

Meditation Skill 12: Cultivate Skill in Experiencing

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Summary

Marker 8 arises as a natural progression of two things: continuous awareness of the length of each breath, and calming of body, breathing and mind due to deepening samadhi. This correlates with a natural resting of attention on breath sensation at the tip of the nose and development of calm.

As relaxation transforms into calm you attention will naturally transition from the flow of each breath within your body, to the sensations within the length of each breath at the tip of your nose. You will become ever more intimate with these sensations at the tip of the nose until you can clearly perceive the sensate difference between each in and out-breath.

Your task during this stage is to become so intimate with breath sensations that the very idea of breathing fades into the background.

This will occur as a natural development of calming three areas:

1. Calming of effort within your body.
2. Calming of effort within your breathing.
3. Calming of effort within your intellectual mind.

This requires developing a heightened sensitivity to the balance of effort. Too much effort and restlessness will arise, too little effort and awareness will sink into dullness.

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.

Know the Full Length of Each Breath

MARKER 7

When you can stay with the flow of each in and out breath, then see if you can notice the very moment each breath begins. To do this simply be aware of each out-breath all the way to its end, relax, and wait for the breath to draw back in by itself.

In this way the full length of each in-breath from its beginning to its middle, to its end will become clearer to you.

Once you have experienced an in-breath, relax, and wait for the out-breath to happen naturally, by itself. In this way you will be aware of the length of each out-breath.

Treat this like a game, be playful.

Be careful of over-straining at this stage, being soft and gentle in your observation. Use your softening skills to relax if you find you are becoming tight. Expanding your awareness to your whole body and watching from afar can also help with this.

Clarity of the full length of each breath develops through increasing calm and tranquility. As your mind and body calm, your ability to mindfully observe more subtle experiences will increase.

Tip: Finding the pleasure within each breath, its gentle stretch as it comes in, its natural relax as it goes out, how good it feels. This is the key to calming while maintaining alertness.

Be Aware of Sensations Within Each Breath

MARKER 8

Once you have become clearer regarding the length of each breath, go through the process of calming of excess effort to allow tranquility to develop and increase the sensitivity of your mind.

Calming of effort

Observe and relax any extra effort you are holding within your body. Since your mind is conditioned by your body, relaxing this extra effort will bring some calm to your mind. Observe this relationship.

Next observe and relax any extra effort you are holding in your breathing, allowing to become gentle and subtle. Since your mind is conditioned by your breathing, as it calms it will bring greater calm to your mind. Observe this relationship.

Then observe and calm the 'effort to do' within your mind. As the effort to do calms your attention will naturally transition from the flow of breath within your body, to sensations within each breath at the tip of your nose. Observe this relationship between calming and refined sensitivity of attention to breath sensation.

Breath sensation

The breath at the tip of the nose may be cool as the breath draws in, and warm as the breath goes out. Place gentle effort to noticing the subtle differences between each breath as it draws in and out of your nose.

Develop stability and clarity through calm not effort!

Be careful of using effort to develop clarity. Greater clarity and stability are developed through being curious regarding calm and tranquility then by trying to hold attention on each breath. The calmer mind and breathing becomes, the clearer breath sensation will be.

When calming tune into the pleasure of that calming, of letting go, abandoning of desire for sensory experience. Develop relaxed intimacy with the changing breath sensation within the length of each breath. Make this into a fun game, be playful in observation and balance of effort.