

EXPLORING MEDITATION COURSE WEEK FIVE

MINDFULNESS & VIPASSANA (BREATHING)

QUOTES:

“NOW IS A GREAT TIME TO BE PRESENT. NOW IS GOOD, TOO. AND NOW.” -  
@HEADSPACE

“IT IS NOT THAT THINKING IS BAD, AND NON-THINKING IS GOOD. TRUE FREEDOM IS WHEN WE ARE EQUALLY CONTENT, NO MATTER WHAT ARISES IN THE MIND; FREE FROM BIAS, BEYOND ANY IDEA OF THOUGHT VERSUS NO-THOUGHT, OR THIS VERSUS THAT.” -ANDY PUDDICOMBE,  
HEADSPACE CO-FOUNDER

“MEDITATION IS NOT CONCENTRATION. IN CONCENTRATION THERE IS A SELF CONCENTRATING AND THERE IS AN OBJECT BEING CONCENTRATED UPON. THERE IS DUALITY. IN MEDITATION THERE IS NOBODY INSIDE AND NOTHING OUTSIDE. IT IS NOT CONCENTRATION. THERE IS NO DIVISION BETWEEN THE IN AND THE OUT. THE IN GOES ON FLOWING INTO THE OUT, THE OUT GOES ON FLOWING INTO THE IN. THE DEMARCATION, THE BOUNDARY, THE BORDER, NO LONGER EXISTS. THE IN IS OUT, THE OUT IS IN; IT IS A NONDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS.” OSHO

MORE ABOUT MEDITATION

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY.COM: “THERE IS NO FIGHT, REPRESSION, OR FORCEFULNESS ABOUT MEDITATION. FIGHTING WITH THOUGHTS WILL SIMPLY STRENGTHEN THEM AND LEAD US TO AN AGITATED STATE.

WITH GENTLE REFOCUSING, THE MIND CAN SLOWLY CALM DOWN.”

MEDITATION IS SIMPLY THE PROCESS OF CONTINUOUSLY REGULATING OUR ATTENTION.

THROUGH THE PROCESS OF MEDITATION, THE MIND BECOMES MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THIS IDEA OF SITTING STILL, AND WE CAN BEGIN TO LEARN HOW TO INTEGRATE THE QUALITIES EXPERIENCED DURING A MEDITATION PRACTICE: CALMNESS, FOCUS, COMPASSION, MINDFULNESS — INTO THE REST OF OUR DAY.

MINDFULNESS

MINDFULNESS IS THE ABILITY TO BE PRESENT, TO REST IN THE HERE AND NOW, FULLY PRESENT & ENGAGED WITH WHATEVER WE'RE DOING IN THE MOMENT WITHOUT DISTRACTION OR JUDGMENT.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION IS NOTICING THOUGHTS WHEN THEY ENTER AND NOTICING AGAIN WHEN THEY LEAVE, WITHOUT JUDGING THEM, GETTING TOO ATTACHED OR DRAWN INTO THEM.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION IS NOT GETTING DISTRACTED BY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE PAST OR STRESSING ABOUT THE FUTURE.

RATHER THAN TRYING TO “EMPTY THE MIND,” MINDFULNESS MEDITATION INVOLVES PLACING OUR ATTENTION ON A SINGLE POINT, MOMENT AFTER MOMENT.

ECKHART TOLLE, A WONDERFUL MEDITATION TEACHER, SAYS THAT PRESENCE IS ALREADY THERE WAITING TO BE REALIZED AND THAT YOU CAN ONLY BE PRESENT IN THE NOW. MINDFULNESS CAN BRING US THERE.

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS MIGHT INCLUDE MINDFUL BREATHING, GUIDED IMAGERY, OR EVEN A BODY SCAN MEDITATION WHERE YOU TUNE INTO DIFFERENT PARTS OF YOUR BODY.

MINDFULNESS MEANS DOING SOMETHING WITH 100% OF YOUR ATTENTION AND FOCUS, YOU COULD PRACTICE MINDFULNESS WHILE WASHING THE DISHES OR TAKING A SHOWER.

ESSENTIALLY, ANYTHING YOU DO WITH ALL YOUR FOCUS AND ATTENTION COULD BE CONSIDERED A FORM OF MINDFULNESS.

### BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

SCIENCE HAS SHOWN THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS EXTEND NOT ONLY TO IMPROVED WELL-BEING, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH, BETTER SLEEP AND REDUCED STRESS, BUT ALSO, TO BETTER RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION AND AN IMPROVED LEVEL OF HAPPINESS.

IMAGINE BEING TOTALLY PRESENT WHILE HAVING A CONVERSATION WITH SOMEONE, A LOVED ONE OR A FRIEND. IT WOULD CHANGE THE QUALITY OF THE CONVERSATION.

MINDFULNESS ALLOWS US THE SPACE AND TIME TO SIT WITH DIFFICULT FEELINGS AND TO MAKE DELIBERATE CHOICES FOR OUR GREATER GOOD. WITH AWARENESS WE CAN EFFECTIVELY MANAGE OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND BEHAVIORS.

MINDFULNESS TEACHES US ACCEPTANCE AND LETTING GO.

IT TEACHES US TO SLOW OUR BODY AND MIND DOWN SO WE CAN ACTUALLY EXPERIENCE THE THINGS WE DO, AND AT A PACE WE CAN ENJOY. THIS IS THE OPPOSITE OF MULTI-TASKING THAT SO MANY OF US DO THESE DAYS.

MINDFULNESS HELPS US TO FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE AND CONNECTS US TO THE BIGGER PICTURE AND OUR GREATER SENSE OF SELF.

### BREATHING MEDITATION

ONE OF THE WAYS TO DO MINDFULNESS MEDITATION IS BY FOCUSING ON THE BREATH.

A SIMPLE BREATH-FOCUSED MEDITATION HAS SEVERAL BENEFITS: BETTER BRAIN HEALTH, AN INCREASED ABILITY TO FOCUS, LESS OF A WANDERING MIND, MORE POSITIVE EMOTIONS, LESS EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY, AND MANY OTHER BENEFITS.

THE MINDFULNESS OF A BREATHING PRACTICE INVOLVES USING THE BREATH AS AN OBJECT OF FOCUS.

EACH TIME WE NOTICE WE'RE DISTRACTED; WE BRING OUR ATTENTION BACK TO THE BREATH.

BREATHING PRACTICES ALLOW YOU TO FOCUS ON THE MOMENT AND FOCUS ON THE BREATH. YOUR BREATH IS A BAROMETER OF HOW YOU ARE FEELING EMOTIONALLY.

MANY PEOPLE BREATHE SHALLOWER DURING TIMES OF STRESS AND LEARNING HOW TO BREATHE DEEPLY CAN HELP YOU FEEL MORE PEACEFUL AND CALMER. IT IS A GREAT WAY TO SHIFT YOUR FOCUS AND ENERGY WHEN YOU ARE FEELING ANXIOUS.

WHEN WE MEDITATE, WE ARE CULTIVATING AWARENESS AND COMPASSION. WE ARE TRAINING THE MIND TO STOP BEING EASILY DISTRACTED AND INSTEAD BE MORE FOCUSED IN THE PRESENT MOMENT.

USING THE BREATH AS OUR ANCHOR IN THE MOMENT, WE SIMPLY SIT AND GRADUALLY LEARN TO LET THOUGHTS AND FEELING COME AND GO.

VIPASSANA BREATHING MEDITATION IS THE OLDEST OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION PRACTICES.

THE BUDDHA'S ORIGINAL DISCOURSE ON MINDFULNESS, MORE THAN 2500 YEARS AGO, SPECIFICALLY SAYS THAT ONE MUST BEGIN BY FOCUSING THE ATTENTION ON THE BREATHING AND THEN GO ON TO NOTE ALL OTHER PHYSICAL AND MENTAL PHENOMENA WHICH ARISE.

VIPASSANA MEANS “TO SEE THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE” OR “SEEING BEYOND THE ORDINARY.” VIPASSANA IS DERIVED FROM TWO ROOT WORDS: “PASSANA” MEANS SEEING OR PERCEIVING. “VI” HAS THE BASIC MEANING OF “IN A SPECIAL WAY.”

IT CAN BE TRANSLATED AS “INSIGHT,” A CLEAR AWARENESS OF EXACTLY WHAT IS HAPPENING AS IT HAPPENS.

VIPASSANA IS A WAY OF SELF-TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SELF-OBSERVATION.

VIPASSANA IS A GENTLE TECHNIQUE DEDICATED TO BECOMING MORE AND MORE AWARE OF YOUR OWN LIFE EXPERIENCE. IT IS ATTENTIVE LISTENING AND MINDFUL SEEING.

WE LEARN TO REALLY PAY ATTENTION. WE LEARN TO LISTEN TO OUR OWN THOUGHTS WITHOUT BEING CAUGHT UP IN THEM, WITHOUT JUDGMENT OR ATTACHMENT.

VIPASSANA WILL HELP YOU TO EXPERIENCE THE WORLD IN A NEW WAY. YOU MAY LEARN FOR THE FIRST TIME WHAT IS TRULY HAPPENING TO YOU, AROUND YOU AND WITHIN YOU.

IT IS A PROCESS OF SELF-DISCOVERY; YOU OBSERVE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES WHILE PARTICIPATING IN THEM AS THEY OCCUR.

WE CAN USE BREATH AS OUR FOCUS. IT SERVES AS THAT VITAL REFERENCE POINT FROM WHICH THE MIND WANDERS AND IS DRAWN BACK.

THE BREATH IS AN ASPECT OF LIFE THAT IS IN CONSTANTLY CHANGING. THE BREATH MOVES IN CYCLES: INHALATION, EXHALATION, BREATHING IN, AND BREATHING OUT. BREATHING BRINGS YOU INTO THE PRESENT MOMENT.

YOU CAN WATCH THE BREATH FROM ONE OF TWO AREAS IN THE BODY, THE BELLY AND THE NOSE. FOR THE VIPASSANA TECHNIQUE, WE BREATHE IN AND OUT THROUGH THE NOSE, NOT THE MOUTH. TRY THIS:

FIRST PLACE A HAND ON THE STOMACH OR LOWER BELLY AND BREATHE. NOT TRYING TO CHANGE THE BREATH, JUST NOTICING. NOTICE THE RISING AND FALL OF THAT AREA. JUST BREATHING IN AND FOLLOWING THE PATH OF YOUR AIR DOWN INTO THE BELLY AND BREATHING OUT. BREATHING IN AND BREATHING OUT.

IF YOU FIND YOUR MIND GOES SOMEWHERE ELSE, STOP AND COME BACK TO YOUR BREATH.

NOW FOCUS ON THE FLOW OF AIR THROUGH YOUR NOSE. NOTICING THE TACTILE SENSATION OF THE AIR THAT PASSES IN AND OUT OF THE NOSTRILS. THIS IS USUALLY JUST INSIDE THE TIP OF THE NOSE. BUT THE EXACT SPOT MAY VARY. NOTICE WHERE YOU FEEL IT.

FOLLOW THE BREATH. NOT TRYING TO CHANGE THE BREATH, JUST NOTICING. NOTICE THE RISING AND FALL OF THAT AREA... JUST BREATHING IN AND FOLLOWING THE PATH OF YOUR AIR AND BREATHING OUT. BREATHING IN AND BREATHING OUT.

YOU HAVE FOCUSED ON WATCHING THE BREATH AT THE BELLY AND THE NOSE. NOW CHOOSE EITHER THE NOSE OR BELLY FOCUS, WHICH EVER FEELS BEST TO YOU, AND STAY WITH THAT FOR VIPASSANA MEDITATION. NOTICING THE BREATH, FLOWING IN AND FLOWING OUT.

WATCH YOUR BREATHING. WATCH THE GAPS BETWEEN INHALATION AND EXHALATION.

YOU ARE SIMPLY THE WITNESS OF WHATEVER IS HAPPENING IN THIS MOMENT.

RATHER THAN THE MIND LEADING THE BREATH, ALLOW THE BREATH TO LEAD THE MIND. FEEL THE SENSATIONS IN YOUR BODY.

WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS PASSING THROUGH WITHOUT ATTACHMENT TO THOSE THOUGHTS, WITHOUT JUDGMENT OR REACTION TO THOSE THOUGHTS.

WATCH YOUR BODY SENSATIONS. NOTICING HOW YOUR BODY FEELS IN THIS MOMENT.

YOU ARE WITNESSING YOUR BREATHING, YOUR THOUGHTS, YOUR BODY SENSATIONS, WHILE YOUR FOCUS REMAINS ON WATCHING YOUR BREATH.

PRACTICE VIPASSANA MEDITATION AND BEING THE WITNESS.

### MORE ON BREATHING

QUOTES:

“FEELINGS COME AND GO LIKE CLOUDS IN A WINDY SKY. CONSCIOUS BREATHING IS MY ANCHOR.” - THICH NHAT HANH

“THERE IS ONE WAY OF BREATHING THAT IS SHAMEFUL AND CONSTRICTED. THEN, THERE’S ANOTHER WAY: A BREATH OF LOVE THAT TAKES YOU ALL THE WAY TO INFINITY.” - RUMI

OUR BREATH IS OUR CONNECTION TO LIFE. IT IS THE FIRST THING WE DO WHEN WE ARE BORN AND THE LAST THING WE DO WHEN WE DIE. HOW WE RELATE TO OUR BREATH IS AN INDICATION OF HOW WE RELATE TO LIFE. IF OUR BREATH IS

OPEN, FLOWING AND FULLY CONNECTED CHANCES ARE WE ARE OPEN,  
FLOWING AND CONNECTED TO LIFE.

DURING VIPASSANA MEDITATION WE DON'T TRY TO CHANGE OUR BREATHING,  
WE ARE SIMPLY THE WITNESS.

HOWEVER, THE BREATH CAN BE AN EMOTIONAL BAROMETER.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED THAT WHEN YOU GET UPSET, ANGRY OR AFRAID  
YOUR BREATHING PATTERN CHANGES. IT MAY QUICKEN AND BECOME  
SHALLOWER.

THE REVERSE IS TRUE. YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR EMOTIONAL STATE SIMPLY BY  
CHANGING YOUR BREATHING PATTERN. TAKING A MOMENT TO TUNE INTO  
YOUR BREATH AND MAKING A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO SLOW IT DOWN,  
DEEPENING YOUR INHALATION AND RELAXING YOUR EXHALATION WILL  
CHANGE HOW YOU ARE FEELING AND MAY CHANGE HOW YOU ARE REACTING  
TO A SITUATION.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO STAY ANGRY IF YOU SLOW DOWN AND DEEPEN  
YOUR BREATHING. THE KEY IS TO REMEMBER TO TUNE INTO YOUR BREATH  
DURING THIS TIME. THE MORE WE ARE AWARE OF OUR BREATHING IN OUR  
DAILY LIVES, THE EASIER IT IS TO TUNE INTO OUR BREATH DURING A  
STRESSFUL SITUATION.

OCCASSIONALLY, WHEN WE ARE MEDITATING EMOTIONS COME TO THE  
SURFACE. IT MIGHT BE ANGER, FEAR OR JUST AN UNEASE. THESE EMOTIONS  
ARE NOT CAUSED BY YOUR MEDITATION. WHEN YOU SLOW DOWN AND FOCUS  
ON WHAT IS GOING ON INSIDE OF YOU, YOU MAY BECOME AWARE THAT YOU  
HAVE BEEN HOLDING THESE EMOTIONS. HELD EMOTIONS ARE TRAPPED  
CONSCIOUSNESS AT A LOWER LEVEL OF VIBRATIONAL FREQUENCY. THEY CAN  
BE TRANSMUTED. RECOGNIZE IT AS ENERGY, ACCEPT IT AND TRY NOT TO  
JUDGE, BE NEUTRAL ABOUT WHAT IS ARISING. USE YOUR BREATH TO HELP YOU  
RELEASE, LET THESE EMOTIONS FLOW OUT WITH THE OUT BREATH.

BREATHING IN AND OUT THRU THE MOUTH IS A VERY QUICK WAY TO RELEASE  
STRESS AND TENSION. YOU MAY FIND THAT YOU CAN GO DEEPER AND EASIER  
INTO MEDITATION IF YOU DO A FEW MINUTES OF MOUTH BREATHING.

KEEP BREATHING!