

SOME SIMPLE MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

(THIS TEACHING HAS BEEN TRANSCRIBED FROM A TAPE-RECORDING MADE BY GODWIN IN THE EARLY 1990'S FOR A YOUNG WOMAN UNDERGOING TREATMENT FOR CANCER AT THE ROYAL MARSDEN HOSPITAL, LONDON)

1) SWEEPING THE BODY

Just focus your attention on the body. Put your attention at the area of your forehead, and just sweep the body, feeling every part of your body: sensations, tensions, whatever you discover in your body.

If you feel any tensions in your body, just be aware of those tensions; don't try to resist those tensions, don't try to control them, but just be aware of the tension and continue sweeping the body. See how far you can feel gentle, friendly, tender towards those sensations, just accepting the body as it is.

Learning to listen to the body, and allowing it to tell you just what it likes. Just saying okay, whether you experience pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations, tensions, or whatever is happening.

Sweep every part of the body until you reach the feet, and then sweep upwards in the same way, slowly, gently, feeling and experiencing every part of your body. Being anchored in your body.

When thoughts arise just let go of them gently and bring the attention back to the body. Just keep on coming back to your body - feelings, sensations, tensions - allowing them, creating space for them.

You can also combine this technique with focusing your attention on the breathing.

2) FOCUSING ON BREATHING

So having made friends with your body, now make an effort to make friends with your breathing.

Just allow your body to breathe naturally, and focus your attention wherever you feel the sensation of the breath in your body.

When you are inhaling be aware, be conscious that you are inhaling; when you are exhaling just know, be aware, be conscious that you are exhaling. Be with this movement of the breath, just come back to it as an anchor.

It is natural that thoughts will arise while watching the breath - don't try to push away thoughts, don't try to control your thoughts. What you need to learn is just to gently let go the thoughts, to come back to the here and the now, come back to the present. Just be with what is happening.

Whatever state of mind that you experience - calm, feeling peaceful, or being restless - just be aware of the state of mind, whatever it is, without wanting it to be different from what it

is. Focus more and more on the sensations that are arising. Breathing then becomes a part of the landscape.

3) WORKING WITH EMOTIONS

The third exercise I would like to suggest is that if you are experiencing tensions, anxieties, fear, sadness, and so on, that you first become aware of that emotion, whatever the emotion is.

And while you are doing that try to focus your attention on other things as well: perhaps the sounds you hear, the sensations in your body, the touch of your clothing, movements in your body, your heart beating, or the rise and fall of the abdomen if you are experiencing it.

Learn to be aware of other things that are happening while you are experiencing an emotion. The emotion will still be there, but when you focus your attention on what is happening around you, you will see the emotion becomes part of the landscape and it won't affect you so much, it won't grip you so much.

So just allow it, create a space around it, make friends with it. Emotions arise and pass away. Remember the fact of change, the fact of impermanence. These emotions arise and pass away, they do not have an owner, they are just states of mind that we are experiencing. Learn to relate to these emotions simply as transient emotions, and do not consider them as your own - my anger, my tension, my fear - see them just as anger, just tensions, just fear: happenings in the landscape.

4) CHOICELESS AWARENESS

Try this in any posture you like: just allow thoughts to arise - thoughts of the past, thoughts of the future - and see how far you can simply observe these thoughts, just thoughts arising and passing away, as if these thoughts do not belong to you, as though you were observing another person's thoughts.

If you are getting involved with the thoughts, if you are judging the thoughts, just know what is happening, and note the difference between being an observer and being involved with the thoughts.

Making friends with your thoughts, creating space for your thoughts by allowing any thought to arise, and observing how you react to the thoughts. The reaction doesn't matter as long as you are aware of it, as long as you observe the reaction. Just being completely choiceless.

Now can you do the same in regard to any emotion that is arising in you. Whatever emotion is arising - sadness, anxiety, fear, joy - do not want it to stay in your mind, and also do not want it to go away, just be at one with that emotion, whatever it is. And do the same in regard to any sensation that is arising, pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations, whatever it is, just let it be.

Being choiceless about thoughts, emotions, sensations - learning to be a witness to whatever is happening in your mind and body. Learn to see things as they are, and not as they should or must be.

5) LOVING-KINDNESS

The last exercise is meditation of loving-kindness. See how far you can gently soften towards yourself, accepting yourself as you are, without any notion of what you should become. Making friends with who you are - and really feel that friendship, that kindness.

Then can you extend that friendship, gentleness, softness even to those who have hurt you, disappointed you, frustrated you. Letting go of the hurts and wounds you have been carrying by learning to forgive, by learning to accept our common human-ness.

Learn to forgive yourself too for all the mistakes you have made in the past, not holding onto these wounds by having guilt and remorse in relation to them; and also letting go of the wounds that have been created by others. Learn to accept yourself as you are, and learn to accept others as they are, without an image of how you or they should be. Learning to be gentle to oneself and gentle to others.

Thinking: May all beings be well and happy; may all beings overcome the suffering that they create themselves.