

MINDFULNESS, SAMADHI, AND ACTIVE DRAINS

We've been looking at right concentration, coming back to the now.

In this class we expanded to include mindfulness, another of the three samadhi factors.

Let's define mindfulness as staying with what's happening.

As was said earlier, if mindfulness is a light illuminating a room, concentration is the light switch.

So what's the relationship between samadhi and mindfulness? We have talked about coming back to the moment and being more fully alive, now we look at what the effects are of mindfulness (staying with what is happening) and samadhi.

Samadhi exercises : LOOKING AT ACTIVE DRAINS

In class, we did some simple exercises together, The point was to see the effect of applying concentration and mindfulness, and how that feels, versus the habitual being out of the moment and distracted. What's the lived experience of coming back to and staying in the present moment?

Just in case you missed class, or want to experiment on your own, here's an outline of the exercises. Give each one 2-4 minutes, set your timer.

EXERCISES:

1) BODY AWARENESS: Walk around the room. As you walk, mentally go through your to-do list for the next few days.

Now stop, close your eyes, and notice the energy level of the body.

What do we mean by this?

- On a gross level, how tired do you feel?
- Do you feel like you want to be somewhere else or need something else? (am ready to be back home, it's been a long day, I need a cookie right now kind of thoughts.) Or does the moment feel complete and whole just

as it is? Mentally how does the mind feel? Does it feel closed and tired, or open and creative?

- Emotionally how do you feel? Anxious? Worried? Inspired? Fresh?
- On a direct and finer level, what is the energetic vibration present in the body right now? How much communication do you have between your awareness and your body?

Now do some walking meditation, set your timer for five minutes. Focus on the body itself walking, specifically on the soles of the feet if additional focus is useful.

Now stop, close your eyes, and notice the energy level of the body.

2) SENSE EXPERIENCE AWARENESS

Go to the cupboard or fridge and pick out two of the same snack to eat, like two cookies, two strawberries, or a two cheese and crackers.

As you eat the first one, think about something that happened earlier, either today or in the last week or two. Go through it in some detail in your mind.

Now stop and notice the energy level of the body.

Now take your second portion, and eat as mindfully as possible. Notice the scent of the food, how the texture feels on the tongue. Chew thoughtfully, really tasting. Notice the impulse to swallow.

Now stop and notice the energy level of the body.

3) EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Think of something that is troubling you right now. Recall the event in some detail. Allow the mind to comment, judge, plan, argue and fix. Indulge the inner voice, let it run riot.

Now stop and notice the energy level of the body.

Now do the following:

- Acknowledge the emotion/feeling: notice it and sense it in the body
- Allow the emotion/feeling: give it plenty of inner space to be there
- Open to the emotion/feeling: receive it fully and feel it directly, without barriers or resistance
- Enter the emotions/feeling(s): Soften right into the center of it and become one with it

Now stop and notice the energy level of the body.

4) COGNITIVE OR MENTAL AWARENESS

Try to make your mind silent. Really try hard.

Now stop and notice the energy level of the body.

Now sit again, allowing the mind to do whatever it is doing. Your practice is to walk alongside it, allowing and observing.

Now stop and notice the energy level of the body.

We looked at four things: body awareness, sensual awareness, emotional awareness and mental awareness. In each case, what increased your energy level and what deflated it?

DEFLATING FACTORS

Not being in the moment, allowing ourselves to be distracted or wander in the past or future, includes:

- following reactivity
- believing the inner voice; rehearsing or justifying, judging, complaining, trying to control
- heart closing
- resisting
- more more than one thing at once

- controlling
- negativity
- fixing
- judging

ELEVATING FACTORS

Coming back and staying in the moment, includes:

- presence, feeling the richness of right now
- awareness
- more skillful ways of responding, more choices on responding to things
- calmer
- creating space
- allowing
- being myself, self acceptance
- ease
- being embodied

Let's introduce new language: let's call these deflating factors **ACTIVE DRAINS**

These are the opposite of concentration, or coming back to the moment, and mindfulness, staying with what's happening. The opposite is leaving the moment to relive the past, worry about the future, or avoid anything unpleasant in between.

In sharing, experiences were shared of being present versus active drains: Resisting or avoiding leave us depleted. Being present filled the energy tank.

Some reflections were that when we are present, the mind felt more open and new ways of responding more skillfully were available.

Another was simply being aware that one was overwhelmed by a feeling brought some perspective. Presence and acceptance brings more inner room around the slings and arrows inevitable in life. There's a reservoir of energy that allows us to feel that we can handle whatever comes up.

Referring back to the spiritual heart from last class: active drains tend to close the heart. The heart is the energy valve. When it closes, the energy flow shuts down, we feel tired. Letting active drains to run rampant in our lives, is not worth it: there is nothing that is worth closing your heart over. The cost is too much.

As we become aware of all this, and we see active drains, we stop leaking energy so much. We begin to build an inner reservoir. Over the next few weeks, explore this and see how it is for you.

NOTE: we are habitually accustomed to a default energy level. This means that when we experience more open energy states, **EVEN AS THEY ARE INFUSED WITH JOY AND CALM**, they can also feel uncomfortable and disorienting. Something in us can say, "This isn't right. This isn't me. Maybe I don't deserve this, or can't keep it. This will pass."

There's an unconscious urge back to your default level, because it is habitual and we are used to it. It takes time for something new to feel familiar. Don't be surprised if there's an urge to fall back out of the moment.

This is not unlike the scene where social service workers are removing children from a terrible home situation. As bad as it is, the children cry and scream as they are dragged out.

Like Rumi's poem:

*Muhammad says: I come before sunrise
to chain you and drag you off.
It is amazing and funny that you have
to be pulled away from being tortured,
pulled out into the Spring garden.*

But that's the way it is

*Almost everyone
must be bound and dragged here. Only a
few come on their own.*

HOMEWORK:

Check in with your energy levels from time to time during your day. When you are feeling tired, or a little gray, notice any active drains. Come back to the moment, applying mindfulness, staying with what's happening, Give it a half hour, then check in again. Where are your energy levels now?

Reading: p. 64-84 in the book on Mindfulness.
p. 99-105 Right Diligence (Effort)