

## Daily Life Practice Retreat

### Recognizing the feeling of mindfulness

As we engage in a daily life practice, it is helpful to become familiar with what it feels like to be mindful and present.

At times throughout the day, we come into mindfulness; it happens spontaneously, effortlessly, for just a moment.

This actually happens to us more than we realize, but it's like the air we breathe: we don't notice it.

It happens in little tiny moments through out the day.

Typically we get a split second of knowing what is happening, and then we start thinking about it, or planning about it, or remembering something we did yesterday that was similar to what we're doing now.

We usually simply use this awareness to navigate our lives.

We use the recognition of what is going on to plan, to further our lives.

We rarely notice the quality of mindfulness itself.

The Buddha recognized the value of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is an everyday, ordinary quality of mind, it is not esoteric or mystical

The brilliance of the Buddha was to notice it, to highlight it, and to point out:

this quality is worth cultivating, and noticing what that actually feels like.

One of the best places to explore what it feels like to be present, aware, mindful, is the moment when you remember that you have not been attending to your experience.

In sitting meditation, this moment happens to us over and over again.

We intend to be present for our experience, and then notice that we have been lost in thought.

That moment of noticing that we have been lost in thought is a moment of remembering mindfulness again.

It is a moment of recognizing that you are now aware.

In your daily life practice, that moment of remembering might happen at any time!

For example, you might be in the midst of reaching for a glass, and mindfulness arises.

At that moment, you don't have to change anything,  
you don't have to stop doing anything, and  
you don't even have to try to be mindful,  
since mindfulness has arisen spontaneously.

You can simply keep reaching, pick up the glass mindfully, and notice what is obvious. Mindfulness has arisen, and it is like the light has gone on. See if you can get familiar with what that feels like.

This moment of remembering is a good place to check in to the feeling of awareness, because there can be a memory of what was like a moment before, when you were not aware.

You can get a sense of the difference between the mind that is lost in thought, and the mind that is present and engaged in knowing.

We can't really know what it feels like to be lost while we are lost, but in the moment when we remember, there can be a lingering memory of what it felt like to be lost: confused, spinning in thoughts, hazy or disconnected.

In that moment, there is also the clarity of actually being present.

While the feeling of knowing that you are aware can seem like a subtle feeling, actually, it is a feeling that is very familiar to us, but we rarely pay attention to the feeling. If you know that your hands are touching this piece of paper, then the feeling of awareness is there in your experience.

Don't look too hard for it.

Just explore how your experience feels when you know that you are aware.

Over time, you will begin to recognize the part of the experience that is the feeling of awareness.

As you become familiar with the feeling of mindfulness, you will notice yourself coming back into mindfulness many, many times throughout the day.

In the midst of an activity, you will suddenly recognize that you are aware of what is happening.

You might be reaching for something, walking across the street, finishing a meal, or driving the car.

Appreciating these moments creates the conditions for you to recognize these moments even more frequently.

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