

Meditation Skill 03: Skill of Softening Into

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Summary

You bring your softening skill to the next level by accessing the subtle pleasure that arises as your body relaxes and bringing it into your mind. This is the beginning of cultivating pleasure of letting go, abandoning effort, in order to develop 'mindful non-participation'.

Mindful non-participation is a structure of attention that neither grasps onto nor pushes away any experience.

By allowing yourself to mentally relax with the deflation of each out-breath, a naturally tendency towards letting go will be trained within your mind. As letting go grows, stillness will arise.

Your ability to soften will allow you to be with difficult experiences without reacting to them during mindfulness of breathing and in daily life.

It is important when softening to tune into the subtle pleasure that arises both in your body and mind with each letting go, abandoning of effort. Gently smiling into this pleasure with your eyes will allow it to enter and grow within your mind as meditative joy.

The word 'borrow' means to align your awareness with the subtle pleasure of the relaxation of each out-breath, and to borrow it in the same way that you would borrow the momentum when pushing a swing in a park.

Just as you align your momentum with the momentum of the swing when pushing it to borrow that momentum; you align your awareness with the subtle pleasure of the relaxation of your body with each out-breath, to borrow the subtle pleasure of relaxation.

Detailed Instructions

What You Are Learning this Lesson

To bring deep relaxation to your mind with slow softening breaths.

Create Your Posture for Meditation

Begin meditation by sitting comfortably on a chair or the floor. Seated, place the tips of your fingers below your belly button and slightly press in.

Allow your eyelids to gently close over and relax, feeling that relaxation and bring to mind the purpose of this meditation: to bring deep relaxation to your body with slow softening breaths.

1. Breathe from Your Belly into Your Chest

Seated, with your hands resting in your lap, take a gentle breath in from below your belly button and gradually move that breath up so that your chest inflates like a balloon. Feel your body gently stretch from the inside outwards like a yoga stretch.

Tune into how good it feels, the subtle pleasure of it.

2. Physically Relax with each Deflation

(Repeat 10 times with step 2)

As your body deflates with the out-breath relax your chest, shoulders and upper back. Abandon all effort with each deflation. The key is to borrow the natural deflation of your body by aligning your awareness with the movement of the out-breath, not to control the breathing itself.

There is an inherent pleasure of relaxation, as sense of ease, of release, that can be accessed every time your body deflates with each out-breath.

Begin to cultivate the Enlightenment Factor of Joy by accessing the subtle pleasure of that release, the letting go of effort in your body.

3. Mentally Relax with each Deflation

(Repeat 10 times with Step 2 & 3)

Now add one extra stage to bring the relaxation of your body into your mind. Concurrent with the deflation of each out-breath, focus on the centre of your forehead and extend the length of the breath through your nose by slowing it down.

Deeply feel the mental relaxation in that slow release of breath.

Make each out-breath more gentle, slow and calm.

Allow yourself to feel the subtle pleasure of this relaxation, the feeling of mentally sinking along the length of each breath. Smile into this subtle pleasure with your eyes, allow the subtle pleasure of letting go to gradually enter your mind and dissolve all mental effort.

4. Allow Your Breathing to Calm Naturally

(15 minutes)

Once mental relaxation develops give up all effort and allow your breathing to become gentle and natural. Relax your breathing until all effort has dissolved.

Bring awareness to the centre of your chest and be aware of the gentle stretch of your body as the breath draws in, like a yoga stretch.

Tune into how nice it feels.

Experience the deflation of each out-breath as it occurs naturally by itself, tuning into the subtle pleasure available in each deflation, each natural release. Breath comes in, feel the gentle stretch, breath goes of access the pleasure of releasing, letting go.

Allow your mind to become settled and still. Smile into this subtle pleasure with your eyes, allow it to fill your mind as the joy of letting go, the happiness and contentment of release.

Play with how little effort you can put into your breathing.

Slightly slow down each out-breath through your nose and see if you can experience any relaxation within the area of the frontal lobes of your brain. Observe, how when this area of the frontal lobes relaxes, that all thinking stops, mental activity settles down, and softness enters your mind.

Be curious regarding:

- Learn what it means to give up all effort within your mind while maintaining clear knowing of the pleasure of letting go.
- Learn what it means to access the subtle pleasure of your body as it relaxes and to allow this pleasure, sense of ease to enter your mind.
- Learn what it means to align your awareness with the pleasure of letting go, of giving up, of releasing of effort within your body and mind.