Mindfulness of Breathing Online Course
Audio meditation transcription

Guided Meditation 6 – Awakening

We are aware of the body in the sitting posture, and we let the mind rest on the body, just as the body rests on the cushion.

And without losing this embodied presence of the mind, we now proceed through the whole scheme of 16 steps and the whole contemplation of the awakening factors.

And just as we found a secluded spot to sit down and meditate, so we establish mental seclusion by letting go of all our worries and concerns.

And just as we found a firm foundation in the sitting posture, so we build a firm foundation in the mental realm by formulating our motivation.

And having formulated our motivation, we pass our attention through the spine, from bottom to top, relaxing and aligning.

And we point the mind straight at the present moment, checking in on the present condition of the mind, and establishing mindfulness, making mindfulness predominant. And taking a moment just to be with that condition of the mind when mindfulness is to the fore.

And with mindfulness established, becoming aware of the inhalations and exhalations, in the understanding that already this preliminary practice is the arousal of the first awakening factor of mindfulness.

And, if we wish, taking a deep breath. And closely investigating the length of the breath as a way of arousing the awakening factor of investigation, by scrutinizing the length of the breath as it naturally, from having been long, becomes shorter and softer.

And shifting gears of our attention, as it were, from the more focused modality to a more open monitoring type, it requires energy - energy to train in continuity, in maintaining in mind
inhalation-exhalation, held in peripheral awareness, and different topics with each step. With the present step, it is the whole body. Whole body in the sitting posture – our main object – and peripheral awareness of inhalations and exhalations. Continuity, energy: the awakening factor of energy.

And calming bodily activity. Allowing a deep sense of relaxation to occur throughout the whole body. Letting go of any tension. Calming bodily activity.

And out of that deep tranquillity of the body, joy can arise. And the experiencing of joy is our experience of the next awakening factor: joy.

With the continuity of peripheral awareness of inhalation and exhalation - from joy to happiness. The happiness of contentment that is always possible.

And now shifting pleasant feeling of being in the present moment also to peripheral awareness, and watching mental activity. Experiencing mental activity, without becoming active ourselves. Just watching. And as we do not become active, do not become involved, mental activity becomes weaker, quietens down. Calming of mental activity. And that natural calming of mental activity completes our cultivation of tranquillity. Earlier bodily tranquillity, now mental tranquillity: awakening factor of tranquillity.

And with the calming of mental activity it becomes possible to experience mind as such, in its bare, even naked condition, of just-knowing quality. Experiencing the mind.

And gladdening the mind. A gladness that touches us deep within. Very still, but very profound. Gladdening the mind.

And that gladdening of the mind leads over to concentration. The mind becoming collected, unified, as if the whole of experience is held in a gentle, soft embrace, so that all its usual fragmentation disappears. And with the experience of concentrating the mind, this can be our arousal of the awakening factor of concentration.
And liberating the mind so that it reaches a superb degree of equipoise. And in the way of practice presented here, in particular, liberating it from all conceit ‘I am’, from all appropriation as ‘mine’.

And with this step of liberating of the mind, all seven awakening factors have been aroused: mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration, and now equipoise.

And with the mind enriched by these seven qualities – impermanence. Contemplating impermanence. And if we wish, we can give slightly more attention to the breath, to discern beginning, middle and end. Beginning, middle and end. Impermanence.

And from impermanence to dispassion. Allowing the flow of impermanence to wash away our passion, wash away our attachment, wash away our clinging. And if we wish, giving attention now just to middle and end of inhalation, middle and end of exhalation. Giving attention to change while persisting and disappearing. Change while persisting and disappearing.

And cessation. The more we are accustomed to, familiar with, at ease with dispassion, the more we come to be at ease with the fact that things end, vanish, disappear. Cessation. And for contemplating cessation, if we wish, we could give just attention to the ending of inhalations and exhalations, to their last part: vanishing, ending, disappearing, ceasing.

And letting go. Letting go. Letting go of what is anyway impermanent, not worth being clung to with passion and attachment, what is anyway going to cease and disappear. What holding on to it? Letting it go.

And, if we wish, we could give particular attention to the gap between inhalation-exhalation, between exhalation-inhalation, almost as if we were to let go into that gap, into that moment of stillness between the air coming in, going out.

And having in this way proceeded one time through all 16 steps, in the awareness of how they arouse the seven awakening factors in the first three tetrads. And the last tetrad brings in those key insight themes - to lead to awakening, to knowledge-and-liberation, the final goal of mindfulness of breathing. We are now free to decide how we wish to continue our practice, choosing any of these tetrads. What seems appropriate now? Maybe feeling contemplation,
second tetrad – good. Aware of the pleasant feeling of being in the present moment, and allowing that to flower into joy. Experiencing joy, all the while aware of inhalation and exhalation, and in the company of these seven awakening factors in the mind. And from joy to happiness. Shifting the pleasant feeling of being in the present moment to peripheral awareness, and watching mental activity, experiencing it. And calming mental activity.

And this final step of calming mental activity is now our reference point for the cultivation, the continuity, the flourishing of the awakening factors. Mindful of calming mental activity. Investigation: “let me see, any tension there in the mind, any agitation that can be calmed?”. And energy: continuity of calming of mental activity. And such joy, when the mind becomes quiet naturally by itself: such joy. And so tranquil of course: tranquillity. And the natural composing, concentrating of the mind, so that it becomes equipoised. Seven awakening factors, related to the theme of calming mental activity.

And with the continuity of this condition of calming of mental activity, and all seven awakening factors related to it, we proceed, keeping balance. Mindfulness alerts us - the mind is getting slightly sluggish – giving more emphasis, more importance to the three energizers: investigation, energy, joy. Mind becoming slightly agitated - more emphasis to the three calmers: tranquillity, concentration, equipoise.

Just like the condor quietly flowing along, so we keep quietly moving along. Calming mental activity - presence of these seven awakening factors in balance - for however long it seems appropriate.

And sooner or later it may feel like something else is now appropriate: “Let me see, what about body contemplation, first tetrad? Good.” Starting off just noting inhalation-exhalation. And then investigating the length of the breath. At this stage we don't take an intentional long breath. Just watch: is it long or short? Whole-body awareness, and calming of bodily activity. And that deep relaxation at the bodily level is now our topic, our reference point. Mindful of it. Investigation: checking, any tension in the body that can be released? Energy: continuity of that calmness, and continuity of that peripheral awareness of inhalation-exhalation. And joy: so agreeable, this relaxed condition. And, of course, tranquillity. And even that bodily tranquillity and calmness already leads to some degree of collectedness of the mind: concentration. And some degree of balance: equipoise.
And with the seven awakening factors related to this theme of calming bodily activity, we proceed. Keeping them finely in balance: the three energizers when it gets slightly sluggish; the three calmers when it gets slightly agitated; and mindfulness, always useful. Until we feel it is time to do something else. At times we may just feel like doing the same tetrad over again, but perhaps also doing something else. Maybe the mind contemplation tetrad? Good. Checking in on that knowing quality, and using that as the entry door to experience the mind. Gladdening the mind. Concentrating the mind. And liberating the mind.

And that condition of liberating the mind is now our reference point, particularly that liberating from I-conceit and mine-appropriation. Mindful of it. Investigation: checking, any conceit here manifesting? Any holding on to this experience as me and mine, that can be released, can be let go of? And energy: continuity, continuity of liberating the mind, and continuity of peripheral awareness, inhalation-exhalation. And joy: such joy to drop the burden of the ego. Such a relief. And so tranquil, so relaxing, so calming. All this agitation about “I” and “me” and “mine”. Letting go of it, so tranquil. And certainly the mind becomes concentrated. And equipoised, balanced.

All seven awakening factors related to this topic, and proceeding, keeping them nicely in balance for however long we feel appropriate. Maybe then moving through the same tetrad again and taking more time for each step. At times we may feel more like moving through the steps swiftly, as we did now, to get the feel for the dynamics. At other times we may want to really stay for a long time, just experiencing the mind. And after a long time only, gladdening it. And again, really staying with that deep sense of gladdening, and only then concentrating it. And again, for quite a long while and then only liberating it. A flexible approach to practice, adjusting, doing things always a little bit differently, to avoid that the mind goes into autopilot mode. Moving through these tetrads in whatever way seems appropriate.

And eventually finishing off with the last one: impermanence, dispassion, cessation, and letting go.

And here, letting go is the topic to which we relate the awakening factors. Mindful of it. Investigating: “is there anything more that can be let go of?” Energy: continuity, continuity of letting go and of peripheral awareness, inhalation-exhalation. And such joy to let go. And such
deep tranquillity out of letting go. And letting go is of course the way into concentration. And reaching equipoise, balance of the mind.

Letting go is the peak of this practice, its supreme consummation point. In fact, even the other tetrads lead up to some degree of letting go - letting go of bodily tension with calming of bodily activity; letting go of mental tension with calming of mental activity; letting go of I-making and my-making with liberating the mind. All are forms of letting go. And each of these forms of letting go is something we can also carry along - walking meditation, other activities. One or the other of these forms of letting go will fit the case.

Letting go.

And with this fourth tetrad our condor has become completely transparent. Head, torso and wings have become transparent. And with the supreme letting go, the letting go of all that is conditioned, taking the plunge into *Nibbāna*, even the scenery, the mountains, become transparent.

Nothing left, just letting go.

Keep practicing like this.