

The Seven Factors of Awakening

Energy

Practices and Reflections

In each of the following weeks repeatedly spend time with the reflection and practices for that week. It would be helpful if you also discussed your reflections with others.

Week 1: Amount of energy

Reflection: In general, do you find that you have enough energy for what is important in your life? Do you spend most of your energy on activities that seem to be the most urgent or the most important or impactful?

Practices: At the end of each day reflect on when you felt energized and when you felt depleted during the day. Is there a consistency to the rhythm of your energy levels on most days; *e.g.* do you consistently feel most energetic in the morning or evening? Or does your energy level depend mostly on the activities you're doing? If possible, try meditating at different times in the day; *e.g.* early morning, lunch time, early evening or late evening. Is there a time of day when you feel most alert or energetic in your meditation?

Week 2: Energizing activities

Reflection: What makes you feel more energetic? What drains your energy? Does spending time with other people take energy or give energy? Do you feel more energized by being physically active or by exciting ideas? What role does food, caffeine or alcohol have in your energy levels?

Practices: Spend more time than you normally would doing generous and kind activities this week. Notice your energy level before, during and after doing any generous, kind or compassionate activities. When did you feel the most energized? Which step required the most energy? Notice whether you have any beliefs, judgments about or resistance to the activity and notice how that mind-set affects your energy level. In addition, notice your energy level before, during and after meditation. Does meditation affect your energy levels?

Week 3: The feeling of being energized

Reflection: How do you know when you are energized? Is it more of a physical sensation or an mental sensation for you? How is feeling energized different than feeling restless?

Practices: Spend more time than you normally would doing activities that energize you. Notice how your body feels when you feel energized. Also notice your mind state and emotional state when you feel energized. Is the feeling of being energized consistent? Were the energizing activities indeed energizing?

Week 4: Persistence

Reflection: How easy is it for you to stay with a task until it is completed? What do you do when there are obstacles or difficulties in your path? Do you have the persistence to overcome them? Do you work on tasks past a point of diminishing returns?

Practices: This week decide to complete a task that you have been intending to accomplish, but haven't. Notice your energy level when you think about doing this task, when you're just about to begin doing the task, while you're doing the task and after you've completed the task. When did you feel the most energetic? Which step required the most energy? Did any step give you energy? How might this affect your practice?

Decide to meditate every day this week. If you already have a daily practice, decide to meditate twice a day. How does it feel to be consistent with your meditation practice? Does the amount of energy required to begin meditation increase or decrease the more often you meditate? What do you do when barriers are presented that impede your time for meditation?

Week 5: Effort needed to abandon unhelpful objects or activities

Reflection: Effort is often required to let go of things as well as to obtain things. Which *requires* more energy for you in general - releasing or acquiring? Which *provides* more energy for you in general - releasing or acquiring? How does this affect your meditation practice? How does this affect the quality of your life?

Practices: This week decide to let go of either an object or a habit that you believe inhibits your meditation practice. It doesn't have to be a large item, but a meaningful one. Notice your energy level as you contemplate letting go of this item, as you let go and after letting go. What took the most energy? Which step gave you the most energy?

Week 6: Energy in meditation

Reflection: During meditation do you find that you are applying a lot of effort and striving or are you primarily relaxing? How can you tell whether you are applying the right amount of effort to your meditation?

Practices: During this week, experiment with applying more effort in meditation. This can be done physically by sitting up straighter or by doing brisk walking meditation before sitting. It can be done mentally by putting more effort into being alert and mindful of what is happening during the meditation. If applying more effort agitates you, try to match the increased effort with increased calm or inner stillness

Week 7: Energy as a Factor of Awakening

Reflection: In the list of the Seven Factors of Awakening, energy is listed after investigation and before rapture. Why do you think this is? Do you experience a relationship between investigation and energy? Do you experience a relationship between energy and rapture?

Practices: This week decide to explore or study something that is interesting to you every day. It could be as simple as looking something up on Wikipedia, or perhaps talking to an expert about something you've been curious about. While you're investigating, notice your energy level and your sense of well-being. Have they increased or decreased since you've started investigating? Also, during this week, pay attention if a satisfying sense of well-being arises. How is your energy level when you have a sense of well-being?