

Meditation Skill 06: Cultivate Skill in Grounding

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Summary

Function: Grounding awareness within your body.

Once you are confident in your ability to meditate using Marker 1, 2 and 3, it is time to include your fourth meditation object, the various sensations within your body: warmth, coolness, tension, heaviness, pressure etc.

Marker 4 arises as awareness softens into the body until the idea of my body dissolves and all that is left is awareness immersed within bodily sensation, creating a grounding point for awareness. The purpose of grounding awareness is to create a reference point from which to observe attention habitually move.

This is not only the basis for insight, but also a counter for the mind's tendency to dwell in past, or future. Observing habitual movements of attention from a grounding point, also has another advantage: it develops a clear perception of anatta, in relation to mind.

To create a grounding point, you need to continuously bring awareness to a present experience, until it immerses within it. Once immersed, awareness is considered grounded, and can be used for cultivating flexible attention and insight.

This grounding however can be temporary, in terms of meditation, or permanent, when immersion within the body becomes habitual.

The Buddha called this Kaya-gata-sati: mindfulness immersed within the body. When creating a grounding point, it is essential to bring awareness to the sensate quality of an experience. For example: the warmth of your body can be a grounding point.

Also, the pressure of the touch of your hands, the hardness of your body resting on the floor, or the heaviness of your body as it relaxes, are all potential grounding points.

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

Detailed Instructions

Your Meditation So Far

Experiential Markers:

- Create your meditation posture
- MARKER 1: Remember the Touch of Your Thumbs.
- MARKER 2: Tuning Into the Experience of the Room.
- MARKER 3: Your Body as it Sits in Meditation.

You now join Marker 1, Marker 2, Marker 3 and Marker 4 sequentially together to create a grounding point for your attention during mindfulness of breathing.

What You Are Learning this Lesson

EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 4: Awareness Grounded Within Body

Gently Soften Into Sensations in Your Body

EXPERIENTIAL MARKER 4

Begin to soften and relax awareness into your body, becoming aware of any sensations present. Relax into sounds, into warmth, coolness and touch. Relax all effort.

Tune into the subtle pleasure of this letting go, its sense of ease.

Smile into this subtle pleasure with your eyes, allow it to enter your mind as the joy of letting go, the happiness of release.

As your body truly relaxes a feeling of heaviness will arise throughout it. Tune into the subtle pleasure of this feeling of complete relaxation. Nowhere to be. nothing to do, easy. Adjust your bodies alignment with the pull of gravity if needed and then soften further into your body until awareness and the presence of your body become one.

It is important to note that this is done in a general, relaxed way, and is not about precisely identifying sensations but rather about grounding awareness within them through a process of softening and letting go. It needs to be an enjoyable experience for awareness to completely immerse and rest within bodily sensations. Accessing the subtle pleasure of abandoning is the key.

Learn to Observe Attention Habitually Wander

(15 minutes)

Once you have created a grounding point for your awareness within your body, relax your effort to be aware and allow your mind to habitually wander. At first you may only notice that your attention has wandered after you have already been lost within thinking. This is perfectly ok.

You are learning about the true nature of your mind. Just bring your awareness back to your body and see if you can notice whenever your mind wanders again. Play with how little effort you need to observe habitual movements of your attention away from your grounding point.

Take interest in how your mind moves seamlessly from periods of knowing that you are sitting meditation (mindfulness) and literally forgetting that you are meditating (habitual thinking). Take interest in how mindfulness returns either because you were distracted from your distraction or because mindfulness arises again, by itself.

Understanding the Minds Natural State

The wandering of your mind is natural, do not concern yourself with it. Your heart beats, your lungs breathe, and your mind thinks.

This is just its nature.

Your task as a meditator is not to stop your mind from wandering but rather to observe it. Treat this as a game. A game of developing your attention by trying to observe it move. A game that you cannot lose if you patiently come back to it again and again.

Have fun trying to notice your attention move.

Whenever you find that you have become lost within thinking just acknowledge it and become aware once again. It is that simple.

As mindfulness develops, the speed in which you notice that you have become lost within thinking will also develop. Your ability to notice whenever you have forgotten what you are doing will sharpen.

It is then helpful to start to observe what it feels like, now that mindfulness has returned and to reflect on your state of mind when you were lost within thinking. This will clarify the difference between mindfulness (remembering) and delusion (not-knowing).

This is a game of training flexibility of your attention. Of observing your mind in its natural, uncontrolled state. Each time you forget you are meditating and wander off, just acknowledge it, then hit the reset button by grounding awareness in your body again.