

Meditation Skill 05: Cultivate Skill in Focussing

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Summary

Awareness has the ability to focus, just like the lens on a camera. It can focus closely in on one thing, or it can zoom out, to take in a greater range of experience.

As an insight meditator, it is an advantage to be able to change the focus of your awareness at will. However, due to habit, there may be a tendency for your mind to prefer one field of focus, over another.

It is the purpose of this meditation to address any deficiencies within your attention.

Once corrected, you can use this newfound skill in three different ways:

- 1) You can change the focus of your awareness from narrow to wide, to settle restlessness, and rebalance energy. Widening awareness disperses energy and gives the restless mind space to run. This can be used in a more subtle way to balance effort.
- 2) You can hold multiple layers of awareness, within one field of attention. When the mind produces distraction, it first arises in background awareness. If you find it interesting, it will bring it to foreground awareness, and shift your meditation object into the background. The meditation object will then fade, and if not noticed will drop from awareness. Noticing this, you can shift your meditation object into the foreground again.
- 3) You can establish mindfulness in daily life and observe your minds habitual tendency to focus in when attracted or averse, by maintaining wide awareness throughout the day.

Detailed Instructions

Your Meditation so Far

Experiential Markers:

- Create your meditation posture
- MARKER 1: Remember the Touch of Your Thumbs.

You now join Marker 1, Marker 2, and Marker 3 sequentially together to create a grounding point for your attention during mindfulness of breathing

What You Are Learning this Lesson

- EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 2: Tuning Into the Experience of the Room.
- EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 3: Your Body as it Sits in Meditation.

1) Narrow Awareness of The Touch of Your Thumbs

Now you train the focus of your awareness between three focusses: narrow, wide, middle.

(Narrow: 1 minute)

MARKER 1

Bring awareness to your hands resting in your lap: warmth, coolness, pressure. Slowly narrowing it to your thumbs touching each other. Keeping this narrow focus of awareness on one point of touch, within your mind for a period of time.

2) Wide Awareness of The Room Around You

(Wide: 1 minute)

MARKER 2

Opening awareness wide to experience the whole room. Listening to sounds, feeling the air on your skin. The general experience of just being here. Keeping this wide focus of awareness within your mind.

3) Middle Awareness of Your Whole Body

EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 1 BEGINS HERE

(Medium: 1 minute)

MARKER 3

Next, you bring awareness to the experience of your body as it sits. Feeling all the different sensations within your body: warmth, coolness, heaviness, touch. Your whole body as one, just sitting here. Keeping this middle focus of awareness within your mind.

4) Slowly Cycle Through Each Focus

(15 minutes)

You then continue to slowly cycle between those three layers of focus: narrow, wide and middle. Gradually extending the amount of time you spend on each focus. Mentally feeling the individual experience of each. Making each layer of focus steadier. Aiming to become comfortable transitioning between these three focuses.

Notice When Your Attention Wanders

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

ADVANCED: Hold Three Layers in One Focus

After 10 minutes, you stop cycling between the three layers of focus. Then resting awareness on just the touch of your thumbs. When this is steady, you open awareness to your whole body, while still aware of your thumbs.

Then you open awareness to the room around you, while still being aware of your body, and the touch of your thumbs. Keeping these three layers of focus in mind, as one focus. If your attention wanders towards sounds or thoughts, you simply re-establish the three layers of focus again.

Investigation

Play with how little effort you can put into holding each of the three grounding points within your awareness. Observe your mind's habitual relationship towards the change in the focus between each point. Learn what it means to relax any resistance within your mind towards intentionally changing focus between these three points. Take interest in the habitual focusing of your awareness towards thinking. Take interest in any forgetting and remembering and reflect on the periods of knowing and unknowing.