

# Meditation Skill 04: Cultivate Skill in Mindfulness

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## Summary

Your first meditation object for mindfulness of breathing is the simple experience of your thumbs touching each other. By keeping this simple experience within your mind, continuously remembering it, you will develop the strength and continuity of your mindfulness.

## How to Structure Your Attention Training

Below are some options you can use Experiential Marker 1: Remember the Touch of your Thumbs to stimulate mindfulness and cultivate insight during meditation.

### Your First Session

Learn to feel what a 'stream of remembering' feels like when keeping the simple experience of one point of touch in mind. Learn to subtly adjust your effort to find balance between restlessness and dullness.

### Your Second Session

Use some softening breaths before this session and tune into the subtle pleasure of your body as it relaxes. Smile with your eyes and bring this pleasure to mind. Learn to keep this subtle pleasure of relaxing in your mind while remembering the simple experience of touch. Observe what happens.

## Your Third Session

Make this a game. Try to notice whenever you forget the simple experience of touch. Each time you notice you have forgotten do three things:

1. Soften awareness within your body and feel the presence.
2. Observe what it feels like now that mindfulness has returned.
3. Reflect on what it felt like to have forgotten you were meditating.
4. Reset the game.

# Detailed Meditation Instructions

## What You Are Learning this Lesson

EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 1: Remember the touch of your thumbs.

### 1) Create Your Posture for Meditation

Begin your meditation by sitting comfortably on a chair or the floor. Palms resting one on the other in your lap, thumbs lightly touching in the middle as a grounding point for attention.

Take some slow softening breaths to relax, as you learnt in Meditation Skill 03, and notice how it makes you more mindful and present. Then bring to mind the purpose for this meditation: to train your ability to keep one simple object in mind.

### 2) Create Your Posture of Attention

Once you have created your physical posture create your posture of attention. Use some slow softening breaths to relax awareness deeply into your body. Be curious in regard to what it means to soften into your body by letting go of all effort. Observe how curiosity and mindfulness naturally establish through softening.

Tune into the subtle pleasure that arises within your body as you soften, as you let go, gently smiling with your eyes, allowing this subtle pleasure to enter your mind. Observe how maintaining sensitivity this subtle pleasure of letting go balances energy and stabilises attention.

### 3) Bring Awareness to the Touch of Your Thumbs

Experiential Marker 1 begins here.

Once you are ready to begin training your attention, become aware of your hands resting in your lap and the feeling of your thumbs touching each other.

Just that one point of touch.

Being careful to keep the point of touch relaxed, free from pressure. To settle any initial mental tension, take some slow softening breaths, and relax your effort to be aware of the point of touch.

Just keeping it gently in mind.

### 4) Notice Whenever Your Attention Wanders

Whenever you notice that you have forgotten what you are doing or that your attention has wandered, use a gentle softening breath and simply bring it back to the point of touch.

It is important to remember that wandering of your attention and forgetting you are meditating are not personal, they are simply mental habit. Like any other habit they can be retrained through precise, patient repetition, you just need to be clear in what you are training your mind to do.

## Important Note on Habitual Forgetting

Habitual forgetting is the experience of transitioning from knowing your present experience, to not forgetting you are meditating, to remembering again.

### Important points:

\*Habitual Forgetting is the transition from mindfulness to habitual delusion.

\*Habitual Forgetting is not the shift of attention from the touch of your thumbs to a sound, thought etc. Even though your attention wanders, if the point of touch is still somewhere in your awareness, even if it is feint, you have not forgotten, the centre of your attention has simply shifted.

\*When Habitual Forgetting has occurred, you will forget the touch of your thumbs and become lost in a mind created world for a period of time.

\*When you overcome Habitual Forgetting your attention will still wander, you will still have thoughts, but you will know that they are occurring without forgetting your meditation object - the point of touch. This is an important distinction.

### Example:

An example of Habitual Forgetting in daily life is when you are driving a car and suddenly realise you have travelled two blocks or driven past your turnoff without being aware of it.

You were present driving, you forgot you were driving, and your mind slipped into habitual delusion. It then habitually drove the car for you while you were doing more useful things, like thinking about what you will do when you arrive at your destination. Then something suddenly jolts you back into your body, into the car, like the sound of a horn, or a sight of movement up head.

This is the experience of habitual delusion, it happens all the time in daily life, it needs to be understood and deconditioned in meditation as it is the barrier to continuous mindfulness.

## Investigation

Learn what it is like to keep a simple object in mind, establish a stream of remembering that your thumbs are touching.

In the same way that you would hold a remembering of where you parked your car in a shopping mall in short term memory you keep a continuous remembering that you are being aware of this touch within your mind.

You are training your short-term memory to keep a simple object in mind, until you decide to drop it. It is the ability to hold an experience within short term memory, the ability to remember it without forgetting, that is important.

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