly, noting all the movements, or it will disturb your concentration. If you find yourself sagging, put more energy into the spine. If the neck or back begins to ache, check the posture, but also that you're not putting 'wrong effort' into the practice, causing tension. You may use a cushion or a meditation stool, but only those with physical problems should use a chair.

. Breathing Process

Observe the rising and falling of the abdomen. Should you be concentrating elsewhere e.g. at the nostrils, please make sure you receive instruction. Concentrate on the exact beginning of the inbreath, stay steady throughout the whole middle process and catch the exact end. Concentrate on the exact beginning of

the outbreath, stay steady throughout the whole middle process and catch the exact end. In the gap before the inbreath begins, become aware of a particular feeling or the feeling of the whole posture and again concentrate on the abdomen as soon as the inbreath starts again.

. Feelings and Sensations of the Body

Do not search for them. Allow them, whether from the outside (such as hearing) or from the inside to draw your attention and observe them with the same acute, energetic watchfulness with which you observe the sensations caused by the breath process, using appropriate noting words.

. Emotions and Moods

These are felt in the body as feelings. As with all sensations, note and observe them carefully.

. Wandering: Talking: Fantasising Mind

As soon as you wake from a daydream, acknowledge it with a noting word and plunge into the body and see if you can feel the emotion which is causing the restlessness of mind. If it is too subtle to catch, then resolve to stay with the breath process. If the whole day is spent doing this, it is not wasted. This is the training we must do with calm but firm perseverance.

. Walking Meditation

Use the first 15 minutes or so as exercise, walking as fast as you wish, noting - left ... right. Then begin to walk slowly, noting - lifting ... moving ... lowering. Continue to slow down, noting - lifting ... moving ... lowering ... placing. Return to the sitting posture at a speed that will not undermine the strength of concentration you've developed. Attention is to be placed on the feelings in the foot. And don't forget to note the intention to walk and turn. If you are going very slow indeed, note - intending to step - before each step.

. Daily Activity

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Discourse on Metta - Good-will

If you are wise and want to reach the state of peace, you should behave like this: You should be upright, responsible, gentle and humble. You should be easily contented and need only a few things. You should not always be busy. You should have the right sort of work. Your senses should be controlled and you should be modest. You should not be exclusively attached to only a few people. You should not do the slightest thing that a wise person could blame you for. You should always be thinking: May all beings be happy. Whatever

living beings there are, be they weak or strong, big or small, large or slender, living nearby or far away, those who have already been born and those who have yet to be born, May all beings without exception be happy. You should not tell lies to each other. Do not think that anyone anywhere is of no value. Do not wish harm to anyone, not even when you are angry. Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, So you should let the warmth of your heart go out to all beings. Let your thoughts of love go through the whole world with no ill-will and no hate. Whether you are standing, walking, sitting or lying down, So long as you are awake you should develop this mindfulness.

This, they say, is the noblest way to live. And if you do not fall into bad ways, but live well and develop insight, And are no longer attached to all the desires of the senses, Then truly you will never need to be reborn in this world again.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

THE TEN PERFECTION

DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

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