

Meditation Skill 10: Cultivate Skill in Acknowledging

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Summary

A label is a silent, intentional word describing your current experience, that is used both direct your attention and to clarify the experience in order to develop insight.

Labels are applied during meditation by gently repeating a simple word describing what you are experiencing.

This label may be aligned with the experience of sitting in meditation as: "sitting", "sitting".

During mindfulness of breathing as: "in, in" as the breath comes in and "out, out" as the breath goes out. While gently labelling, make sure that the labels are concurrent with the experience to increase the accuracy of attention.

Labelling is a way of saying: "This is what I am experiencing now".

Using Labels to Clarify Distraction

At some time during meditation your attention will be drawn away from your meditation object.

When this happens intentionally turn your attention towards what is distracting you and clarify this movement of attention by labelling the distraction appropriately in terms of your experience of it by using labels such as: "hearing, hearing", "thinking, thinking", "aching, aching" and so on.

If a thinking pattern arises again and again during your meditation it is, then helpful to clarify the emotional charge that is feeding it. This is done by observing and labelling the

type of thinking that is present such as: "planning, planning", "discussing, discussing", "doubting, doubting" etc.

Whatever is driving the thinking process. When you notice the emotional charge within the thinking process, we use the MIDL Softening Into skill to relax your relationship to it.

When the thought dissolves through the relaxing of our participation we then come back to the experience of your body/breathing again.

Purpose of Using Two Labels

When using labels during meditation, you should begin by bringing awareness to the experience of your meditation object. In the case of your body as it sits, you silently say: "sitting, sitting".

The first label 'sitting', points your awareness towards the experience of sitting, the second label allows you to mentally feel it.

In the case of your breathing as it flows through your body, you silently say: "in, in" as the breath draws in, and "out, out" as the breath goes out. The first label 'in', points your awareness towards what your breathing is doing, the second allows you to mentally feel it.

This process of acknowledging what you are aware of, and mentally feeling the experience of it, is the purpose of repeating it twice.

At some stage your attention will wander, this is the nature of the habitual mind. If your attention is drawn out to a sound, you silently say: "hearing, hearing"; to an itch: "itching, itching", if you feel frustrated: "frustrated, frustrated" etc.

The first label is used to acknowledge where your attention now sits, the second to mentally feel the experience of the distraction.

This is the important part.

The doorway to vipassana insight is not found by acknowledging things, but by experiencing them. It is the same process when lost within thoughts of the past or future.

When you notice that you are thinking about something, acknowledge it by silently saying "thinking, thinking", to withdraw your awareness from it.

Detailed Instructions

What You Are Learning this Lesson

To develop continuity of your attention by clarifying present experience by using labels.

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.

Establish Mindfulness on the Touch of Your Thumbs

MARKER 1

Once your body and mind have relaxed into your meditation posture, bring awareness just to the touch of your thumbs, establishing a stream of remembering on it.

Apply a gentle label by silently saying: "touching, touching".

Keep these labels relaxed with a pause between each word and notice the affect this has on the application of your attention.

Widen Awareness to the World Around You Breath

MARKER 2

Once your attention has settled on the touch of your thumbs, widen your awareness to the room around you.

What it feels like to be in this room.

The touch of air on your skin, the flow of distant sounds, the happiness of the ease that comes with nothing to do.

Apply a gentle label by silently saying: "hearing, hearing" for sounds, or "knowing, knowing", for the experience of the room. Keep these labels relaxed with a pause between each word and notice the affect this has on the application of your attention.

Become Aware of Your Body as it Sits.

MARKER 3

Once your attention has settled on the experience of the room around you, gently soften and allow your awareness to naturally narrow into the experience of your body as it sits, establishing a stream of remembering on it.

Apply a gentle label by silently saying: "sitting, sitting". Keep these labels relaxed with a pause between each word and notice the affect this has on the application of your attention.

Gently soften Into Sensations in Your Body

MARKER 4

Begin to soften and relax awareness into your body, becoming aware of any sensations present. Relax into sounds, into warmth, coolness and pressure with the chair/floor.

Apply a gentle label by silently saying: "warm, warm", "cool, cool", "pressure, pressure".

Keep these labels relaxed with a pause between each word and notice the affect this has on the application of your attention.

Observe the Natural Movement of Your Body as it Breathes.

MARKER 5

As you soften into your body, the natural flow of breathing will appear to you as a subtle movement in your body, establish a stream of remembering on it.

Know if Breath is Coming In or Going Out

MARKER 6

Notice that you can know if your breath is drawing into your body, or if it is going out again.

As the breath draws in, apply a gentle label by silently saying: "in, in", in line with the in-breath.

As the breath goes out, apply a gentle label by silently saying: "out, out", in line with the out-breath.

Establish a continuous stream of remembering regarding knowing each in, and out-breath.

Observe Your Attention Habitually Wander

Relax your effort and allow your mind to habitually wander. Whenever you notice small and gross movements of your attention, use a silent label to clarify where it wandered to.

Your attention may move to a sound, an itch, thinking etc. When it does, follow this same principal: Use a simple, silent label to describe where your attention has wandered to:

"Hearing, hearing", "itching, itching", "thinking, thinking".

Pause between each word, allowing the first word to point your attention towards the distraction, and the second to allow you to mentally feel it.

Using labels in this way, you clarify the habit of wandering and importantly, withdraw your participation from it.

This will gradually weaken this habit.

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