

Free Booklet for
'Community Session'
Participants



Peace through self-understanding

DAILY LIFE EXERCISES

Book 1

3rd edition, Woking, 2020

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This booklet is meant to be used with your drop-in attendance at the Community Sessions, so you can discuss and ask questions.

Complete all exercises repetitively over a period of about 6 months.

Evaluate yourself from time to time.

Completion of these exercises is recommended for admission to the Root Session (Book 2). Speak to the teacher about that.

Introduction

The Buddha Dhamma

The Four Great Virtues

- Towards all living things I learn to practice kindness
- Towards all living things I learn to practice Compassion
- Towards all living things I learn to practice Generosity
- Towards all living things I learn to practice Gratitude

The Four Noble Truths

- Anxiety and suffering (of all sentient beings)
- Originating in craving, clinging and rejecting
- Decrease in craving-clinging-rejecting brings greater peace
- The method of decreasing (Noble Eightfold Path)

The Noble Eightfold Path

- Right Understanding (of the Four Noble Truths)
- Right Resolve (Intention: no greed or hatred)
- Right Speech (truthful and kind)
- Right Action (taking responsibility, non-harm)
- Right Livelihood (non-harmful work and life-style)
- Right Effort (making mental effort for the good)
- Right Mindfulness (inner awareness)
- Right Concentration (single-pointed focus)

The Three Refuges (Jewels)

- To the Buddha (teacher) I go for refuge
- To the Dhamma (truth of human life) I go for refuge
- To the Community (sangha) I go for refuge.

The Four Footings

Attention (noticing)

Is the foundation of all meditation and it is a power you can harness and develop; it is like a handle to which you can attach three tools

Concentration

To focus your mind on a single physical or mental object, and let go of 'distractions' until your mind becomes calm and clear.

Mindfulness

To be aware in the moment of what arises in your body and mind, without falling into describing, explaining or judging it.

Open-heartedness

To develop an attitude of kindness, compassion, generosity and gratitude.

And how is a meditator skilled in knowing the ways of his own mind? It is just as if a woman or a man, young, youthful and fond of ornaments, would look at their face in a clean, bright mirror ... If they then see any dust or dirt, they will make all effort to remove it.

The Buddha

Exercises

1. Body Scan

We first practice mindfulness of the Whole Body. Sit with your eyes closed. Pay attention to the top of your head, and note any sensations or absence of sensations. Move your attention slowly downwards through the listed phases, each time paying close attention to sensations and noting non-sensation. In each phase let go of any tension or pressure, as though it were flowing quickly into the ground (like a lightning conductor).

- Forehead
- Area between and around eyes
- Nose and nostrils
- Jaw
- Tongue
- Swallow gently and be aware of it
- Neck
- Left shoulder, right shoulder
- Chest
- Belly
- Thighs
- Left knee, right knee
- Ankles, feet

Then slowly come back up, continuing until the bell is invited.

2. Breathing

To concentrate the mind and attain calmness (tranquillity):

In-breath/out-breath

Establish the daily routine of 5-15 minutes of focusing on your breathing, with your eyes closed, watching each in-breath and out-breath, letting go of thinking as best you can. Be aware of the breathing motion.

Belly Motion

After some weeks, when watching the breathing also engage the belly, so that as the breath comes in the belly moves out, and as the breath goes out the belly is pulled in. Do this lightly and naturally, not in a forced way. Be aware of the belly motion.

Nostrils

An alternative to the belly-breathing method is as follows. As you breathe, closely watch with awareness the sensation of air in contact with the nostrils. Find out whether this method is more effective at focussing and calming the mind.

After some weeks choose one of the above as your main concentration & calm practice.

Breathing in long, he discerns, 'I am breathing in long'; or breathing out long, he discerns, 'I am breathing out long.' Or breathing in short, he discerns, 'I am breathing in short'; or breathing out short, he discerns, 'I am breathing out short.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out sensitive to the entire body.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe in calming bodily fabrication.' He trains himself, 'I will breathe out calming bodily fabrication.'

The Buddha - Ānāpānasati sutta

3. Walking Meditation

Watchful Walking

This is an outward form of 'walking meditation'. Slow down your walking, wherever you are going. Subdue thoughts of the destination. Pay attention to the motion of your legs, be aware of the weight-shifting right to left to right, etc. Note the swinging of the arms, briefly note what is on the path in front of you and how you shift motion according to the path. Feel grateful that you are able to walk.

Sole-Sensations

This is an inward form of 'walking meditation'. Take your shoes off (taking socks off is optional). Walking with your close and continuous attention to the *sensations* in heel, sole, ball, toes in your left foot as contact is made with ground. Keep your mind following these sensations with awareness.

Furthermore, when walking, the meditator discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it ... This is how a meditator develops mindfulness immersed in the body.

The Buddha - Kayagata-sati Sutta

4. Generosity

Keep an open-heart. This is not necessarily about giving money. Notice and use any opportunity to be generous with your thoughts, words, actions, time, and resources for those you encounter during the day. Slowly you will develop or enhance your generosity and patience.

5. Mindful Eating

Whenever you eat, try to slow down, moving the cutlery and food to your mouth more slowly and with awareness.

Pay attention to the taste and texture of each morsel of food and drop of drink.

Be aware of your chewing and swallowing sensations. Wait between each swallowing.

About to eat, we say or think:

This food is a gift of the earth, the sky, numerous living beings, and much hard and loving work.

May we eat with mindfulness and gratitude so as to be worthy to receive this food.

May we recognize and transform unwholesome mental formations, especially our greed and learn to eat with moderation.

May we keep our compassion alive by eating in such a way that reduces the suffering of living beings, stops contributing to climate change, and heals and preserves our precious planet.

We accept this food so that we may nurture our brotherhood and sisterhood, build our community, and nourish our ideal of serving all living beings.

Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn

6. Doors

Exercise in mindful action. Refrain from slamming doors or allowing them to slam. When closing any door or drawer (at home, work, in any building) close it with awareness of the action, making as little sound as possible under the circumstances. Heavy doors with dampers or closers may be held lightly as they close. Car doors are difficult to close quietly, but using the palm of hand until the lock engages does soften the impact. Also close all drawers and similar with awareness.

7. Tiny Living Things

This is a practice of **Non-harm**: See an insect, fly, wasp, spider or wood-louse etc., in your vicinity? Note your reaction to it. Try to see your kinship with its life.

When appropriate, let this little visitor out of the window or door, instead of harming it. Consider alternatives to destroying garden 'pests'. (Wisdom is in recognizing genuine exceptions to the non-harm rule e.g. allergy to wasp sting)

And how does one, in protecting others, protect oneself?
By patience and forbearance, by a non-violent and
harmless life, by loving kindness and compassion.

The Buddha - Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta

8. Irritation

We all experience mild irritation or frustration every day. Irritation can easily grow to annoyance, to anger, to rage and even violence. Catch it early with self-awareness. Say to yourself 'I feel irritation growing – it's not me, I now let it go'.

9. The Leaf

This is a practice in the awareness of the impermanence of all things. Now take any single large tough green leaf back home from your walk. Place it about 3 feet (1 metre) from your face (e.g. window sill). Fix your attention on it. Look at it as closely and continuously as you can for 5-10 minutes. Do not seek explanations. Do this for a few minutes for three months and note the changes and their wider meaning for all living things.

10. Speech

'Victims'

Next time you are in a group of people (for example, at a meeting or social gathering) which is speaking negatively of someone absent, pay attention to what *you* are saying, what you are tempted to say and what you do not say. (Note, it is what *you* are saying that will help you, not what others are saying.) Be aware of your feeling or mood, what it is you are saying, your intention or motivation in saying it, the manner in which you are saying it.

'Some', not 'all'

When speaking: Embracing rather than labelling and rejecting people. We often label people when we start a statement with "People X always do Y" e.g. "Women drive badly". Next time you feel any such statement on the tip of your tongue try to substitute "All..." with a "Some..." e.g. 'Some women drive badly (and so do some men)'

He avoids slanderous speech, & abstains from it. What he has heard here he does not repeat there, so as to cause dissension

there ... Thus he unites those that are divided; and those that are united he encourages. Concord gladdens him, he delights and rejoices in concord; and it is concord that he spreads by his words'.

'He avoids harsh language, & abstains from it. He speaks such words as are gentle, soothing to the ear, loving, such words as go to the heart, and are courteous, friendly, and agreeable to many

The Buddha - Anguttaranikaya, 10:176.

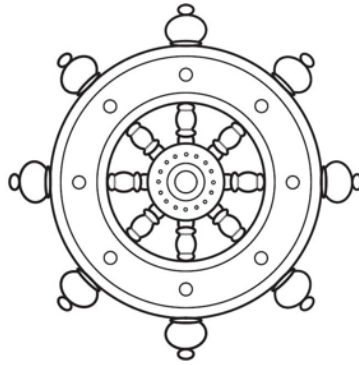
11. Loving-Kindness

This is the cultivation of loving-kindness (*mettā-bhavana*) practice. Close your eyes and follow the teacher's instructions (below). If no teacher is present then give yourself the instructions once you have rote-learned them:

- 1) Imagine you have standing before you your own self in a snap-shot series of your life. Say to that person (which is yourself) 'I sincerely wish you happiness and peace'. Bell.
- 2) ... before you someone you love or care about, etc.
- 3) ... before you someone who is just an acquaintance you have neutral feelings about, etc.
- 4) ... before you someone you have had difficulties with, etc.
- 5) ... a bird's eye view of this town, and see people going about their business..., etc.
- 6) ... an astronaut's view of planet Earth, carrying over seven billion people like yourself, and say to them 'I sincerely wish all of us happiness and peace'.

So with a boundless heart
Should one cherish all living beings;
Radiating kindness over the entire world:
Spreading upwards to the skies,
And downwards to the depths;
Outwards and unbounded,
Freed from hatred and ill-will.
Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down
Free from drowsiness,
One should sustain this recollection.
This is said to be the sublime abiding.

Mettā sutta



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