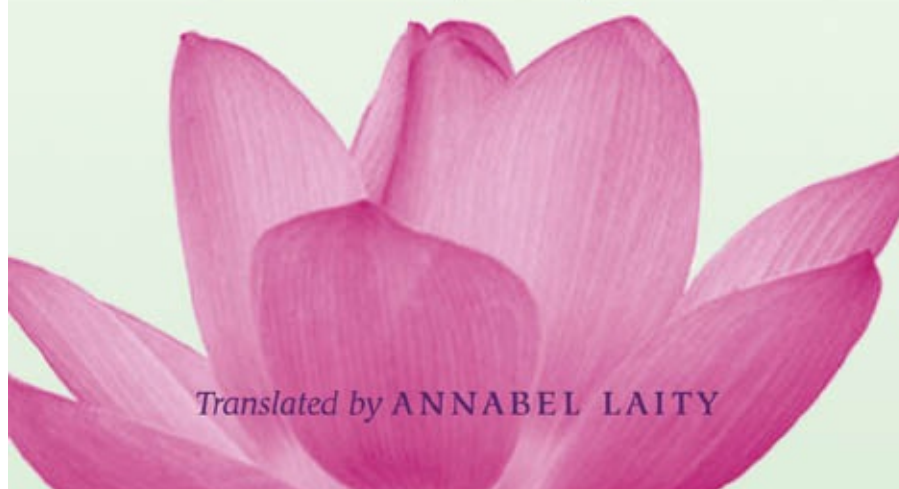


REVISED EDITION

THICH NHAT HANH

The Blooming of a Lotus

*Guided Meditation for Achieving
the Miracle of Mindfulness*



Translated by ANNABEL LAITY

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Guided Meditation for Achieving
the Miracle of Mindfulness

Revised

Thich Nhat Hanh

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Preface

The function of meditation practice is to heal and transform. Meditation, as understood in my tradition of Buddhism, helps us to be whole and to look deeply into ourselves and around us in order to realize what is really there. The energy that is used in meditation is mindfulness; to look deeply is to use mindfulness to light up the recesses of our mind, or to look into the heart of things in order to see their true nature. When mindfulness is present, meditation is present. Mindfulness helps us to understand the true essence of the object of meditation (whether it is a perception, an emotion, an action, a reaction, the presence of a person or object).

By looking deeply, the meditation practitioner gains insight, *prajñā*, or wisdom. This insight has the power to liberate us from our own suffering and bondage. In the meditation process, fetters are undone; internal blocks of suffering such as fear, anger, despair, and hatred are transformed; relationships with humans and nature become easier; freedom and joy penetrate. We become aware of what is inside us and around us; we are fresher, more alive in our daily existence. As we become freer and happier, we cease to act in ways that make others suffer, and we are able to bring about change around us and to help others become free.

The energy of mindfulness is constantly produced, nurtured, and strengthened during meditation. The meditation practitioner is like a lotus flower in the process of blooming. Buddhas are fully bloomed human flowers, beautiful and refreshing. All of us are buddhas to be. That is why in practice centers when people meet each other, they form a lotus with their palms and greet each other while bowing, saying: “A lotus for you, a buddha to be.” As they inhale while saying “a lotus for you” and exhale, smiling, while saying “a buddha to be,” they have the appearance of a blooming flower.

It may be possible for you to meditate on your own, without a teacher or a Sangha, namely, a Buddhist community of practice. But it goes without saying that to practice with a teacher and a Sangha is more advisable and much easier than to practice without them. A teacher is someone who has had experience of the practice and has succeeded in it. A Sangha is a meditation community where everyone follows more or less the same kind of practice. Since everyone is doing the same practice, it becomes easier for you to practice, too, because the group energy emitted by the Sangha is strong and very supportive. You can also learn a great deal from individual members of the Sangha, especially those who have realized some degree of peace and

transformation. There are many things you may find difficult to do when alone, but in the presence of the Sangha you can do them easily. All of us who have practiced with a Sangha can testify to this fact.

If you have no teacher or friends on the path, though, this book may help you in the beginning. The subjects chosen for the meditation exercises in this book have been taken from the basic dhyana sutras of Source Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. The meditation taught in this book is the practice as perfected and taught by the Buddha. All of this book's exercises have been put into practice before being shared with the wider community of meditation students. Relying on the exercises of a practice that has been perfected, you may feel secure throughout the period of meditation. You need have no fear of beginning your practice right now, even if you have not yet had a chance to meet a teacher or find a Sangha.

In the Buddhist tradition, we consider Sangha one of the three gems. (The three gems are Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.) As we see it, the three gems are already in your heart. The Sangha in yourself may guide you to the Sangha that is somewhere near you. Maybe the teacher and the Sangha are right there, very close to you, but you have not yet noticed. From practice of the exercises in this book, you will generate the energy of mindfulness, which may lead you toward a teacher and a community. This book can be a mediator between you and a teacher, between you and a Sangha. Allow it to play its role.

Introduction

Meditation can be practiced almost anywhere—while sitting, walking, lying down, standing, even while working, drinking, and eating. Sitting is only the most familiar form of meditation, and the one we feel most privileged to enjoy, but there are many other forms that can be learned. During the past twenty-five years, many thousands of people have come to Plum Village to practice meditation. From time to time, they have been offered guided exercises during sitting meditation sessions. At first, those who are used to sitting silently to meditate do not feel at ease during the exercises, but with practice they are able to experience the many benefits of guided meditation and consequently to experience transformation at a very fundamental level. Over the years, meditation students from many parts of the world have asked me to make these exercises more widely available.

The Subject Matter of the Guided Meditation

The guided meditations in this book have different purposes. Some exercises encourage joy within us; others enable us to discover our true nature, help us heal, shine the light of awareness in us, or release us from hurtful emotions. Some exercises have several purposes. The exercises that nourish and refresh our bodies and our minds should be done frequently. These exercises can be called the food of joy. (In the dhyana school, there is the expression “meditation as the food of joy,” which means that the feeling of joy arising from the practice of meditation nourishes and sustains us. During the ceremony for offering rice at midday, we say, “*Receiving this food, we pray that everyone will be nourished by the enjoyment of the meditation practice and the enjoyment of the Dharma that will bring them to the realization of the full truth.*”) Exercises one through four are especially suitable for this purpose. Such exercises connect us to elements that are refreshing and healthy, both in ourselves and in the world around us. They help us put an end to distracted thoughts, bringing us back to the present moment, to where we can recognize the oneness of body and mind. Although they are called nourishment exercises, they also restore internal balance, allowing the body as well as the mind to begin the work of healing. Other exercises help us renew contact not only with the self, the body, and the mind but also with the world at large, with family, and with society. We thus learn to overcome feelings of separation, loneliness, and isolation and begin to see a new way of being in, being part of, the world. Some of the exercises make us whole, and in others we learn to let go. Practitioners can judge from experience which

exercises are most suitable for their needs and the circumstances in which they find themselves.

The Person Guiding the Meditation

Those who are chosen to guide sitting meditation exercises should be experienced in the practice of meditation; that is, they themselves should have realized an inner transformation. They should know how to invite^[1] the bell during the meditation in a firm and unhurried way, so that the sound of the bell expresses and gives rise to a stable and calm state of mind. The voice of the guide should be neither too loud nor too soft. It should inspire and at the same time soothe. The guide must be sensitive to the needs of the participants. Just as the doctor must choose the medicine best suited to the patient, the guide must determine the most appropriate exercises for the community of participants. The subject matter of the guided meditation and the length of time allotted to it will be based on this understanding. If the participants experience delight and ease after each session of guided meditation, then the guide can be said to have succeeded in the task.

The Best Way to Practice

Before practicing any of the exercises, it is important to understand its purpose. Usually, the person leading a meditation will take five to seven minutes at the beginning of a session to explain the exercise. In this book you will find basic guidelines before each exercise. A single exercise can be practiced over several periods of meditation. After any session of guided practice, the person leading the meditation should be ready to hear the reactions of the participants, so that in the succeeding sessions, the meditation can better fit their needs. Practitioners must be given enough time to grasp each stage of the meditation. For example, the in-breath is always accompanied by an image, and the out-breath often has another image, based on the preceding one. Using an image to meditate is much easier and more useful than using an abstract idea. The guide should allow as many as ten to twelve breaths, or even more, for the meditation participants to focus themselves. Indeed, every session should begin with a few minutes of mindful breathing so that participants can calm their minds and open themselves to the joy of meditation. The bell should not be invited with a full sound, lest it take the practitioners by surprise. The guide should simply wake the bell^[2] before continuing on to the next stage of the exercise. The voice of the guide should be expressive of the spirit and the image upon which the participants are concentrating. This requires a little practice, and all participants should practice the role of guide so that at some time in the future they may be able

to help others.

Breathing and Looking Deeply

Breathing and knowing that we are breathing is a basic practice. No one can be truly successful in the art of meditating without going through the door of breathing. To practice conscious breathing is to open the door to *stopping* and *looking deeply* in order to enter the domain of concentration and insight. The meditation master Tang Hoi, the first patriarch of the dhyana school in Vietnam (third century C.E.), said that “*Anapananusmriti* (being aware of the breathing) is the great vehicle offered by the Buddhas to living beings” (from the preface to the *Anapananusmriti* sutra). Conscious breathing is the way into any sort of meditative concentration. Conscious breathing also leads us to the basic realizations of the impermanence, emptiness, interdependent origination, selflessness, and nonduality of all that is. It is true that we can practice *stopping* and *looking deeply* without using conscious breathing, but conscious breathing is the safest and surest path we can follow. Thus all the exercises presented here employ the vehicle of conscious breathing. The breathing carries the image, and the image throws open the doors closed by our wrong perceptions.

“You only need to sit.”

While practicing sitting meditation, you need to feel completely at ease. Every muscle in your body should be relaxed, including the muscles in your face. The best way to relax the muscles in your body is to smile gently as you breathe. You should keep your spinal column quite straight, but the body should not be rigid. This position will relax you, and you can enjoy the feeling of ease. Do not make a great effort, do not struggle, do not fight. Let go of everything as you sit. This prevents backache, shoulder-ache, or headache. If you are able to find a cushion that fits your body well, you can sit for a long time without feeling tired.

Some people say they do not know what to do when they are sitting. They have been taught a correct meditation posture but do not know how to make their breathing light and even. The exercises found here will help them realize the oneness of body and mind. At the very least, they will learn that it is possible to do “something” while sitting.

“You only need to sit” is an exhortation of Tao Dong (Soto) meditation. It means that you should sit without waiting for a miracle—and that includes the miracle of enlightenment. If you sit always in expectation, you cannot be in contact with or enjoy the present moment, which always contains the whole

of life. *Sit* in this context means to sit in an awakened way, in a relaxed way, with your mind awake, calm, and clear. Only this can be called *sitting*, and it takes training and practice.

Unfavorable Reactions to Guided Meditation

Some people find the sound of the bell and the spoken voice during the sitting meditation session disturbing. Accustomed to silence while meditating, they feel that their peace and joy is taken away from them in guided meditation. This is not difficult to understand. In silent meditation, you are able to calm your body and your mind. You do not want anyone to disturb that state of lightness, peace, and joy. But, if you are content only with this, you will not be able to go far in the work of transforming the depths of your consciousness. There are people who meditate only to forget the complications and problems of life, like rabbits crouching under a hedge to escape a hunter or people taking shelter in a cellar to avoid bombs. The feeling of security and protection arises naturally when we sit in meditation, but we cannot continue in this state forever. We need the vigor and strength to come out of the meditation hall into life because that is the only way we can hope to change our world. In the practice of guided meditation, we have the opportunity to look deeply into the mind, to sow wholesome seeds there, to strengthen and cultivate those seeds so that they may become the means for transforming the suffering in us. Finally, we can also be guided in meditation to come face to face with that suffering in order to understand its root causes and be free of its bondage.

Guided meditation is not some new invention. It was used by practitioners in the time of the Buddha. This is clear if you read the Sutra for the Sick and the Dying (Ekottara Agama, chapter 51, sutra 8; Madhyama Agama, sutra 26; or Majjhima Nikaya, sutta 143). This sutra records the guided meditation that Sariputra used to help the layman Anathapindika when he was lying on his sick bed. The Venerable Sariputra guided Anathapindika step by step until he was able to transform his fear of death. The Anapanasati sutta is also a guided meditation teaching. In short, guided meditation has been part of the Buddhist tradition right from the beginning.

The guided meditation exercises in this book can help many practitioners by making their sitting meditation more concrete. Because of the systematic nature of the exercises, they could open a new era for the practice of sitting meditation.

The Breath, the Bell, the Guiding Sentences, and the Key Words

The leader of the guided meditation exercise first makes a “waking-up” sound on the rim of the bell to draw the attention of the community. She should allow five or six seconds to pass before reading the two guiding sentences. For example (from exercise four):

Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.

Breathing out, I feel fresh.

After that, she pronounces the *key words* (the condensed version of the guiding sentences):

flower/fresh

A full sound of the bell signals the practice stage. After five, ten, fifteen, or more in/out breaths, the leader of the meditation invites another waking-up sound, allows five or six seconds to pass, and then reads the next two guiding sentences.

There are exercises where the in/out breathing is the sole object of mindfulness and concentration. For example (from exercise two):

Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.

Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.

In other exercises, the breathing carries in itself an image, and this image is visualized and kept alive during the whole in-breath or out-breath. The image is associated closely with the breathing. For example (from exercise four):

Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain.

Breathing out, I feel solid.

Breathing and Singing

In this book you will see some practice songs printed. It is beneficial to sing as part of our meditation practice. First of all, the music helps us remember the words of the guided meditation that have been incorporated into the song. Once a meditation is memorized it is much easier to put it into practice in a natural way, whether we are sitting or engaged in any activity.

Before beginning a Dharma talk or a Dharma discussion, singing a song can help create a calm and joyful atmosphere. While singing we practice the words that we are singing. If we sing the word “flower” we feel the freshness of the flower as we sing. We can also use the singing or music of the song as an accompaniment to our breathing. One half of the group can sing as the other half listens and breathes, and then the two halves change roles.

[1] We never say “strike” the bell because for us the bell is a friend who can wake us up to full understanding. We say “invite” the bell, meaning invite the bell to sound.

[2] To wake the bell means to touch it firmly with the inviter and not move the inviter away. This muffles the sound. A “wake-up” is always followed by an in-breath and an out-breath and then the full sound can be made. Making this full sound is called inviting the bell.

Guided Meditation Exercises

Chapter I. Mindfulness of the Body

In the Anapanasati Sutta, the Buddha teaches mindfulness of breathing as a guided meditation. There are sixteen exercises divided into four parts. The first part is using the breath to be mindful of the body. The second is using the breath to be mindful of the feelings. The third is breathing to be mindful of the mind. The fourth is breathing to be mindful of the objects of the mind. In this book all four of these areas or fields of mindfulness are covered. The exercises on mindfulness of the body are the most basic practice and can be used at any time as an introduction to exercises for looking deeply and transforming. They help us become accustomed to breathing consciously and to use the breathing to unite body and mind.

Exercise One

Joy of Meditation as Nourishment

1. Breathing in, I calm my body. Calm

Breathing out, I smile. Smile

2. Breathing in, I dwell in Present moment

the present moment.

Breathing out, I know it is Wonderful moment

a wonderful moment.

Many people begin to practice sitting meditation with the help of this exercise. Even those who have meditated for many years continue to practice it, because the exercise is so effective.

Breathing in, give complete attention to the in-breath. Wherever in the body the breath may be, feel the calm it brings. Just like drinking cool water on a hot day, feel how the breath cools the inner organs of the body. When practicing meditation, if the body is calm then the mind is calm. Conscious breathing makes the body and mind one. In breathing out, smile to relax all the facial muscles (the face has about three hundred small muscles in all). The nervous system will also be relaxed. The half smile can be seen as a sign of

the calm brought by the in-breath, but it is itself also a means of attaining comfort and a clearer awareness of peace and joy. The conscious breathing and smile should be practiced during five, ten, or even fifteen in/out breaths before moving on to the second stage of the exercise.

Stage two of the exercise brings us back to the present moment. By dwelling in the present moment, we put an end to attachments to the past and anxieties about the future. Life is only available in the present. We need to return to *this* moment to be in touch with life as it really is. To know that we are alive, that we can be in contact with all the wonders within us and around us, is truly a miracle. We need only to open our eyes and to listen carefully to enjoy life's richness. In using conscious breathing, we can transform the present moment into a moment full of wonder and beauty.

This exercise can be practiced anywhere at any time: in the meditation hall, in the kitchen, on the bank of a river, in a park, whether we are walking or standing still, lying down, or sitting, even when we are working.

Exercise Two

Joy of Meditation as Nourishment

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Breathing in, I know | In |
| I am breathing in. | |
| Breathing out, I know | Out |
| I am breathing out. | |
| 2. Breathing in, my breath grows deep. | Deep |
| Breathing out, my breath goes slowly. | Slow |
| 3. Aware of my body, I breathe in. | Aware of body |
| Relaxing my body, I breathe out. | Relaxing body |
| 4. Calming my body, I breathe in. | Calming body |
| Caring for my body, I breathe out. | Caring for body |
| 5. Smiling to my body, I breathe in. | Smiling to body |

Easing my body, I breathe out.	Easing body
6. Smiling to my body, I breathe in.	Smiling to body
Releasing the tensions in my body,	Releasing tensions
I breathe out.	
7. Feeling joy (to be alive), I breathe in.	Feeling joy
Feeling happy, I breathe out.	Feeling happy
8. Dwelling in the present moment,	Being present
I breathe in.	
Enjoying the present moment,	Enjoying
I breathe out.	
9. Aware of my stable posture,	Stable posture
I breathe in.	
Enjoying the stability, I breathe out.	Enjoying

While this exercise is easy and pleasant to practice, it also brings about many good results. Through this exercise, many people who are just beginning to meditate can taste the pure joy that meditation brings. Moreover, those who have already been practicing for some years can use this exercise to nourish body and mind and to continue further on the path of meditation.

The first stage (in, out) is to identify the breath. If this is an in-breath, the practitioner must know that it is an in-breath. If this is an out-breath, the practitioner must know that it is an out-breath. In concentrating on the breath even a few times, the practitioner will naturally stop thinking about the past and the future, putting an end to dispersed thoughts. This happens because the mind of the meditator is wholly with the breathing, in identifying the in-breath and the out-breath. In this way, the meditator has become one with the breathing. The mind is no longer an anxious mind or a thinking mind; it is simply a breathing mind.

The second stage (deep, slow) is to see that the in-breath is already

growing deeper and the out-breath has already slowed down. This process happens of itself and does not require any effort on the part of the meditator. To breathe and to be aware that you are breathing (as in the first stage of the exercise) naturally makes the breathing deeper, slower, more even. In other words, the breathing has more quality. When the breathing has become even, calm, and rhythmical, the practitioner begins to feel peace and joy in body as well as in mind. The tranquility of the breathing brings the tranquility of the body and of the mind. At this point, the meditator begins to experience meditation as the food of joy.

The third stage (awareness of the whole body, relaxing the whole body) brings the mind home to the body with the in-breath, and the mind becomes acquainted with the body. The breathing is the bridge that takes the meditator from the body to the mind and from the mind to the body. The function of the out-breath is to relax the whole body. While breathing out, the meditator allows the muscles in the shoulders, in the arms, and then in the whole body to relax so that a feeling of comfort is apparent in the whole body. This stage should be practiced for at least ten in- and out-breaths.

The fourth stage (calming the body, caring for the body) calms the functions of the body with the in-breath. With the out-breath, the meditator expresses a heartfelt compassion for the needs of the body. If the meditator continues to practice the third stage, the breath will be utterly calming and help the meditator to treat the body with deep respect and care.

The fifth stage (smiling to the whole body, easing the body) brings relaxation to all the facial muscles. The meditator sends the half smile to the whole body, as if it were a fresh, cool stream of water. To ease the body is to feel light. This stage of the exercise nourishes the whole body through the compassion of the meditator.

The sixth stage (smiling to the body, releasing the tensions in the body) is a continuation of the fifth stage. Here the breathing helps remove all the tensions that still remain in the body.

The seventh stage (feeling joy, feeling happy) brings awareness of the feeling of joy when the meditator breathes in. This is the joy of being alive, of being in good health (which is the same as living in awareness), of being able to nourish the body at the same time as the soul. The out-breath brings a feeling of happiness. To sit with nothing to do but breathe in awareness is a great happiness. Countless people bounce about like yo-yos in their busy lives and never have the chance to feel this meditator's joy.

The eighth stage (present moment, wonderful moment) brings the meditator back to the present moment with the in-breath. The Buddha taught that the past has already gone and the future has not yet come; that we find life in what is happening *now*. To dwell in the present is truly to return to life. Only in the present moment is the meditator really in touch with the wonders of life. Peace, joy, liberation, the buddha nature, and nirvana cannot be found anywhere else. Happiness lies in the present moment. The in-breath helps the meditator be in touch with this happiness. The out-breath also brings much happiness to the meditator, and that is why he says, “wonderful moment.”

The ninth stage (stable posture, enjoying) steadies the meditator in the sitting position he has adopted. It will help a posture that is not yet straight, not yet beautiful, to become both straight and beautiful. A stable sitting posture brings about ease and enjoyment of that stability. The meditator becomes master of his body and mind and is not pulled hither and thither by the different actions of body, speech, and mind, in which he might otherwise drown.

Exercise Three

Joy of Meditation as Nourishment

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|--|-------|
| 1. Breathing in, I know | In |
| I am breathing in. | |
| Breathing out, I know | Out |
| I am breathing out. | |
| 2. Breathing in, my breath grows deep. | Deep |
| Breathing out, my breath goes slowly. Slow | |
| 3 Breathing in, I feel calm. | Calm |
| Breathing out, I feel ease. Ease | |
| 4. Breathing in, I smile. | Smile |
| Breathing out, I release. Release | |

5. Dwelling in the present moment. Present moment

I know it is a wonderful moment. Wonderful moment

This exercise also can be practiced anywhere, in the meditation hall, in the living room, in the kitchen, or while on a train.

The first stage is designed to bring body and mind back into oneness and at the same time to help bring us back to the present moment, to connect us with the miracle of life now occurring. If we can breathe in this spirit for two or three minutes, our breathing will quite naturally become light, leisurely, gentler, slower, and deeper, and naturally we shall feel much more at ease in body as well as in mind. This is the second stage, “deep, slow.” We can stay with this stage for just as long as we like.

Next we come to “calm, ease.” Here we can achieve deeper tranquility (Sanskrit *prasrabdhis*), a great calm of body and mind, and the joy of meditation will continue to nourish us. The final two stages have already been discussed in exercise two. We can learn by heart the gatha, and we can also sing it.



Exercise Four

Touching, Connecting

1. Aware of the hair on my head, Hair

I breathe in.

Smiling to the hair on my head, Smiling

I breathe out.

2. Aware of my eyes, I breathe in. Eyes

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|---|-----------|
| Smiling to my eyes, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 3. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. | Ears |
| Smiling to my ears, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 4. Aware of my teeth, I breathe in. | Teeth |
| Smiling to my teeth, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 5. Aware of my smile, I breathe in. | Smile |
| Smiling to my smile, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 6. Aware of my shoulders, I breathe in. | Shoulders |
| Smiling to my shoulders, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 7. Aware of my arms, I breathe in. | Arms |
| Smiling to my arms, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 8. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. | Lungs |
| Smiling to my lungs, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 9. Aware of my heart, I breathe in. | Heart |
| Smiling to my heart, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 10. Aware of my liver, I breathe in. | Liver |
| Smiling to my liver, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 11. Aware of my bowels, I breathe in. | Bowels |
| Smiling to my bowels, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 12. Aware of my kidneys, I breathe in. | Kidneys |
| Smiling to my kidneys, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 13. Aware of my feet, I breathe in. | Feet |
| Smiling to my feet, I breathe out. | Smiling |

14. Aware of my toes, I breathe in. Toes

Smiling to my toes, I breathe out. Smiling

This exercise helps the meditation practitioner to become more attuned to her body. The in-breath is to touch a certain part of the body: eyes, ears, heart, lungs, and so on. The out-breath smiles to that part of the body. The half smile can soften and heal. It expresses care and affection for the body. The lungs, the heart, and the liver work diligently over many decades, but how often do we take the time to show them any attention and/or compassion? Not only do we fail to recognize when these parts of the body are tired and out of sorts, but we frequently treat them in a brutal way, weakening them even further. The liver is destroyed by drinking alcohol. Incorrect breathing weakens the lungs, makes them vulnerable to disease, and at the same time undermines the other organs of the body. If we are always anxious and worrying and over-emotional, if we eat too much fat, we can put our hearts at risk. But by breathing consciously and putting ourselves in touch with all the different parts of the body, we come to feel and understand the body, and we learn in a concrete way how we can bring it peace and joy. The peace and joy of the body is nothing other than our own peace and joy. This exercise is an exercise of love meditation toward the body. If we are not able to love our bodies, then how can we love anyone?

The first time you practice this exercise you might think that it is too simple, but after you have been practicing it for some time, you shall see how important it is. At first you just recognize and smile to the different parts of your body, but gradually you shall see each individual part very clearly and deeply. Every hair and every cell contains all the data necessary to make the universe. That is the teaching of interdependence found in the Avatamsaka sutra. Every hair on your head is a message from the universe. You can realize awakening by meditating on a single hair.

If you are practicing on your own, you can use this exercise when you are lying down to relax or to go to sleep.

Exercise Five

Being in Touch, Looking Deeply

1. Looking at myself as a	Myself five years old
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five-year-old child, I breathe in.

Smiling with compassion to Smiling

the five-year-old child, I breathe out.

2. Looking at myself as Myself seventy-five

a seventy-five-year-old person, years old

I breathe in.

Smiling to the Smiling

seventy-five-year-old person,

I breathe out.

3 Looking at my physical body now, My body now

I breathe in.

Smiling to my physical body now, Smiling

I breathe out.

4. Aware of the look on my face now, Look on

I breathe in. my face now

Smiling to my physical body now, Smiling

I breathe out.

5. Aware of the state of my skin, State of skin

I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my skin, Smiling

I breathe out.

6. Aware of the state of my hair, State of hair

I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my hair, Smiling
I breathe out.

7. Aware of the state of my heart, State of heart
I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my heart, Smiling
I breathe out.

8. Aware of the state of my lungs, State of lungs
I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my lungs, Smiling
I breathe out.

9. Aware of the state of my liver, State of liver
I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my liver, Smiling
I breathe out.

10. Aware of the state of my bowels, State of bowels
I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my bowels, Smiling
I breathe out.

11. Aware of the state of my kidneys, State of kidneys
I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my kidneys, Smiling
I breathe out.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 12. Caring for my heart, I breathe in. | Caring for heart |
| Smiling to my heart, I breathe out. | Smiling to heart |
| 13. Caring for my lungs, I breathe in. | Caring for lungs |
| Smiling to my lungs, I breathe out. | Smiling to lungs |
| 14. Caring for my liver, I breathe in. | Caring for liver |
| Smiling to my liver, I breathe out. | Smiling to liver |
| 15. Caring for my bowels, I breathe in. | Caring for bowels |
| Smiling to my bowels, I breathe out. | Smiling to bowels |
| 16. Caring for my kidneys, I breathe in. | Caring for kidneys |
| Smiling to my kidneys, I breathe out. | Smiling to kidneys |
| 17. Caring for my brain, I breathe in. | Caring for brain |
| Smiling to my brain, I breathe out. | Smiling to brain |

This exercise puts us in touch with our bodies and helps us be aware of the condition of each part. It helps us express our concern and our compassion for those parts. This is a form of compassion meditation whose object is the body. It teaches us to live mindfully in order to protect our health and the peace and joy of our bodies. It shows us how to eat, drink, sleep, rest, and work mindfully each day so as not to bring poisons into our bodies. We learn not to work the parts of the body (heart, intestines, kidneys, and so on) to exhaustion and instead learn how to rest, refresh, and restore to each part the capacity to function normally.

Exercise Six

Being in Touch, Looking Deeply

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Aware of my body, I breathe in. | Aware of body |
| Smiling to my body, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 2. Aware of the element earth in me, | Aware of earth |

I breathe in.

Smiling to the element earth in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

3. Aware of the element water in me, Aware of water

I breathe in.

Smiling to the element water in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

4. Aware of the element fire in me, Aware of fire

I breathe in.

Smiling to the element fire in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

5. Aware of the element air in me, Aware of air

I breathe in.

Smiling to the element air in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

6. Aware of the element space in me, Aware of space

I breathe in.

Smiling to the element space in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

7. Aware of the element consciousness Aware of
in me, I breathe in. consciousness

Smiling to the element consciousness Smiling

in me, I breathe out.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 8. Recognizing the element earth | Recognizing earth |
| everywhere, I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the element earth | |
| everywhere, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 9. Seeing that the element earth | Earth contains |
| contains water, fire, air, | other elements |
| space, and consciousness, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing that earth is water, fire, air, | Earth is the |
| space, and consciousness, | other elements |
| I breathe out. | |
| 10. Recognizing the element water | Recognizing water |
| everywhere, I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the element water | Smiling |
| everywhere I breathe out. | |
| 11. Seeing that the element water | Water contains |
| contains earth, fire, air, space, and | other elements |
| consciousness, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing that water is earth, fire, air, | Water is the |
| space, and consciousness, | other elements |
| I breathe out. | |
| 12. Recognizing the element fire | Recognizing fire |
| everywhere, I breathe in. | |

Smiling to the element fire
everywhere, I breathe out.

Smiling

13. Seeing that the element fire
contains earth, water, air, space, and
consciousness, I breathe in.

Fire contains
other elements

Seeing that fire is earth, water, air,
space, and consciousness,
I breathe out.

Fire is the
other elements

14. Recognizing the element air
everywhere, I breathe in.

Recognizing air

Smiling to the element air
everywhere, I breathe out.

Smiling

15. Seeing that the element air
contains earth, water, fire, space, and
consciousness, I breathe in.

Air contains
other elements

Seeing that air is earth, water, fire,
space, and consciousness,
I breathe out.

Air is the
other elements

16. Recognizing the element space
everywhere, I breathe in.

Recognizing space

Smiling to the element space
everywhere, I breathe out.

Smiling

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 17. Seeing that the element space | Space contains |
| contains earth, water, fire, | other elements |
| air, and consciousness, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing that space is earth, water, fire, | Space is the |
| air, and consciousness, | other elements |
| I breathe out. | |
| 18. Recognizing the element | Recognizing |
| consciousness everywhere, | consciousness |
| I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the element consciousness | Smiling |
| everywhere, I breathe out. | |
| 19. Seeing that the element consciousness | Consciousness |
| contains earth, water, air, | contains other |
| fire, and space, I breathe in. | elements |
| Seeing that consciousness is earth, | Consciousness |
| water, air, fire, and space, | is the other |
| I breathe out. | elements |

This exercise leads us to the observation of the six elements that comprise both the human organism and the universe. The six elements are earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. Earth stands for the solid aspect of things, water for the fluid, fire for warmth and heat, air for movement. Space and consciousness are the nature and frame of the four first elements. When we breathe in, we see earth in our bodies. When we breathe out, we recognize and smile to that element earth. Earth is the mother who gives us birth, and our mother is right inside us. We are one with our mother; we are one with the earth. Every moment earth is entering us. The vegetables we eat are also earth. As we meditate, we should see earth by means of concrete images.

When we meditate on water in ourselves, we should see water in our blood, in our saliva, bile, and sweat, and we should smile to acknowledge water. Our bodies are approximately 70 percent water. We can also see air and space in our bodies. If we look deeply, we shall see that these elements all depend on each other. The air, for example, is nourished by the forest, and the forest needs the air to nourish itself. The vegetable world, including the vegetables we eat, requires the earth and the heat of the sun to grow. Neither space nor solid matter could exist without the other. The sutra teaches that form is also mind, and we see consciousness has penetrated every cell of our bodies. Consciousness upholds body, and body upholds consciousness.

When we begin to meditate on earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness outside our bodies, we recognize that these six elements are everywhere in the universe. We gradually come to see that we and the universe are one. The universe is our basis, and we are the basis of the universe. The composition and the decomposition of a body do not add anything to or take away anything from the universe. The sun is just as necessary for our bodies as our hearts are. The forest is just as necessary for our bodies as are our lungs. Our bodies need the river as much as they need our blood. If we continue to meditate like this, we shall see that we can let go of the boundaries between “I” and “not I,” and thus we can overcome the distinction between birth and death, being and nonbeing, and finally we can overcome fear. According to the principle of interdependent origination, the *one* comes about because of the *all*, and the *all* is present in the *one*. Thus the earth element contains the water, heat, air, space, and consciousness elements. The earth element can be recognized as including the whole universe within itself. The Pali word *kasina* (in Sanskrit, *krtsna*) is sometimes translated as “sign,” meaning the sign that we have realized the object of our meditation, but the original meaning of the word is “wholeness,” and when our meditation is deep enough, we see that each element contains all the others. Such a practice is called *krtsnāyatanabhāvanā*, which means “training in entering the whole.” In *krtsnāyatanabhāvanā*, we can also meditate on colors: blue, red, white, and yellow. These four colors and the six elements make up ten trainings in entering the whole. Colors are also present in the universe and in us, and every color contains all the other colors and also contains the six elements that are in us and in the whole universe.

Exercise Seven

Taking Refuge

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Breathing in, I go back to myself. | Going back |
| Breathing out, I take refuge in | My own island |
| my own island. | |
| 2. Breathing in, Buddha is | Buddha is |
| my mindfulness. | mindfulness |
| Breathing out, my mindfulness | Shining near |
| shines near and far. | and far |
| 3. Breathing in, Dharma is my | Dharma is |
| conscious breath. | conscious breath |
| Breathing out, the conscious breath | Protecting body |
| protects my body and mind. | and mind |
| 4. Breathing in, Sangha is my | Sangha is five |
| five skandhas. | skandhas |
| Breathing out, my skandhas are | Practicing in |
| practicing in harmony. | harmony |

Although this exercise can be used anywhere and at any time, it is especially useful when we find ourselves in a state of anxiety and agitation and do not know what is best to do. It is a means of finding refuge through the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. When we practice this exercise, it takes us directly to a place of peace and stability, to the most calm and stable place we can go. Buddha taught: “Be an island unto yourself. You should take refuge in yourself and not in anything else.” This island is right mindfulness, the awakened nature, the foundation of stability and calm that resides in each of us. This island is the Dharma, or the teachings of the Awakened Ones that shine light on the path we are treading and help us see what we need to do and what we should not do. Finally, this island is also the Sanghakaya, or our practice community. In each member of the Sanghakaya, the five skandhas, elements of body and mind, need to be in accord with each other. That is, our

own skandhas must be in harmony before we can live in harmony with others. When the five skandhas are in harmony then, naturally, there will be the right action that brings peace. We will find that the nervous system and heart rediscover their evenness and their calm. Conscious breathing itself brings about this evenness. If we can become aware that we are doing what is most appropriate in a difficult moment, we shall see that we no longer have any reason to be anxious or agitated. Is there anything better we could possibly do than that? “Being an Island unto Myself” is a song to help us memorize the gatha:



Say you were on an airplane and the pilot announced that the plane was in trouble and might crash, this exercise would enable you to calm yourself and clear your mind. By bringing the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha back to your own island to shine light upon it, you would be able to find peace. If you were indeed to die, you would be able to die beautifully, as you have lived beautifully, in mindfulness. You would have enough calm and clarity in that moment and would know exactly what to do and what not to do.

Chapter II. Images

When we meditate we use our stored consciousness (the deepest levels of our consciousness) more than our mind consciousness (our thinking and rationalization). That is why images are more useful to the meditator than are abstract concepts. These exercises are to help us be aware of and nourished by the contact of the five senses with the sense impressions. They help us appreciate more the wonders of life that our senses make possible. They also help us be aware of any feelings—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral—that arise when our senses touch sense objects.

Exercise One

Joy of Meditation as Nourishment

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Breathing in, I know | In |
| I am breathing in. | |
| Breathing out, I know | Out |
| I am breathing out. | |
| 2. Breathing in, I see myself as a flower. | Flower |
| Breathing out, I feel fresh. | Fresh |
| 3. Breathing in, I see myself | Mountain |
| as a mountain. | |
| Breathing out, I feel solid. | Solid |
| 4. Breathing in, I see myself as still water. | Still water |
| Breathing out, I reflect all that is. | Reflecting |
| 5. Breathing in, I see myself as space. | Space |
| Breathing out, I feel free. | Free |

This exercise can be practiced in the first part of any period of sitting meditation, or for the whole of the meditation period, to nourish and calm body and mind, to enable the meditator to let go and attain freedom.

The first stage should be practiced for as long as it takes the body and mind to become one. The second stage encourages a sense of freshness. A human being should be as fresh as a flower, for indeed we are one species of flower in the garden of all phenomena. We need only to look at the beauty of children to see that human beings are flowers. Two round eyes are flowers. The clear complexion of the face with its gentle forehead is a flower. The two hands are a flower... . It is only because we worry that our foreheads become wrinkled. It is only because we cry so much and pass so many sleepless nights that our eyes are clouded. We breathe in to restore the flower in us. This in-breath brings the flower in us back to life. The out-breath helps us be aware that we have the capacity to be, and are now, fresh as a flower. This awareness waters our flower. It is the practice of loving-kindness meditation toward ourselves.

The third stage, “mountain, solid,” helps us to stand firmly when we are upset by vehement feelings. Whenever we feel despair, anxiety, fear, or anger, we are carried right into the heart of a whirlwind. We are like a tree standing in the gale. If we look up, we shall see our branches bending as if they are about to break and be carried away by the storm. But if we look down, we shall know that the roots of the tree are held firmly in the earth, and we shall feel more stable and relaxed.

Body and mind are like that. When there is a hurricane of emotions in us, if we know how to withdraw from the storm—that is, if we know how to withdraw from the turmoil of the brain—we shall not be swept away. We must transfer our attention to a place in the abdomen about two fingers’ width below the navel and breathe deeply and slowly according to the formula “mountain, solid.” In doing this, we shall see that we are not just our emotions. Emotions come and go, but we are always here. When we are oppressed by emotions, we feel very insecure and fragile; we may feel that we are in danger of losing life itself. Some people do not know how to deal with their strong emotions. When they are suffering greatly from despair, fear, or anger, they think the only way to put an end to their suffering is to put an end to their life. But those who know how to sit in a meditation position and practice breathing with the exercise “mountain, solid” can weather such times of difficulty and suffering.

This exercise can be practiced lying down, resting easily on the back. Our

entire attention should be directed to the rising and falling of the abdomen. This will enable us to leave the storm area and to know that we can choose a more peaceful, stable state of mind whenever a storm occurs. Nevertheless, we should not wait until we find ourselves in difficulty in order to practice. If we do not have the habit of practicing, we shall forget how to do the exercise, and our emotions may once again overwhelm and oppress us. To make a good habit, we should practice every day; in that way, whenever painful feelings arise we shall know quite naturally how to resolve and to transform them. In addition, we can explain the practice to young people to help them ride out their stormy periods.

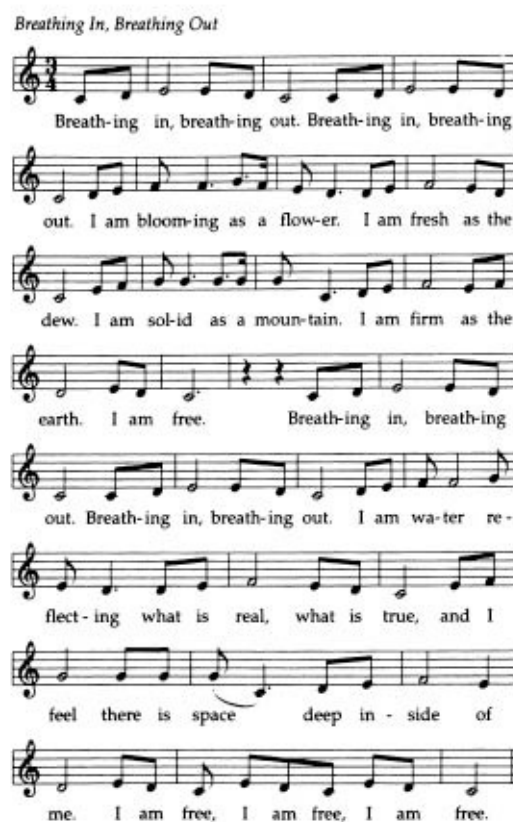
“Still water, reflecting” is the fourth stage intended to calm the mind and body. In the Anapanasati sutta, the Buddha taught: “Breathing in I make my mind calm... .” This exercise essentially does the same; the image of the still lake water simply makes the practice easier. When our mind is not calm, our perceptions are usually clouded; what we see, hear, and think does not reflect the truth of things, just as when the surface of a lake is troubled by waves, it cannot clearly reflect the clouds above. I wrote this gatha based on the words of our ancestral teachers:

Buddha is the cool moon,
Crossing the sky of utter emptiness.
The lake of the mind of beings quietens,
The moon reflects beautifully in it.

Our sorrows, pains, and anger arise from our wrong perceptions. In order to avoid these wrong perceptions, we need to practice making the mind as still as the surface of a still lake. The breathing is what does that work.

“Space, free” is the fifth stage. If we have too many preoccupations and cares, we will not have clarity and peace and joy. Thus the purpose of this exercise is to create space for ourselves, space in our hearts and space around us. We must release the anxieties and projects that burden us. We should deal in the same way with sorrows and anger. We must practice letting go of the things we carry needlessly. This sort of baggage only makes life heavy, even if sometimes it seems we cannot be happy without it—without, for example, a title, high position, fame, business, and people to run around after us. But if we look again, we shall see that this baggage is often nothing but an obstacle to our happiness. If we can just put it down, we shall have happiness. “*Buddha is the cool moon,/ Crossing the sky of utter emptiness... .*” Limitless space is the sky of utter emptiness. That is why the happiness of the Buddha is so great. One day the Buddha was sitting in the forest at Vaisali and saw a

farmer going past. The farmer asked the Buddha if he had seen his herd of cows, which had broken loose. He also said that earlier that year he had lost two acres of sesame fields when they were attacked by caterpillars and complained that he must be the most wretched person on earth. Perhaps, he said, he should put an end to his own life. The Buddha advised him to look in another direction. After the farmer had gone, the Buddha turned to the bhiksus who were sitting with him and smiled. He said: “Bhiksus, are you aware of your happiness and freedom? You do not have any cows you need be afraid of losing.” Practicing this last exercise helps us to let go of our cows, the cows of our mind and the cows we have gathered around us. It also can be sung:



Exercise Two

Touching, Healing

1. In touch with the air, I breathe in. Touching air
Smiling with the air, I breathe out. Smiling

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2. In touch with pure mountain air,

I breathe in.

Smiling with pure mountain air,

I breathe out. | Pure mountain air

Smiling |
| 3. In touch with pure countryside air,

I breathe in.

Smiling with the countryside air,

I breathe out. | Pure countryside
air

Smiling |
| 4. In touch with cool water,

I breathe in.

Smiling with the cool water,

I breathe out. | Cool water

Smiling |
| 5. In touch with the clear stream,

I breathe in.

Smiling with the clear stream,

I breathe out. | Clear stream

Smiling |
| 6. In touch with the snow on

the mountain, I breathe in.

Smiling with the snow on

the mountain, I breathe out. | Snow on
the mountain

Smiling |
| 7. In touch with the vast ocean,

I breathe in.

Smiling with the vast ocean, | Vast ocean

Smiling |

I breathe out.

8. In touch with the Arctic ice fields, Arctic ice fields

I breathe in.

Smiling with the Arctic ice fields, Smiling

I breathe out.

9. In touch with the clouds in Touching clouds
the blue sky, I breathe in.

Smiling with the clouds in Smiling

the blue sky, I breathe out.

10. In touch with the sunshine, Touching sunshine

I breathe in.

Smiling with the sunshine, Smiling

I breathe out.

11. In touch with the trees, I breathe in. Touching trees

Smiling with the trees, I breathe out. Smiling

12. In touch with the children, I breathe in. Touching children

Smiling with the children, I breathe out. Smiling

13. In touch with the people, I breathe in. Touching people

Smiling with the people, I breathe out. Smiling

14. In touch with the singing of birds, Singing birds

I breathe in.

Smiling with the singing birds, Smiling

I breathe out.

15. In touch with the sky, I breathe in. Touching sky

Smiling with the sky, I breathe out. Smiling

16. In touch with the flowers, I breathe in. Touching flowers

Smiling with the flowers, I breathe out. Smiling

17. In touch with the spring, I breathe in. Touching spring

Smiling with the spring, I breathe out. Smiling

18. In touch with the summer, I breathe in. Touching summer

Smiling with the summer, I breathe out. Smiling

19. In touch with the fall, I breathe in. Touching fall

Smiling with the fall, I breathe out. Smiling

Exercise Three

Touching, Connecting

1. Aware of my eyes, I breathe in. Aware of eyes

Aware of light, I breathe out. Aware of light

2. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. Aware of ears

Aware of sound, I breathe out. Aware of sound

3. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. Aware of ears

Aware of a cry of pain, I breathe out. Aware of

cry of pain

4. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. Aware of ears

Aware of singing, I breathe out. Aware of singing

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 5. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. | Aware of ears |
| Aware of the sound of rain, | Aware of |
| I breathe out. | sound of rain |
| 6. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. | Aware of ears |
| Aware of laughter, I breathe out. | Aware of laughter |
| 7. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. | Aware of ears |
| Aware of silence, I breathe out. | Aware of silence |
| 8. Aware of my skin, I breathe in. | Aware of skin |
| Aware of the sense of touch, | Aware of touch |
| I breathe out. | |
| 9. Aware of my skin, I breathe in. | Aware of skin |
| Aware of the sun on my skin, | Aware of sun |
| I breathe out. | |
| 10. Aware of my skin, I breathe in. | Aware of skin |
| Aware of cool water on my skin, | Aware of cool water |
| I breathe out. | |
| 11. Aware of my skin, I breathe in. | Aware of skin |
| Aware of ice on my skin, I breathe out. | Aware of ice |
| 12. Aware of my skin, I breathe in. | Aware of skin |
| Aware of touching the bark of a tree, | Touching bark |
| I breathe out. | |
| 13. Aware of my skin, I breathe in. | Aware of skin |

Aware of touching an earthworm, I breathe out.	Touching earthworm
14. Aware of my teeth, I breathe in. Aware of an apple, I breathe out.	Aware of teeth Aware of apple
15. Aware of my teeth, I breathe in. Aware of a toothache, I breathe out.	Aware of teeth Aware of toothache
16. Aware of my teeth, I breathe in. Aware of lemon juice, I breathe out.	Aware of teeth Aware of lemon juice
17. Aware of my teeth, I breathe in. Aware of the dentist's drill, I breathe out.	Aware of teeth Aware of dentist's drill
18. Aware of my tongue, I breathe in. Aware of the taste of orange juice, I breathe out.	Aware of tongue Tasting orange juice
19. Aware of my tongue, I breathe in. Aware of the taste of lemon, I breathe out.	Aware of tongue Tasting lemon
20. Aware of my tongue, I breathe in. Aware of the taste of salt water, I breathe out.	Aware of tongue Tasting salt water
21. Aware of my tongue, I breathe in. Aware of the taste of hot pepper,	Aware of tongue Tasting hot pepper

I breathe out.

22. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Aware of lungs

Aware of smell, I breathe out. Aware of smell

23. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Aware of lungs

Aware of the scent of fresh grass, Smelling

I breathe out. fresh grass

24. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Aware of lungs

Aware of the scent of roses, Smelling roses

I breathe out.

25. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Aware of lungs

Aware of the smell of dung, Smelling dung

I breathe out.

26. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Aware of lungs

Aware of tobacco smoke, I breathe out. Tobacco smoke

27. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Aware of lungs

Aware of the smell of the sea, Smelling the sea

I breathe out.

28. Aware of my liver, I breathe in. Aware of liver

Aware of the taste of wine, Tasting wine

I breathe out.

29. Aware of my liver, I breathe in. Aware of liver

Aware of greasy food, I breathe out. Aware of

	greasy food
30. Aware of my liver, I breathe in.	Aware of liver
Aware of yellow skin caused	Aware of
by a sick liver,	yellow skin
I breathe out.	
31. Aware of my feet, I breathe in.	Aware of feet
Aware of shoes, I breathe out.	Aware of shoes
32. Aware of my feet, I breathe in.	Aware of feet
Aware of a thorn, I breathe out.	Aware of thorn
33. Aware of my feet, I breathe in.	Aware of feet
Aware of young grass, I breathe out.	Young grass
34. Aware of my feet, I breathe in.	Aware of feet
Aware of an ant's hill, I breathe out.	Aware of ant's hill
35. Aware of my feet, I breathe in.	Aware of feet
Aware of sand on the beach,	Sand on the beach
I breathe out.	

These two exercises help us to be in contact with wholesome and fresh things, which have the capacity to heal.

In exercise three there are examples of sense contacts that give rise to painful feelings. This practice helps us to be mindful when we encounter painful feelings in our daily life and to be less afraid of them. When we visualize the arctic ice fields, we may recognize that this is a wonder of nature that is disappearing as global warming increases. This will help us be in touch with impermanence and also strengthen our deep aspiration to do all we can to reverse global warming.

Our minds are often thrown into a state of confusion by our anxieties and hurts, and we have lost the ability to connect with the wonderful things in life.

It is as if there is a wall between us and the richness of the world outside us, and we have become numb toward the healing elements in the world because we cannot touch them.

As you practice these two exercises, although you may not be in direct contact with the things you are asked to concentrate upon, you can find them by means of the images stored in your consciousness by your five senses. You can call up these images when you want them to present themselves. With conscious breathing and the power of concentration, contact with these images will help you to discover that your ability to feel is still intact. After practicing these two exercises, you can go outside and with your *six* senses—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (that is, perception, not just the meditating mind)—continue making connections with all the good things around you. You will see that the outside world is brighter and more beautiful than before, because you have put an end to forgetfulness and have lit the lamp of mindfulness. You have begun again to be nourished by what is wonderful in life.

Chapter III. Mindful Consumption

The practice of mindful consumption is crucial for our own well-being and the well-being of our planet. If we continue to consume thoughtlessly there is no future for our children or our children's children.

Exercise One

Mindfulness of the Five Mindfulness Trainings

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Aware of the suffering brought about
by killing, I breathe in.

Giving rise to compassion for the
victims of violence,

I breathe out. | Aware that killing
brings suffering

Compassion for
victims of violence |
| 2. | Determined not to kill, I breathe in.

Determined to foster non-violence
in actions of body, speech and mind,

I breathe out. | Not killing

Fostering
non-violence |
| 3. | Aware of the suffering brought about
by exploitation and social injustice,

I breathe in.

Giving rise to loving-kindness for the
victims of social injustice, I breathe out. | Exploitation and
social injustice

Loving-kindness |
| 4. | Feeling compassion for the victims
of exploitation, I breathe in. | Compassion
for victims |

Determined to live simply, consuming only what I need, I breathe out.	Determined to live simply
5. Aware of suffering brought about by sexual misconduct, I breathe in. Feeling compassion for a victim of sexual misconduct, I breathe out.	Suffering caused by sex Feeling compassion
6. Aware of harm to children and adults by irresponsible sexual behavior, I breathe in. Determined to practice responsibility in sexual relations, I breathe out.	Aware of harm Practicing responsibility
7. Aware of the suffering brought about by unmindful speech, I breathe in. Giving rise to loving thoughts and mindful words in my heart, I breathe out.	Suffering caused by words Loving thoughts and words
8. Feeling compassion for the one I have hurt by my words, I breathe in. Determined to listen deeply and speak mindfully, I breathe out.	Compassion Listening deeply, speaking mindfully

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 9. Aware of the suffering brought | Suffering caused |
| about by unmindful consumption, | by unmindful |
| I breathe in. | consumption |
| Giving rise to the capacity to protect | Protecting myself |
| my body and mind, I breathe out. | |
| 10. Feeling compassion for someone | Compassion |
| harmed by addiction, I breathe in. | |
| Determined to consume mindfully | Consuming |
| for the rest of my life, I breathe out. | mindfully |
| 11. Seeing myself practicing the | Practicing with |
| mindfulness trainings with | the Sangha |
| the Sangha, I breathe in. | |
| Feeling happiness to be practicing | Feeling happiness |
| the trainings with the Sangha, | |
| I breathe out. | |

The Five Mindfulness Trainings are not prohibitions to restrict our freedom. They are the practice of true love that brings happiness, both to the one who practices them and to many others. The mindfulness trainings are the fruit of our awareness and experience. They are the practice of Engaged Buddhism, protecting us as well as those with whom we live. This guided meditation waters the seed of compassion by helping us be aware of the suffering that has been caused by ourselves and others when we do not follow the guidelines of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. We receive and practice the mindfulness trainings because we see how they preserve our freedom and happiness now and in days to come. The mindfulness trainings are the concrete practice of mindfulness or enlightenment, which is the Buddha himself. They are the embodiment of the Dharma, which is the path shown by the Buddha. They are also the embodiment of the Sangha, the community of

all those who have taken up the path of practice. Practicing the Five Mindfulness Trainings is to be one with the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. To recite the mindfulness trainings is an exercise in mindfulness of their teachings and a way of looking deeply at the benefits of keeping them. [\[1\]](#)

In this exercise, certain concrete examples of suffering are given so that we can give rise to compassion. To help us practice in an alive way, it is possible to change these examples in our own meditation and make them most relevant to our own life. For a more detailed meditation in mindful consumption (the fifth mindfulness training), see the following exercise.

Exercise Two

The Four Nutriments Looking Deeply

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1. Aware of the edible food I consume | Edible food |
| every day, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing the effect of my consumption | Effect on the |
| on the universe, I breathe out. | universe |
| 2. Aware of the edible food I consume, | Edible food |
| I breathe in. | |
| Determined to eat in a way that | Reducing suffering |
| reduces the suffering of living beings, | |
| I breathe out. | |
| 3. Aware of the sense impressions | Sense impressions |
| I consume every day, I breathe in. | |
| Determined to have wholesome | Wholesome |
| sense contacts, I breathe out. | sense contacts |

4. Aware of the desires and intentions Desires and
I consume every day, I breathe in. intentions
Determined to base my intentions Understanding
in understanding and love, and love
I breathe out.
5. Aware of the collective consciousness Collective
that nourishes me every day, consciousness
I breathe in.
Determined to be nourished by what Wholesome
is wholesome in that consciousness, elements
I breathe out.

When you receive the Five Mindfulness Trainings you resolve to follow the direction of right consumption for body and mind. You are aware that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and the transformation of society. This exercise is based on the Sutra of the Four Nutriments. According to this sutra, there are four ways in which beings consume: edible food, sense contacts, intentions and desires, and collective consciousness.

Our consumption of edible food necessarily involves some suffering for other beings. If we enjoy a vegan diet, the suffering is less. A diet that includes meat, alcohol, and other products of factory farming not only causes suffering to the animals but also causes deforestation and significantly reduces the availability of arable land for the growth of crops for human consumption. Methane (the gas produced in part by decomposing organic matter) contributes more to the production of greenhouse gases than does the motor car. We can experience joy when we know that we are reducing the suffering of beings by the way we eat.

When the sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—are in touch with the sense objects—forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and mental objects—the energy we receive can be wholesome or unwholesome. Mindfulness tells us what kinds of sense contact to avoid and what kind to

foster: what films to watch, what music to hear, what books to read, what conversations to follow, what thoughts to nurture.

When we have an intention or desire, it can give us much energy. If our desire is the mind of love that wants to reduce the suffering of beings, we bring happiness to ourselves and our loved ones. If we want power, fame, or sensual gratification, we can cause suffering to our loved ones and ourselves.

Our unconscious mind is inevitably influenced by the collective consciousness that contains strong seeds of fear and discrimination. If we are not careful we can consume the collective fear. The collective consciousness also has many beautiful aspects that have been nourished by spiritual practice for thousands of years. We know that we should stay near good spiritual friends in order to be nourished by the wholesome elements of collective consciousness.

As you meditate, you can look deeply at these forms of nutriment that play an important role in your physical and mental health.

Exercise Three

Looking Deeply

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Aware of the state of my | Aware of |
| physical health, I breathe in. | physical health |
| Smiling to the state of my | Smiling |
| physical health, I breathe out. | |
| 2. Seeing poisons such as sugar, alcohol, | Poisons in body |
| and drugs in my body, I breathe in. | |
| Knowing that these poisons are | Exhausting body |
| exhausting this body, I breathe out. | |
| 3. Seeing myself bringing poisons such | Poisons consumed |
| as sugar and stimulants into my | every day |

body every day, I breathe in.

Knowing these poisons are accumulated Poisons accumulated

in my body every day, I breathe out. every day

4. Seeing the necessity for consuming Consuming

mindfully, I breathe in. mindfully

Determined to consume nourishing No longer

foods and no longer to consume consuming poisons

physically damaging substances,

I breathe out.

This exercise goes along with exercise two of this chapter. It may help to put a piece of paper and pencil in front of your meditation cushion and write down what you have determined to do.

Exercise Four

Looking Deeply

1. Aware of my mental health, Aware of

I breathe in. mental health

Smiling to my state of mental health, Smiling

I breathe out.

2. Seeing poisons such as anger, jealousy, Poisons in

and suspicion[\[2\]](#) in my consciousness, consciousness

I breathe in.

Knowing these poisons are harming Harmful to

me and those around me, self and others

I breathe out.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| 3. Seeing myself watering these | Poisons watered |
| poisonous seeds and allowing | every day |
| them to be watered every day, | |

I breathe in.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| Knowing that to continue to live like | Adding suffering |
| this is to add to suffering every day, | every day |

I breathe out.

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 4. Seeing myself determined not to water | Determined to |
| these seeds anymore, I breathe in. | transform |
| Determined to do things like breathing, | Taking action |
| smiling, and walking mindfully, [3] and | to transform |
| no longer to do things like judging, | |
| blaming, comparing [4] in order to weaken | |
| and transform the poisons, I breathe out. | |

This exercise, like the one which precedes it, can also be practiced with the help of pencil and paper. The principle is the same as that of exercise three in chapter three. The first stage is to acknowledge the poisons that are already present within us. The second is to recognize the poisons currently being introduced into our bodies and minds. In the third stage, we are able to determine what we should or should not do to transform our state of being.

In the first stage, we acknowledge the raw materials of hatred and resentment, fear, violence, infatuation, and anger, which we know are lying in the depths of our consciousness ready to surface at any time to cause us suffering.

In the second stage, we acknowledge the evils constantly assailing us during the course of our everyday lives. We are often exposed, if not first-

hand, then through films, reading material, and conversations, to violence, fear, hatred, and unnecessary craving. Society is full of violence and hatred, which accumulates in the collective consciousness. If in our daily lives we do not know how to abstain from damaging materials and attitudes, the seeds of violence, hatred, and suffering in us will continue to be watered. We need to be aware of what we hear, see, and read every day. We need to be aware of the cultural products we consume and the people with whom we are sharing experience and conversation. Do our associations and ways of consumption poison us?

The third stage marks our determination to live in mindfulness to avoid poisoning ourselves anymore. We determine to abandon those things that harm body and mind. We choose which films to watch and which materials to read, and we are careful in the associations we make and the conversations we have. This is not difficult to do if those around us, our families or our communities, are determined to practice together with us. The insights we discover in our meditation can be noted clearly on a sheet of paper. This is a way of establishing a healthy diet for living. By following this diet, we shall be able to restore the health of body and mind and recover joy in being alive. It is best if we can share this exercise with our families or the people with whom we live.

[1] Please see the appendix for the text of the Recitation of the Five Mindfulness Trainings.

[2] Also, fear, anxiety, hatred, violence, arrogance, passion, intolerance, illusion, prejudices ...

[3] Also, listening to, reading, or discussing subjects that can water the seeds of happiness, tolerance, compassion, forgiveness, openness, bringing joy to people ...

[4] Also, listening to, reading, or watching materials that can water the seeds of the poisons mentioned in note 2.

Chapter IV. Feelings and Mind

This chapter treats the second and third fields of mindfulness.

Exercise One

Looking Deeply, Healing

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Aware of my body, I breathe in. | Aware of body |
| Smiling to my body, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 2. Experiencing the pain in my body, | Experiencing |
| I breathe in. | physical pain |
| Smiling to the pain in my body, | Smiling |
| I breathe out. | |
| 3. Recognizing that this is a | Recognizing |
| physical pain, I breathe in. | pain as physical |
| Knowing that this is no | Only physical pain |
| more than a physical pain, | |
| I breathe out. | |
| 4. Aware of the state of my mind, | Aware of mind |
| I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the state of my mind, | Smiling |
| I breathe out. | |
| 5. Experiencing the pain in my mind, | Experiencing |
| I breathe in. | mind's pain |

Smiling to the pain in my mind, Smiling

I breathe out.

6. Experiencing the pain of fear in me, Experiencing fear

I breathe in.

Smiling to the pain of fear, Smiling

I breathe out.

7. Experiencing the feeling of insecurity Experiencing
in me, I breathe in. insecurity

Smiling to the feeling of insecurity, Smiling

I breathe out.

8. Experiencing the feeling of sadness Experiencing
in me, I breathe in. sadness

Smiling to the feeling of sadness, Smiling

I breathe out.

9. Experiencing the feeling of anger Experiencing anger
in me, I breathe in.

Smiling to the feeling of anger, Smiling

I breathe out.

10. Experiencing the feeling of jealousy, Experiencing
I breathe in. jealousy

Smiling to the feeling of jealousy, Smiling

I breathe out.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 11. Experiencing the feeling of attachment, | Experiencing |
| I breathe in. | attachment |
| Smiling to the feeling of attachment, | Smiling |
| I breathe out. | |
| 12. Experiencing the feeling of joy, | Experiencing joy |
| I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the feeling of joy, | Smiling |
| I breathe out. | |
| 13. Experiencing the joy of freedom, | Joy of freedom |
| I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the joy of freedom, | Smiling |
| I breathe out. | |
| 14. Experiencing the joy of release | Joy of release |
| of tension, I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the joy of release | Smiling |
| of tension, I breathe out. | |
| 15. Experiencing the joy of letting go, | Joy of abandoning |
| I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the joy of letting go, | Smiling |
| I breathe out. | |
| 16. Experiencing the neutral feeling | Neutral feeling |
| in me, I breathe in. | |
| Smiling to the neutral feeling, | Smiling |

I breathe out.

This exercise is to help us be in touch with all the feelings that arise in our minds. The feelings are either pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. We must learn to recognize, acknowledge, and welcome each one and, after that, to look into its impermanence. A feeling or an emotion arises, persists, and then disappears. Mindfulness enables us to be calm throughout the appearance and disappearance of feelings. Buddha taught us not to be attached to feelings but also not to push them away. To acknowledge feelings with an even mind is the very best way; while we are acknowledging them in mindfulness, slowly, slowly we come to a deep realization of their nature. It is that insight that will enable us to be free and at ease as we face each feeling.

Feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, jealousy, and attachment are often unpleasant or painful. The steady practice of mindfulness will help us to acknowledge the painful feeling whenever it appears. In this way, we can avoid being drowned by waves of feelings, however powerful they may be. Sitting in a stable, upright, and relaxed position, we should bring our attention to the part of the abdomen just below the navel. From the rising and falling of the abdomen, we should become aware of our in-breath and out-breath for the duration of ten or fifteen minutes. In that time, peace of mind will be gradually restored, and we shall not be blown away by gales of emotion. As we continue to acknowledge and look deeply, we shall see the essence of each feeling and emotion as it arises.

We should acknowledge and look deeply at pleasant feelings as well as at painful ones, for states of mind born from freedom, release, and letting go are healthy and nourishing. Acknowledged in mindfulness, these states of mind are able to develop and last. Mindful breathing is the wholesome food for these feelings, which are so necessary in our lives.

States of mind are always accompanied by an object of perception. Freedom is freedom from something, and letting go is letting go of something. The meditator should identify the object that he is letting go in order to experience the mental formation and accompanying feeling fully.

A neutral feeling is neither pleasant nor painful. But when such feelings are recognized in mindfulness, they usually become pleasant feelings. This is one of the benefits of insight meditation. When you have a toothache the feeling is very unpleasant, and when you do not have a toothache, you usually have a neutral feeling. However, if you can be mindful of the non-toothache,

the non-toothache will become a feeling of peace and joy. Mindfulness gives rise to and nourishes happiness.

Exercise Two

Looking Deeply, Healing

1. Aware of my body, I breathe in. Aware of body

Smiling to my body, I breathe out. Smiling

2. Looking at the roots of the pain Roots of

in my body, I breathe in. physical pain

Smiling to the roots of the pain Smiling

in my body, I breathe out.

3. Aware of the state of my mind, Aware of mind

I breathe in.

Smiling to the state of my mind, Smiling

I breathe out.

4. Looking at the roots of the pain Roots of

in my mind, I breathe in. mind's pain

Smiling to the roots of the pain in Smiling

my mind, I breathe out.

5. Looking at the roots of the pain Roots of fear

of fear, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the pain Smiling

of fear, I breathe out.

6. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of insecurity

of insecurity, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of insecurity, I breathe out.

7. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of sadness

of sadness, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of sadness, I breathe out.

8. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of anger

of anger, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of anger, I breathe out.

9. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of jealousy

of jealousy, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of jealousy, I breathe out.

10. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of attachment

of attachment, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of attachment, I breathe out.

11. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of

of being caught, I breathe in. being caught

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of being caught, I breathe out.

12. Looking at the roots of the feeling Roots of joy

of joy, I breathe in.

Smiling to the roots of the feeling Smiling

of joy, I breathe out.

13. Looking at the roots of the joy Roots of joy

of freedom, I breathe in. of freedom

Smiling to the roots of the joy Smiling

of freedom, I breathe out.

14. Looking at the roots of the joy Roots of joy

of relaxation, I breathe in. of relaxation

Smiling to the roots of the joy Smiling

of relaxation, I breathe out.

15. Looking at the roots of the joy Roots of joy

of letting go, I breathe in. of abandoning

Smiling to the roots of the joy Smiling

of letting go, I breathe out.

16. Looking at the roots of the Roots of

neutral feeling, I breathe in. neutral feeling

Smiling to the roots of the Smiling

neutral feeling, I breathe out.

To oppose, brush aside, or deny pain in our body or mind only makes that feeling more intense. In the preceding exercises, we have practiced

acknowledging and accepting painful feelings. Our painful feelings are not other than ourselves, or to put it more precisely, they are a part of us. To deny them is to deny our very selves. The moment we accept these feelings, we begin to feel more peaceful, and the pain begins to lose some of its intensity. To smile to our pain is the wisest, the most intelligent, the most beautiful thing we can do. There is no better way.

Every time we acknowledge a feeling of pain and make its acquaintance, we come in closer contact with ourselves. Bit by bit we look deeply into the substance and the roots of that pain. Fear, insecurity, anger, sadness, jealousy, and attachment form blocks of feelings and thoughts within us (in Sanskrit, *samyojana*, or “internal formation”), and we need time and opportunity to acknowledge them and to look into them. The mindfulness of breathing does the work of making painful feelings bearable. Mindfulness recognizes the presence of the feelings, acknowledges them, soothes them, and enables the work of observation to continue until the substance of the block is seen. Mindfulness is the only way to transform it. All the seeds of pain are present within us, and if we live in forgetfulness, the seeds of pain will be watered every day. They will grow strong, and the internal blocks will become more solid. Conscious breathing transforms internal formations of painful feelings.

Internal formations can also be seen as “fettters” or “knots” of suffering deep in our consciousness. The knots are created when we react emotionally to what others say and do, and also when we repeatedly suppress our awareness of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings and thoughts. The fettters that bind us can be identified as any painful feeling or addictive pleasant feeling, such as anger, hatred, pride, doubt, sorrow, or attachment. They are forged by confusion and a lack of understanding, by our misperceptions regarding our selves and our reality. By practicing mindfulness, we are able to recognize and transform unpleasant feelings and emotions when they first arise, so they do not become fettters. When we do not let ourselves react to the words and actions of others, when we are able to keep our minds calm and peaceful, the fettters of internal formations cannot be made, and we will experience greater happiness and joy. Our families, friends, and associates will also benefit from our greater understanding and love.

In our consciousness there are also the seeds of happiness, such as a loving heart, the ability to let go, joy, calm, and freedom. But these seeds need water every day or they will never thrive. When we are able to nourish these seeds with mindfulness, they will burst into bloom and offer us the flowers and fruits of happiness. This is the object of the latter part of the exercise. This exercise does not need to be practiced all at one time. It can be divided

into several shorter exercises to be practiced over a long period of time, say, three to six months.

Exercise Three

Looking Deeply, Release

1. Contemplating a person in anger, Angry person
I breathe in.
Seeing the suffering of that person, Suffering
I breathe out.
2. Contemplating the damage from Anger harms
anger to self and others, I breathe in. self and others
Seeing that anger burns and destroys Destroys happiness
happiness, I breathe out.
3. Seeing anger's roots in my body, Anger's
I breathe in. roots in body
Seeing anger's roots in my Anger's roots
consciousness, I breathe out. in consciousness
4. Seeing the roots of anger in pride Anger's roots
and ignorance, I breathe in. in pride and
Smiling to my pride and ignorance, ignorance
I breathe out. Smiling
5. Seeing the angry person suffer, Angry person
I breathe in. suffers

Feeling compassion for the angry person who suffers, I breathe out.	Feeling compassion
6. Seeing the unfavorable environment and unhappiness of the angry person, I breathe in.	Angry person unhappy
Understanding the causes of this unhappiness, I breathe out.	Understanding unhappiness
7. Seeing myself burned by the fire of anger, I breathe in.	Burned by anger
Feeling compassion for myself burning with anger, I breathe out.	Compassion for myself
8. Knowing my anger makes me look ugly, I breathe in.	Anger makes me ugly
Seeing myself as the chief cause of my ugliness, I breathe out.	I cause my ugliness
9. Seeing when angry I am a burning house, I breathe in.	I am a burning house
Taking care of my anger and going back to myself, I breathe out.	Taking care of myself
10. Contemplating helping the angry person, I breathe in.	Helping angry person
Seeing myself able to help the	Capable of

angry person, I breathe out.

helping

The Buddha taught that the fire of anger can burn up everything we have done to bring happiness to ourselves and others. There is not one of us who has not sown seeds of anger in his heart, and if those seeds are daily watered, they will grow rapidly and choke us and those around us.

When we are angry, we should come back to ourselves by means of our conscious breathing. We should not look at or listen to the one we feel is making us angry and causing us to suffer. In fact, the main root of our suffering is the seed of anger in us. The other person may have said or done something unskillful or unmindful. But his unskillful words or actions arise from his own suffering. He may just be seeking some relief, hoping to survive. The excessive suffering of one person will very often overflow on to others. A person who is suffering needs our help, not our anger. We come to see this when we examine our anger through our breathing.

Buddha says that anger makes us look ugly. If we are able to breathe when we are angry and recognize the ugliness anger brings with it, that recognition acts as a bell of mindfulness. We breathe and smile mindfully in order to bring some evenness back into our hearts, at the same time relaxing the nervous system and the tense muscles of the face. We must keep on with our conscious breathing as we practice walking meditation in the open air, looking deeply at what has happened. Mindfulness and conscious breathing are sources of energy and can calm the storm of anger, which itself is also a source of energy. If we keep on practicing mindfulness in order to take care of our anger with the affection of a mother when she takes her small child in her arms, then not only shall we calm the storm but we shall also be able to find out where our anger really comes from. Our practice, carefully executed, will thus be able to transform the seeds of anger in us.

Exercise Four

Looking Deeply

1. Visualizing some damage I have done Damage done

in the past, I breathe in.

Seeing the suffering I caused in

Suffering

the past, I breathe out.	caused
2. Seeing my lack of understanding	Lack of
while committing the act, I breathe in.	understanding
Seeing my lack of mindfulness while	Lack of
committing the act, I breathe out.	mindfulness
3. Seeing the past present in me now,	Past present
I breathe in.	in me now
Seeing the wounds of the past present	Wounds in
in me now, I breathe out.	me now
4. Seeing the past present in the	Past present
other now, I breathe in.	in the other now
Seeing the wounds of the past present	Wounds in
in the other now, I breathe out.	the other now
5. Saying I am sorry, I breathe in.	Saying sorry
Determined not to do it again,	Determined
I breathe out.	not to repeat
6. Seeing that the Five Wonderful	Protection of
Mindfulness Trainings are a	mindfulness
protection for me and the other,	trainings
I breathe in.	
Determined to practice the mindfulness	Deep practice
trainings deeply, I breathe out.	of mindfulness
	trainings

7. Knowing that by transforming	Transforming past
the present, I transform the past,	in transforming
I breathe in.	present
Determined to be mindful and	Mindful and
understanding in the present,	understanding
I breathe out.	now
8. Smiling to the present, I breathe in.	Smiling to
	the present
Determined to take good care of	Taking good
the present, I breathe out.	care of present
9. Transforming the past by positive	Present action
present action, I breathe in.	transforming past
Seeing my present action influencing	Influencing
the future, I breathe out.	future

The purpose of this exercise is to enable us to let go and begin a new life. All of us have made mistakes, have harmed or wounded others, especially those who are close to us. Often we ourselves have been wounded—by our parents, by our society, by those we have vowed to love. But we know also that because of our lack of understanding and mindfulness, we have—to a greater or lesser extent—caused our own wounds. Moreover, because we lack understanding and mindfulness, we have not been able to transform the wounds that we bear deep within. Above all else this exercise helps us to acknowledge that our injuries are often self-inflicted. When we can acknowledge our responsibility, we will not blame ourselves or feel ashamed but will instead feel compassion for ourselves and determine to start afresh. The past has not been lost; it has become the present. If we are able to be in touch with the present we are able to be in touch with the past, and if we know how to be responsible for and transform the present we can transform

the past. As we shall see in the appendix, the Five Mindfulness Trainings are not laws to coerce us but the fruit of mindfulness and an awakened mind. They only protect us and guarantee our own peace, and the peace of others. With the mindfulness trainings as a foundation, we are immediately able to bring joy once again to others and once again to relieve others of their suffering.

Chapter V. Objects of Mind

In the Anapanasati Sutta, the section on objects of mind has four components: fading of desire, impermanence, the ending of dualistic conceptions (such as birth-death, coming-going), and letting go. These ways of understanding are essential for our realization of enlightenment and liberation. However, intellectual understanding is not enough, and our mindfulness and meditation need to be sustained and wholehearted for us to realize true liberation. The following exercises are to help us in this.

Exercise One

Impermanence Looking Deeply

1. Aware of the hair on my head, Hair

I breathe in.

Seeing the impermanence of the hair Impermanent

on my head, I breathe out.
2. Aware of my eyes, I breathe in. Eyes

Seeing the impermanence of my eyes, Impermanent

I breathe out.
3. Aware of my ears, I breathe in. Ears

Seeing the impermanence of my ears, Impermanent

I breathe out.
4. Aware of my nose, I breathe in. Nose

Seeing the impermanence of my nose, Impermanent

I breathe out.

5. Aware of my tongue, I breathe in. Tongue
Seeing the impermanence of Impermanent
my tongue, I breathe out.
6. Aware of my heart, I breathe in. Heart
Seeing the impermanence of my heart, Impermanent
I breathe out.
7. Aware of my liver, I breathe in. Liver
Seeing the impermanence of my liver, Impermanent
I breathe out.
8. Aware of my lungs, I breathe in. Lungs
Seeing the impermanence of my lungs, Impermanent
I breathe out.
9. Aware of my intestines, I breathe in. Intestines
Seeing the impermanence of Impermanent
my intestines, I breathe out.
10. Aware of my kidneys, I breathe in. Kidneys
Seeing the impermanence of Impermanent
my kidneys, I breathe out.
11. Aware of my body, I breathe in. Body
Seeing the impermanence of my body, Impermanent
I breathe out.
12. Aware of the planet earth, I breathe in. The planet earth

Seeing the impermanence of the Impermanent
planet earth, I breathe out.

13. Aware of the human species, The human species
I breathe in.

Seeing the impermanence of the Impermanent
human species, I breathe out.

14. Aware of governments, I breathe in. Governments
Seeing the impermanence of Impermanent
governments, I breathe out.

This exercise helps us to acknowledge the impermanent nature of everything. The work of acknowledging everything in mindfulness leads us to a deeper view of what life is. It is very important to understand that impermanence is not a negative aspect of life. Impermanence is the very basis of life. If what exists were not impermanent, no life could continue. If a grain of corn were not impermanent, it could not become a corn plant. If a tiny child were not impermanent, she could not grow into an adult.

Life is impermanent, but that does not mean that it is not worth living. It is precisely because of its impermanence that we value life so dearly. Therefore we must know how to live each moment deeply and use it in a responsible way. If we are able to live the present moment completely, we will not feel regret later. We will know how to care for those who are close to us and how to bring them happiness. When we accept that all things are impermanent, we will not be incapacitated by suffering when things decay and die. We can remain peaceful and content in the face of change, prosperity and decline, success and failure.

Many people are always restless and in a hurry and do not know how to look after their bodies and minds. Night and day, bit by bit, they barter their health away in order to obtain material comforts. In the end, they destroy body and mind for the sake of these unimportant things. This exercise also can help us to look after our bodies and minds.

In our own time the fact of global warming is forcing us to look deeply to see that even our planet earth and all the species that live on it are

impermanent. When people see the life of our planet endangered by global warming, they fall into a state of despair. In such a state they cannot do anything to help the situation, and they may well die of despair before they die as a result of global warming. In order to transform this despair they need to accept the fact that civilizations are impermanent. Only then can they be at peace enough to be able to act wisely to reverse the process of global warming. It is the same in the case of sickness or disability. Once a person can accept that she is sick and may die as a result, she can live at peace in a way that can actually prolong her life.

Exercise Two

Impermanence Contemplation

1. Aware of my body alive and breathing, Live body

I breathe in.

Smiling to my body alive and Smiling

breathing, I breathe out.
2. Seeing my dead body lying in bed, Dead body

I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body lying in bed, Smiling

I breathe out.
3. Seeing my dead body being placed Placed in coffin

in a coffin, I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body being placed Smiling

in a coffin I breathe out.
4. Seeing my dead body gray in color, My gray body

I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body gray in color, Smiling

I breathe out.

5. Seeing my dead body infested with My infested body
worms and flies, I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body infested with Smiling
worms and flies, I breathe out.

6. Seeing my dead body as a white My white skeleton
skeleton, I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body as a Smiling
white skeleton, I breathe out.

7. Seeing my dead body as a number of Scattered
fresh bones scattered here and there, fresh bones
I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body as a number Smiling
of fresh bones scattered here and there,
I breathe out.

8. Seeing my dead body as a number of Dried bones
dried bones, I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body as a number Smiling
of dried bones, I breathe out.

9. Seeing my dead body being wrapped Wrapped
in a shroud, I breathe in. in a shroud

Smiling to my dead body being Smiling

wrapped in a shroud, I breathe out.

10. Seeing my dead body being cremated, Cremated

I breathe in.

Smiling to my dead body being Smiling

cremated, I breathe out.

11. Seeing my mortal remains being Remains mixing

mixed with the earth, I breathe in. with earth

Smiling to my mortal remains being Smiling

mixed with the earth, I breathe out.

This exercise helps us become accustomed to the fact that sooner or later we all have to die. It is also a way of meditating on the impermanence of the body. It is traditionally known as the Nine Contemplations on the unclean (*navāśubha samjñā*). If we can become familiar and comfortable with the idea that makes us afraid of death, we shall begin to transform that fear. We shall also begin to live our lives more deeply and with more care and awareness.

When we can envision and accept our own death, we are able to let go of many ambitions, worries, and sufferings. In short, we are able to let go of all the things that keep us so unnecessarily busy. We can begin to live in a way that is meaningful for ourselves and for other species.

The various stages of decomposition of the corpse that belong to the traditional Nine Contemplations can be replaced by simple images more appropriate to our own era, for example, a shroud, coffin, cremation furnace, vase of ashes, ashes becoming earth, or ashes scattered on the waves of a river or ocean.

The exercises on the visualization of a corpse, either one's own or that of another, should only be practiced when the meditator is strong in body and in mind. The meditator should be warned not to visualize the corpse of someone who has already passed away. The practice is to help us face the fear that one day our loved one must die; it is not to relive the experience that we had when we saw the corpse of our loved one.

Exercise Three

Impermanence Contemplation

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Aware of my beloved alive and

healthy, I breathe in.

Smiling to my beloved alive and

healthy, I breathe out. | Beloved alive

Smiling |
| 2. Seeing the dead body of

my beloved, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of

my beloved, I breathe out. | Seeing beloved dead

Smiling |
| 3. Seeing the dead body of my beloved

gray in color, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of my beloved

gray in color, I breathe out. | Beloved's gray body

Smiling |
| 4. Seeing the dead body of my

beloved infested with worms

and flies, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of my

beloved infested with worms and flies,

I breathe out. | Beloved's body

infested

Smiling |
| 5. Seeing the dead body of my beloved | Beloved's skeleton |

as a white skeleton I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of Smiling

my beloved as a white skeleton

I breathe out.

6. Seeing my beloved's body as a Scattered

number of fresh bones scattered fresh bones

here and there, I breathe in.

Smiling to my beloved's body as Smiling

a number of fresh bones scattered

here and there, I breathe out.

7. Seeing my beloved's body as a Dried bones

number of dried bones, I breathe in.

Smiling to my beloved's body as a Smiling

number of dried bones, I breathe out.

8. Seeing my beloved's body being Wrapped

wrapped in a shroud, I breathe in. in a shroud

Smiling to my beloved's body being Smiling

wrapped in a shroud, I breathe out.

9. Seeing my beloved's body being Placed in coffin

placed in a coffin, I breathe in.

Smiling to my beloved's body being Smiling

placed in a coffin, I breathe out.

10. Seeing my beloved's body being Cremated

cremated, I breathe in.

Smiling to my beloved's body being Smiling

cremated, I breathe out.

11. Seeing my beloved's remains being Remains mixing

mixed with the earth, I breathe in. with earth

Smiling to my beloved's remains being Smiling

mixed with the earth, I breathe out.

This exercise helps us to accept that sooner or later those we love most will pass away. There is no escaping that fact. As in the preceding exercise, the images presented by the Nine Contemplations can be replaced by simpler ones.

When we can envision the death of one we love, we are able to let go of anger and reproachful feelings toward that person. We learn to live in a sweeter way with those we love, to look after them and to make them happy. Our awareness of impermanence keeps thoughtless words and actions about those we love from invading our daily lives. We learn how to avoid hurting the ones most important to us and avoid sowing seeds of suffering in ourselves and in them.

Exercise Four

Impermanence Contemplation

1. Seeing the vigor and strength of the The vigor of
one who makes me suffer, I breathe in. one who makes
me suffer
Smiling to the vigor and strength Smiling
of the one who makes me suffer,

I breathe out.

2. Seeing the dead body of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe out.

The dead body of one who makes me suffer

Smiling
3. Seeing the dead body, gray in color, of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body, gray in color, of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe out.

Gray corpse

Smiling
4. Seeing the bloated dead body of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe in.

Smiling to the bloated dead body of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe out.

Bloated corpse

Smiling
5. Seeing the festering dead body of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe in.

Smiling to the festering dead body of the one who makes me suffer, I breathe out.

Festering corpse

Smiling
6. Seeing the dead body of the one who

Infested corpse

makes me suffer infested with worms
and flies, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of the Smiling
one who makes me suffer infested
with worms and flies, I breathe out.

7. Seeing the white skeleton of the one White skeleton
who makes me suffer, I breathe in.

Smiling to the white skeleton of the Smiling
one who makes me suffer,
I breathe out.

8. Seeing the dead body of the one Scattered
who makes me suffer as a number of fresh bones
fresh bones scattered here and there,
I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of the one Smiling
who makes me suffer as a number of
fresh bones scattered here and there,
I breathe out.

9. Seeing the dead body of the one Scattered
who makes me suffer as scattered dried bones
dried bones, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of the one Smiling

who makes me suffer as scattered

dried bones, I breathe out.

10. Seeing the dead body of the one Rotten bones

who makes me suffer as rotten bones turned to dust

turned to dust, I breathe in.

Smiling to the dead body of the one Smiling

who makes me suffer as rotten bones

turned to dust, I breathe out.

This exercise is just like the two that precede it, but the object of the meditation is someone who makes us suffer so much that we are filled with hate and anger. We meditate in order to be able to see the frailty and the impermanence of those who hurt us. This meditation will dissolve our anger and foster love and compassion for someone we hate, and for ourselves, too. Very often those with whom we get most angry are those we most love. Our anger is a function of that deep love, which can be released by the exercise.

Exercise Five

Impermanence

Looking Deeply, Healing

1. Knowing I will get old, I breathe in. Getting old

Knowing I can't escape old age, No escape

I breathe out.

2. Knowing I will get sick, I breathe in. Getting sick

Knowing I can't escape sickness, No escape

I breathe out.

3. Knowing I will die, I breathe in. Dying

Knowing I can't escape death, No escape

I breathe out.

4. Knowing that the human species Death of civilization

and our civilization will die,

I breathe in.

Knowing that our civilization cannot No escape

escape death, I breathe out.

5. Knowing that one day I will have to Abandoning

abandon all that I cherish today, what I cherish

I breathe in.

Knowing I can't escape having to No escape

abandon all that I cherish today,

I breathe out.

6. Knowing that my actions are my only Actions true

belongings, I breathe in. belongings

Knowing that I cannot escape the No escape

consequences of my actions, from consequences

I breathe out.

7. Determined to live my days deeply in Living mindfully

mindfulness, I breathe in.

Seeing the joy and the benefit of living Seeing joy

mindfully, I breathe out.

8. Vowing to offer joy each day to my Offering joy

beloved, I breathe in.

Vowing to ease the pain of my Easing pain

beloved, I breathe out.

This exercise helps us to come face to face with the anxieties and fears that lie deep in our subconscious, and to transform the latent tendencies Buddhists call *anuśaya*. In principle, we all know very well that we cannot avoid growing old, falling sick, dying, and being separated from those we love, but we do not want to give our attention to these things. We do not want to be in touch with the anxiety and the fear but prefer to let them sleep deep in our minds. That is why they are called latent tendencies (*anuśaya* literally means “lying asleep along with”). But although they are lying asleep in our hearts, they still follow us and secretly influence our whole way of thinking, speaking, and acting. When we hear people speaking about, or are ourselves witness to, old age, sickness, death, and separations from loved ones, the latent tendencies in us are watered and become more deeply rooted—along with our other sorrows, longings, hatreds, and angers. Because we are not able to resolve the *anuśaya*, we repress them, and they become more deeply rooted and cause sicknesses whose symptoms can be recognized in everything we do. We must learn a different way to treat the *anuśaya*. The Buddha himself taught this exercise and advised his followers to practice it every day. Buddha taught that rather than repressing our fears and anxieties, we should invite them into our consciousness, recognize them, welcome them. When we begin to practice conscious breathing, mindfulness is lit up within us. In that gentle light, if we simply acknowledge the presence of our fears and smile to them as we would smile to an old friend, quite naturally they will lose some of their energy. When once again they return to our subconscious, they will be that much weaker. If we practice every day, they will continue to grow weaker. The circulation of feelings in our consciousness under the light of mindfulness will prevent their regrowth; we will see into their essence, and there will be no more manifestations of the former mental and physical sicknesses. The latent tendencies will have been transformed.

In our own time people are very afraid that our civilization and even the human species will come to an end as a result of global warming. Because of this fear they are not able to see clearly what they should do or should not do. The first step is to accept that our species is impermanent and that sooner or

later it has to end. However, it does not have to end by global warming, and the understanding of impermanence gives people enough peace and calm to act in a positive way.

This exercise helps us to live the present moment in a joyous, calm, and awakened way. Right in this moment, we will come to understand that we are able to bring joy to those in our company.

Exercise Six

Fading of Desire

Looking Deeply, Letting Go

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Contemplating the attractive body | Attractive body |
| of a woman, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing the impermanent nature of | Impermanent |
| that body, I breathe out. | nature of body |
| 2. Contemplating the attractive body | Attractive body |
| of a man, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing the impermanent nature of | Impermanent |
| that body, I breathe out. | nature of body |
| 3. Contemplating the danger that my | Danger from |
| craving for sex can bring about, | craving sex |
| I breathe in. | |
| Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go | |
| 4. Contemplating the suffering that my | Danger from |
| craving for sex can bring about, | craving sex |
| I breathe in. | |

Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 5. Contemplating the hardship that my
craving for sex can bring about,
I breathe in. | Hardship from
craving sex |
|--|------------------------------|

Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go

- | | |
|---|---|
| 6. Contemplating running after
possessions, I breathe in.

Seeing the impermanent nature
of possessions, I breathe out. | Running after
possessions

Impermanent
nature of
possessions |
|---|---|

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 7. Contemplating my desire for a car,
I breathe in. | Desire for a car |
|--|------------------|

Seeing the impermanent nature of a car, I breathe out.	Impermanent nature of car
---	------------------------------

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 8. Contemplating my desire for
a house, I breathe in. | Desire for a house |
|--|--------------------|

Seeing the impermanent nature of a house, I breathe out.	Impermanent nature of house
---	--------------------------------

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 9. Contemplating my
desire for material security,
I breathe in. | Material security |
|---|-------------------|

Seeing the impermanent nature of material security,	Impermanent
--	-------------

- I breathe out. nature of security
10. Contemplating the danger that my Danger of
craving for wealth can bring about, craving for wealth
I breathe in.
Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go
11. Contemplating the suffering that Suffering from
my craving for wealth can bring about, craving for wealth
I breathe in.
Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go
12. Contemplating the hardship that Hardship from
my craving for wealth can bring about, craving for wealth
I breathe in.
Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go
13. Contemplating the pursuit of fame, Pursuit of fame
I breathe in.
Seeing the impermanent nature Impermanent
of that fame, I breathe out. nature of fame
14. Contemplating the danger that my Danger of craving
craving for fame can bring about, for fame
I breathe in.
Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go
15. Contemplating the suffering that Suffering from

my craving for fame can bring about, craving for fame

I breathe in.

Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go

16. Contemplating the hardship that my Hardship from
craving for fame can bring about, craving for fame
I breathe in.

Letting go of the craving, I breathe out. Letting go

17. Contemplating my greed for clothes Greediness
and food, I breathe in.

Seeing the impermanent nature Impermanent
of clothes and food, I breathe out. nature of clothes
and food

18. Contemplating the danger that Danger from
my greed for clothes and food can greediness
bring about, I breathe in.

Letting go of the greed, I breathe out. Letting go

19. Contemplating the suffering that Suffering from
my greed for clothes and food greediness
can bring about, I breathe in.

Letting go of the greed, I breathe out. Letting go

20. Contemplating the hardship Hardship from
that my greed for clothes and greediness
food can bring about, I breathe in.

Letting go of the greed, I breathe out. Letting go

21. Contemplating an indolent life, Indolent life

I breathe in.

Seeing the danger of an indolent life, Danger

I breathe out.

22. Contemplating letting go, I breathe in. Letting go

Contemplating letting go, I breathe out. Letting go

This exercise helps us to see the impermanence as well as the dangers, complications, and hardships of our endless pursuit of material and sensual pleasure—whether that pleasure takes the form of a beautiful man or woman, riches and possessions, fame, or other objects of desire. We suffer countless agonies large and small in order to enjoy these sensual pleasures. We could waste our whole lives chasing after them without there being any guarantee that we would attain them. Even if we did attain them, we would discover that they are not only short-lived but also dangerous to the well-being of the body and mind.

Real happiness cannot exist when we are not totally free. Burdened by so many ambitions, we are not able to be free. We are always grasping at something; there are so many things we want to do at the same time, and that is why we do not have the time to live. We think that the burdens we carry are necessary for our happiness, that if they are taken from us we will suffer. However, if we look more closely, we shall see that the things at which we grasp, the things that keep us constantly busy, are in fact obstacles to our being happy. The practice of this meditation exercise should be followed by the practice of exercises that help us to let go, like the following one. In letting go, we learn that true happiness can only come by way of freedom, an awakened life, and the practice of love and compassion.

Exercise Seven

*No Birth, No Death
Looking Deeply*

1. Aware of my in-breath, I breathe in. Aware of in-breath
Seeing my in-breath no longer there, In-breath
I breathe out. no longer there
2. Aware of the birth of my in-breath, Birth of in-breath
I breathe in.
Aware of the death of my in-breath, Death of in-breath
I breathe out.
3. Seeing my in-breath born from Birth of in-breath
conditions, I breathe in. conditional
Seeing my in-breath die from Death of in-breath
conditions, I breathe out. conditional
4. Seeing my in-breath comes from Breath from
nowhere, I breathe in. nowhere
Seeing my in-breath goes nowhere, Breath going
I breathe out. nowhere
5. Seeing my in-breath without birth Breath without
and death, I breathe in. birth-death
Seeing my in-breath free from birth Free from
and death, I breathe out. birth-death
6. Aware of my eyes, I breathe in. Aware of eyes
Seeing my eyes born from conditions, Eyes conditional
I breathe out.
7. Seeing my eyes come from nowhere, Eyes from nowhere

I breathe in.

Seeing my eyes go nowhere,	Eyes going nowhere
----------------------------	--------------------

I breathe out.

8. Seeing my eyes have no birth	Eyes without
and death, I breathe in.	birth-death

Seeing my eyes free from birth	Eyes free from
and death, I breathe out.	birth-death

9. Aware of my body, I breathe in.	Aware of body
------------------------------------	---------------

Seeing my body born from conditions, Body conditional

I breathe out.

10. Seeing my body comes from nowhere, Body from nowhere

I breathe in.

Seeing my body goes nowhere,	Body going
------------------------------	------------

I breathe out.	nowhere
----------------	---------

11. Seeing my body has no birth	Body without
and death, I breathe in.	birth-death

Seeing my body free from birth	Free from
and death, I breathe out.	birth-death

12. Aware of my consciousness,	Aware of
--------------------------------	----------

I breathe in.	consciousness
---------------	---------------

Seeing my consciousness born	Consciousness
------------------------------	---------------

from conditions, I breathe out.	conditional
---------------------------------	-------------

13. Seeing my consciousness comes	Consciousness
from nowhere, I breathe in.	from nowhere
Seeing my consciousness goes	Consciousness
nowhere, I breathe out.	goes nowhere
14. Seeing my consciousness has no	Consciousness
birth and death, I breathe in.	without birth-death
Seeing my consciousness free from	Free from
birth and death, I breathe out.	birth-death

This exercise helps us to realize that nothing comes and nothing goes, nothing is born and nothing dies. This is one of the most wonderful practices of meditation in Buddhism.

To start with, we try to see the presence of each breath in order to be aware of the birth and the death of that breath. As we begin to breathe in, we see the in-breath being born, and as we begin to breathe out, we see the in-breath has died. Birth and death are two marks of a breath. As we continue the meditation, we see that the occurrence of our in-breath is dependent on various causes and conditions: the lungs, the respiratory muscles, the body, the atmosphere, the nose, the bronchial tubes, being alive, and so on. As we breathe out, we see that the ending of the in-breath is also due to causes and conditions, and we become physically aware of those conditions. For example, the lungs are now full of air and are not able or do not want to breathe in anymore. As we meditate, we see that when the causes and conditions are right, the breath is born, and when the right causes and conditions are not present, it dies. We see that our breath at its birth does not come from anywhere and at its death does not go anywhere. There is no place in space where it comes from when it is born, and there is no place in space it goes to when it dies. Then we see the not-coming, not-going marks of the breath. Looking more deeply, we see that a breath is not born and does not die but only manifests itself or lies hidden. Being born usually means that something comes into existence that did not exist before. Dying usually means something that has existed ceases to exist. But our breath is not like that. We cannot say that it did not exist before, only that because the conditions are sufficient and right it can manifest itself. If one of those

conditions is absent, the breath goes into hiding. It is with regard to our perception that we talk about manifesting and failing to manifest. Manifest does not mean that something exists and not manifest does not mean that something fails to exist. Marks like birth and death, being and nonbeing are assigned to the breath by our perception. The real marks of the breath are no-birth, no-death, no-existence, no-nonexistence. The realization of this arises with our willingness to persevere in looking deeply into causes and conditions.

When we meditate on our eyes, we see that our eyes too are manifested dependent on conditions and go into hiding dependent on conditions. Our eyes do not come from anywhere and do not go away to any place. Eyes manifesting does not mean that eyes exist, and eyes going into hiding does not mean that eyes fail to exist. We cannot say that our eyes are born because they manifest, and we cannot say that they die because they fail to manifest. The same is true of our bodies and our consciousness. The true nature of the five aggregates (body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness) is no-birth, no-death, no-existence, and no-nonexistence. Birth and death are both illusory. To be, or not to be: that is not the question.

Exercise Eight

Looking Deeply

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Seeing my eyes, I breathe in. | Seeing my eyes |
| Smiling to my eyes, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 2. Seeing my eyes are brought about | Eyes made of |
| by the coming together of the | four elements |
| four elements, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing my eyes cease to be with the | Elements dissolved, |
| dissolution of the four elements, | eyes cease |
| I breathe out. | |
| 3. Seeing my eyes containing the | Eyes contain |

sunshine, I breathe in. sunshine

Seeing my eyes containing the cloud, Eyes contain clouds

I breathe out.

4. Seeing my eyes containing the earth, Eyes contain earth

I breathe in.

Seeing my eyes containing the air, Eyes contain air

I breathe out.

5. Seeing my eyes containing the Eyes contain

whole cosmos, I breathe in. cosmos

Seeing my eyes present in everything Eyes in

in the cosmos, I breathe out. everything

6. Seeing that my eyes do not exist Eyes interare

separately from other realities,

I breathe in.

Seeing nothing in the cosmos exists All in cosmos

separately from other realities, interis

I breathe out.

7. Seeing the all in the one, All in one

I breathe in.

Seeing the one in the many, One in all things

I breathe out.

8. Seeing the one as basic to the all, One as basis of all

I breathe in.

Seeing all things as basic to the one, All things as

I breathe out. basis of one

9. Seeing the birthless nature of Eyes birthless

my eyes, I breathe in.

Seeing the deathless nature of Eyes deathless

my eyes, I breathe out.

This exercise is a continuation of the previous exercise. Its purpose is to help us look deeply at the conditional arising of all things, as well as the interdependence and interpenetration of all that exists. All that exists is impermanent. If something is born it must die, and this birth and death is taking place in every instant (in Sanskrit, *ksana*, or the shortest instant of time). We realize this each time we meditate on impermanence. However, if we look deeper still, we shall see that impermanence means all things arise in dependence on each other. All that exists comes to be, endures, and disappears because of certain causes and conditions: *This is because that is. This is not because that is not. This is born because that is born. This ceases to be because that ceases to be.* This is the principle of dependent arising which is taught in the Madhyama and Samyukta Āgamas. When we look deeper still, we see that because everything arises in dependence on something else, there is no such thing as a separately existing self-nature. We come to see that all things are in essence empty: *This contains that and that contains this*—the principle of interpenetration. *This is that and that is this*—the principle of interbeing. Time contains time, and time contains space. Space contains space, and space contains time. Space is itself time. Space and time cannot exist separately from each other. One *ksana* (point instant) contains infinite time, and the smallest particle contains limitless space. This is the principle of all is one and one is all. When we understand that principle, the phenomena we have spoken of as birth, death, being, and nonbeing are seen to be illusions. We are able to see into the birthless and deathless nature of reality, which is sometimes called *dharmadhātu* (the true nature of the phenomenal world), *tathata* (suchness), *nirvana* (extinction of illusion and sorrow), and perfected truth. Concepts of birth, death, one, many, coming, going, purity, defilement, increasing, and decreasing thus cannot be used to describe reality. Only when we realize the birthless and deathless nature of

reality will we overcome the fears and sorrows that fetter us. That realization is a liberation.

Exercises seven and eight in this chapter need to be practiced diligently, not just during times of sitting meditation but throughout our daily lives.

Exercise Nine

Looking Deeply

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Aware of a wave on the ocean,

I breathe in.

Smiling to the wave on the ocean,

I breathe out. | Wave on

the ocean

Smiling |
| 2. | Aware of the water in the wave,

I breathe in.

Smiling to the water in the wave,

I breathe out. | Water in wave

Smiling |
| 3. | Seeing the birth of a wave,

I breathe in.

Smiling to the birth of the wave,

I breathe out. | Birth of a wave

Smiling |
| 4. | Seeing the death of a wave,

I breathe in.

Smiling to the death of the wave,

I breathe out. | Death of a wave

Smiling |
| 5. | Seeing the birthless nature of the | Birthless water |

water in the wave, I breathe in. in wave

Smiling to the birthless nature of the Smiling

water in the wave, I breathe out.

6. Seeing the deathless nature of the Deathless water

water in the wave, I breathe in. in wave

Smiling to the deathless nature of the Smiling

water in the wave, I breathe out.

7. Seeing the birth of my body, Birth of

I breathe in. my body

Smiling to the birth of my body, Smiling

I breathe out.

8. Seeing the death of my body, Death of my body

I breathe in.

Smiling to the death of my body, Smiling

I breathe out.

9. Seeing the birthless nature of Body birthless

my body, I breathe in.

Smiling to the birthless nature of Smiling

my body, I breathe out.

10. Seeing the deathless nature of Body deathless

my body, I breathe in.

Smiling to the deathless nature of Smiling

my body, I breathe out.

11. Seeing the birthless nature of my Consciousness
consciousness, I breathe in. birthless
Smiling to the birthless nature of my Smiling
consciousness, I breathe out.
12. Seeing the deathless nature of my Consciousness
consciousness, I breathe in. deathless
Smiling to the deathless nature of my Smiling
consciousness, I breathe out.

This exercise goes along with the preceding exercises, and its aim is to help us look deeply into the true nature of all things. The phenomenal world seems to be marked by oppositions: birth/death, coming/going, being/nonbeing, one/many, defilement/purity, and so on. Mindful meditation enables us to see beyond such notions as these. The three seals of Buddhist teaching are impermanence, selflessness, and nirvana. Because things are impermanent and without a self, we say that they are born and die, come and go, still exist or no longer exist, are one or many, are defiled or pure. But Buddhism does more than reveal the phenomenal aspect of reality; it puts us in touch with the true nature (in Sanskrit, *svabhāva*) of phenomena. That true nature is nirvana. Nirvana cannot be described by means of either/or concepts. Nirvana means the putting to rest of all oppositional terms and notions. It also means the putting to rest of afflictions like desire, hatred, and ignorance, which are born from these notions.

In the *Udāna* (Words of Uplift), Buddha speaks of nirvana in the following way (let us be very careful not to be caught in words and ideas because the Buddha has also taught that it is impossible to say anything about the true nature of nirvana): “Monks, there is a place which is not the place of earth, water, air, or fire, limitless space or limitless consciousness, limitless non-materiality, perceptions or no perceptions, this world or that world. I do not talk about this place as coming and going or not coming and not going, as being born and dying. This place does not come into existence or pass away and it does not need to rely on something else. It is the ending of all sorrow. It is nirvana.” And again in the *Udāna*: “Monks, there is something which is not

born, which is not conditional, which does not become, is not made, is not a composite. Supposing that this nonborn, nonconditional, not-become, not made, not compounded is not there? How could there be a place for the born, the conditional, the becoming, the made, the compounded to return to?"

Suppose that while we are listening to the Buddha speaking like this, we are caught in the words, "There is a place which ... This place." Then there will be no way we shall be able to understand because the reality of nirvana goes beyond all ideas of is or is not, one or many, place and no place, this and that. This exercise uses the image of a wave and the water as a metaphor for nirvana. The wave is birth and death; the water is nirvana. The wave is born and dies, rises and falls, is high and is low, comes to be and passes away, is many and is one. This is not true of the water in the wave. We should remember that this is only a metaphor. In our common perception, water still belongs to the phenomenal world, like clouds, vapor, ice, and snow. Because we are able to look deeply at the phenomenal world, we are able to discover its birthless and deathless nature and to enter the world of suchness. In Buddhist studies, we talk about the process of going from the mark (*laksana*) to the nature (*svabhāva*), from the sign to the essence.

A bodhisattva is able to see the nature of all that is and therefore is no longer afraid and no longer desires to hold on. Thus she can ride on the waves of birth and death with complete equanimity.

Exercise Ten

Looking Deeply

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Aware of my body, I breathe in. | Aware of body |
| Smiling to my body, I breathe out. | Smiling |
| 2. Aware that this body is not me, | Body not me |
| I breathe in. | |
| Aware that no self owns this body, | No self owns body |
| I breathe out. | |
| 3. Aware of a feeling present now, | Aware of feeling |

I breathe in.

Smiling to this feeling, I breathe out. Smiling

4. Aware that this feeling is not me, Feeling not me

I breathe in.

Aware that no self owns this feeling, No self

I breathe out. owns feeling

5. Aware of a perception present now, Aware of

I breathe in. perception

Smiling to this perception, Smiling

I breathe out.

6. Aware that this perception is not me, Perception not me

I breathe in.

Aware that no self owns this No self owns

perception, I breathe out. perception

7. Aware of a mental formation Aware of
present now, I breathe in. mental formation

Smiling to this mental formation, Smiling

I breathe out.

8. Aware that this mental formation Mental formation
is not me, I breathe in. not me

Aware that no self owns this No self owns

mental formation, I breathe out. mental formation

9. Aware of consciousness being present, Aware of

I breathe in.	consciousness
Smiling to this consciousness,	Smiling
I breathe out.	
10. Aware that this consciousness is	Consciousness
not me, I breathe in.	not me
Aware that no self owns this	No self owns
consciousness, I breathe out.	consciousness
11. Knowing I am not limited by	I not limited
this body, I breathe in.	
Knowing this body is not limited	Body not limited
by my life span, I breathe out.	
12. Knowing that this body as five	Body birthless,
aggregates is birthless and	deathless
deathless, I breathe in.	
Knowing that I am also birthless	I birthless, deathless
and deathless, I breathe out.	
13. Smiling to the birthlessness	Smiling to
and deathlessness of this body,	birthless, deathless
I breathe in.	body
Smiling to the birthlessness	Smiling to
and deathlessness of this self,	birthless, deathless
I breathe out.	self

This exercise helps us to look deeply at the nature of selflessness. The body and the other bases of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and mind) are not the self. Nor do they belong to a self that lies outside them. The five aggregates are the body, the feelings, the perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. These five aggregates are not the self, and they are also not the property of a self that exists apart from them. Self is often defined as a changeless entity existing independently from so-called non-self entities. Buddhism teaches that there is no such self because, in reality, there is nothing changeless that can exist independently of all else. What, then, is the meaning of the words “I” and “self” in exercise ten, and to what do they refer? Obviously “I” here refers to the person who is meditating, who is a compound of the five aggregates. The five aggregates are themselves a river of constantly transforming phenomena, which are not separate entities. If we understand that, then there is nothing wrong with the use of the word “I.” If our minds are open to the fact that self is made of non-self elements, we can use the expression “self” without fear—like Buddha when he asked Ananda: “Do *you* wish to come to Vulture Peak with *me*?”

The wrong views of self can be enumerated as follows:

1. The body is the self (*Satkāyadrsti*).
2. The body is not the self, but it belongs to the self.
3. The body is in the self, and the self is in the body.
4. The body is not the self, but it is also not something independent of the self.
5. The world is the self, the self is the world.

It is important to remember that we meditate on no-self in order to uproot the idea of a permanent and changeless self-substance, not to establish a theory of nihilism. Eternalism and nihilism are both wrong views, traps that the Buddha taught his disciples to avoid. The view of permanence (Pali *sassata-ditthi*) and the view that nothing is (Pali *uccheda ditthi*) are the basis of all wrong thinking. If we are able to go beyond these two extremes, we can freely and as we please use the word “I,” just as the Buddha used “This body is not me” or “I am not this body.” To identify self with the world is also a confused notion if it means we are caught in “eternalist” or nihilistic thinking: “I am the universe. As long as the universe is there, I continue to exist. When the universe is not there, I cease to exist.” This is not so, for, truly, reality is birthless and deathless, without self and without other. It does not come and does not depart. It is only by realizing this reality that we can destroy the wrong view of self. Those who simply repeat over and over again “no self” as a religious doctrine have probably lost their way and entered the view of nihilism.

Exercise Eleven

Being in Touch, Looking Deeply

1. In touch with the flower, I breathe in. Flower

In touch with the scent and the beauty Beauty and scent

of the flower, I breathe out.
2. In touch with the sun in the flower, Sun in the flower

I breathe in.

Knowing that without the sun there Without sun

would be no flower, I breathe out. no flower
3. In touch with the cloud in the flower, Cloud in the flower

I breathe in.

Knowing that without the cloud there Without cloud

would be no flower, I breathe out. no flower
4. In touch with the earth in the flower, Earth in the flower

I breathe in.

Knowing that without the earth there Without earth

would be no flower, I breathe out. no flower
5. In touch with the air in the flower, Air in the flower

I breathe in.

Knowing that without the air there Without air

would be no flower, I breathe out. no flower
6. In touch with space in the flower, Space in

I breathe in.	the flower
Knowing that without space there	Without space
would be no flower, I breathe out.	no flower
7. In touch with consciousness in	Consciousness
the flower, I breathe in.	in the flower
Knowing that without consciousness	Without
there would be no flower,	consciousness
I breathe out.	no flower
8. Knowing that the flower manifests	Flower from
from the six elements, I breathe in.	six elements
Smiling to the six elements in the	Smiling
flower, I breathe out.	
9. Seeing the impermanence of the	Flower
flower, I breathe in.	impermanent
Seeing the flower on the way to	Flower turning
the garbage, I breathe out.	into garbage
10. In touch with the garbage,	Garbage
I breathe in.	
In touch with the impurity	Impurity
and smell of garbage, I breathe out.	and smell
11. In touch with the garbage arising	Garbage from
from the six elements, I breathe in.	six elements

Smiling to the six elements in the
garbage, I breathe out. Smiling

12. Seeing the impermanence of the
garbage, I breathe in. Garbage
impermanent

Seeing the garbage on the way to
the flower, I breathe out. Garbage turning
into flower

13. In touch with the cloud in the garbage, Cloud in
I breathe in. the garbage

Knowing that without the cloud
there would be no garbage, Without cloud
no garbage
I breathe out.

14. In touch with the earth in the garbage, Earth in
I breathe in. the garbage

Knowing that without the earth there
would be no garbage, I breathe out. Without earth
no garbage

15. In touch with the air in the garbage, Air in the garbage
I breathe in.

Knowing that without the air there
would be no garbage, I breathe out. Without air
no garbage

16. In touch with space in the garbage, Space in
I breathe in. the garbage

Knowing that without space there
would be no garbage, I breathe out. Without space
no garbage

17. In touch with consciousness in	Consciousness
the garbage, I breathe in.	in the garbage
Knowing that without consciousness	Without
there would be no garbage,	consciousness
I breathe out.	no garbage

This exercise helps us see the interdependent arising and nonduality of all that is. Interdependent arising is described in the Avatamsaka sutra as interbeing and interpenetration. We must learn to see the one in the many and the many in the one. Nonduality means that there are not two, but it does not mean that there is only one. The notion one always goes with the notion two and the notion *many*. In comprehending interbeing and nonduality, we will be able to transform our anxieties and fears and to dissolve the barriers of perception that are formed by our habits of conceptualizing and discriminating. The boundaries between birth and death, being and nonbeing, defilement and purity will be erased, and we will be able to live without fear in the freedom of limitless space.

Exercise Twelve

Looking Deeply

1. Aware of myself as a collection	Myself as
of five aggregates, I breathe in.	five aggregates
Seeing the five aggregates rooted in	Roots in
all that is, I breathe out.	all that is
2. Aware of myself as made up of	Myself made of
what is not myself (vapor, water, air,	nonself elements
ancestors, habits, society, economics),	
I breathe in.	

Seeing that my everyday perception of myself as a separate entity is in error, I breathe out.	Separate entity, erroneous perception
3. Aware of the human species as an animal species though it has a culture and has become sovereign of the earth, I breathe in.	Humans one animal species
Seeing that the human species cannot exist without the animal, vegetable, and mineral species, I breathe out.	No human species without other species
4. Seeing the presence of the human species in the presence of the animal, vegetable, and mineral species, I breathe in.	Humans in animal, vegetable, and mineral species
Seeing that my idea of myself as belonging to a separate, independent species is in error, I breathe out.	Separate species, erroneous idea
5. Aware of all animal species as subject to birth and death, with feelings and consciousness, I breathe in.	Animal species have consciousness
Seeing that the animal species cannot exist without the presence of the vegetable and mineral species, the	No animal species without vegetable and mineral species

sun, the water, and the air, I breathe out.

6. Seeing the presence of the animal Animals in
species in the presence of the nonsentient species
nonsentient species, like plants,
minerals, sun, water, and air, I breathe in.

Seeing that my everyday perception Everyday
of an animal is in error, I breathe out. perception of
animals erroneous

7. Aware of my life beginning at my My beginning,
birth and ending with my death, my ending
I breathe in.

Seeing that I was already present No beginning,
before my birth in many different no ending
forms and that I shall be present when
I die in many different forms (the sun,
the water, the air, the earth, ancestors,
descendants, habits, society, economics),
I breathe out.

8. Seeing that my life span is not Life unbounded
bounded by the span of my birth
and death, I breathe in.

Seeing that my perception of a life Life span,

span is in error, I breathe out.

erroneous

perception

This exercise originates in the *Vajracchedika Prajñāpāramitā* sutra (in English, the Diamond sutra), whose purpose is to help us break through our habitual thought patterns, in this case, the following four conceptions:

1. The conception of myself as a separately existing entity (parts 1 and 2)
2. The conception of the human species as a separately existing species (parts 3 and 4)
3. The conception of animal species as separately existing (parts 5 and 6)
4. The conception of a life span beginning with birth and ending in death (parts 7 and 8)

The quintessential Buddhist teaching is the teaching on emptiness (Sanskrit *śūnyatā*). Emptiness is a way of expressing that all species exist in connection with and in dependence upon each other. Our meditation practice breaks down the barriers between us and what seems to be other: the human species and all the other species, the animal species and the so-called non-sentient species, a short life span limited by space and time and a life span not limited in that way. If we can break through our habitual conceptions and thought patterns, we will emerge in a state of fearlessness, and our love for all species will be like our love for ourselves. Our practice will include the protection of all species, whether vegetable, animal, or mineral. Anyone who works to protect the plants, the animals, the environment of our earth, can take the Vajracchedika sutra as a fundamental text.

Acting in accord with its teachings, we shall not give way to anger, chagrin, and despair. If we base our actions on perceptions that open wide our mental frontiers, we shall know to use only the materials of understanding and love in our work for all species. In this task, we will feel happy and at peace.

Exercise Thirteen

Looking Deeply

1. Aware of myself picking up an autumn leaf, I breathe in.
Touching the wonderful interdependent nature of that leaf,
Picking up leaf
Interdependent nature

I breathe out.

2. Aware of myself alive here and now, Alive here, now

I breathe in.

Touching the wonderful	Interdependent life
interdependent nature of life in me	in and around me
and around me, I breathe out.	

3. Aware of the leaf returning to the Leaf to earth,
earth and arising as a new leaf, earth to leaf

I breathe in.

Seeing the leaf in ten thousand	Ten thousand
different forms of birth and death,	different forms
I breathe out.	

4. Aware of myself as a part of the Part of
wonderful, interdependent existence, interdependence

I breathe in.

Seeing that I become manifest under	Many different
many different forms, I breathe out.	forms

5. Seeing that the leaf is not really born, Leaf only appears
does not really die, but only appears to be born and die
to be born and die, I breathe in.

Seeing that I do not really pass	I only appear to be
through birth and death but only	born and die
appear to, I breathe out.	

6. Seeing that the leaf functions in multiple universes, I breathe in. Leaf functions in multiple universes
Seeing that I function in multiple universes, I breathe out. I function in multiple universes
7. Seeing that the leaf has accomplished its work from beginningless time, I breathe in. Leaf's work beginningless
Seeing that I have accomplished my work from beginningless time, I breathe out. My work already accomplished
8. Seeing that the leaf is already what it wants to become, I breathe in. Leaf is what it wants to be
Seeing that I am already what I want to become, I breathe out. I am what I want to be
9. Seeing that the leaf can call up all its past lives from beginningless time, I breathe in. Leaf's past lives without beginning
Seeing that I can call up all my past lives from beginningless time, I breathe out. My past lives without beginning

This exercise is based on the insights of the Avatamsaka and Saddharmapundarika sutras. In the practice of mindfulness, the meditator can be in touch with the wonderful aspect of reality called the Dharma realm

(Sanskrit *dharmadhātu*). Here he will discover that neither he himself nor anything that exists is subject to birth or death. The realm of birth and death is called the world (in Sanskrit, *lokadhātu*). In the Dharma realm, birth, death, being, and nonbeing do not truly exist. Birth is only an appearance, and the same is true of death. To be born is to appear to be born, and to die is to appear to die. The appearance of a Buddha is not really a new arising: it is just an appearance, like that of an actor on a stage. The life of a leaf too is only apparent. Although it seems to be born and to die, it does not really do so. When it falls from the tree, it is only appearing to pass away, just as a Buddha appears to pass away into nirvana. If a meditator can see this, she will also see that her own birth and death are only apparent. In the *Saddharmapundarīka* sutra (the Lotus sutra), there is a chapter on the life span of a Buddha and one on the powers of a Buddha. Someone who has learned to look at a Buddha in terms of the Dharma realm can see the birthless and deathless nature of the Buddha and realize that Buddha only appears to be born and to die.

The life span and the powers of a Buddha cannot be measured. The life span of a leaf and the powers of a leaf are, like those of a Buddha, immeasurable. The same can be said of each one of us.

The *Saddharmapundarīka* sutra teaches us to distinguish three dimensions: the historical dimension, the ultimate dimension, and the dimension of action. The historical dimension is the dimension in which we can say that the Buddha is born, is enlightened, teaches the Dharma, and passes away into nirvana. The ultimate dimension is the dimension where Buddha has been Buddha since beginningless time and has been teaching the Dharma and passing away into nirvana since beginningless time. The tower in which Buddha Prabhūtaratna sits—in the *Saddharmapundarīka* sutra, we are told that this tower appears whenever and wherever the teachings of this sutra are given—refers to the ultimate dimension. The Buddha Prabhūtaratna of the past can be touched in the present moment. Sakyamuni Buddha is indeed Prabhūtaratna Buddha. The dimension of action is that of the bodhisattvas, such as Samantabhadra, Avalokiteshvara, Bhaishajyaraja, Gadgadasvara, and Sadāparibhūta. All these bodhisattvas voyage in the historical dimension, teaching and helping all beings. Each has been a Buddha since times long past, and from the basis of the ultimate dimension, they open up the dimension of action, which means that they appear in the historical dimension, too, for that dimension is the framework for their actions.

If Buddha Sakyamuni and all other Buddhas only appear to come to give the teachings, while in fact their life spans and their powers are immeasurable, then we can say the same of the leaf and of ourselves.

The Saddharmapundarīka sūtra shows us that the Buddha is not a lone image arising within the framework of space and time. The chapter called “Appearance of a Stupa” in the Saddharmapundarīka shows us that the Buddha has countless transformation bodies arriving in countless worlds to give the teachings. The leaf can also be described this way, as can we ourselves. Each of us has a transformation body in all places, and every action, thought, and word we speak has an influence on the ten directions. This exercise brings us a wonderful concentration. That concentration is called the *saddharmapundarīka samādhi*.

Chapter VI. Representing the Buddha

When we take refuge in the Buddha, it is the Buddha of our own consciousness. Buddha is not a personal name. It is an epithet meaning “awakened.” All beings have the capacity to be awake and to realize understanding and compassion. The question is how to be in touch with our Buddha nature and how to keep it alive. These guided meditations help us to do that. Some of the exercises in this chapter have very short sentences and do not need key words.

Exercise One

Mindfulness of the Buddha-nature

1. Breathing in, I let the Buddha sit. Buddha sits
Breathing out, I do not have to sit. I do not have to sit
2. Breathing in, I let the Buddha breathe. Buddha breathes
Breathing out, I do not have to breathe. I do not have to
breathe
3. Breathing in, the Buddha is sitting. Buddha is sitting
Breathing out, I enjoy the sitting. I enjoy the sitting
4. Breathing in, the Buddha is breathing. Buddha is breathing
Breathing out, I enjoy the breathing. I enjoy
the breathing
5. Breathing in, the Buddha is the sitting. Buddha is
the sitting
Breathing out, I am the sitting. I am the sitting
6. Breathing in, Buddha is the breathing. Buddha is the

	breathing	
Breathing out, I am the breathing.	I am the breathing	
7. Breathing in, there is only the sitting.	Only the sitting	
Breathing out, there is only	Only the breathing	
the breathing.		
8. Breathing in, there is no sitter.	No sitter	
Breathing out, there is no breather.	No breather	
9. Breathing in, there is peace	Peace while sitting	
while sitting.		
Breathing out, there is joy	Joy while breathing	
while breathing.		
10. Breathing in, peace is the sitting.	Peace is the sitting	
Breathing out, joy is the breathing.	Joy is the breathing	

This exercise takes us from the historical to the ultimate dimension. At the beginning of the exercise we see that the Buddha and the meditator are two separate entities. Perhaps the meditator is feeling a little lazy or at an impasse and so she does not try to practice any more but lets the Buddha take over. It is just as when you, who are not a computer expert, have difficulty with your computer. You have to ask someone who knows about computers to come along and sort the problem out for you. The meditator, instead of struggling, allows the innate Buddha nature to take over. This exercise is based on the teaching that the Buddha nature is not something acquired from without but is always available in consciousness.

When we come to the sixth part of the exercise we see that the agent is no longer separate from the action. The agent and the action have become one. It is like the sentence, "The wind is blowing." We see that it is a tautology. If it is wind, it must be blowing. A wind that does not blow is not a wind at all. All we need is the word "wind." At this point we touch the ultimate dimension where there is no separate self.

This exercise shows us that we can allow the Buddha nature to take over in any practice. As we brush our teeth or urinate we can also witness that the Buddha is brushing our teeth or urinating.

Christian practitioners have enjoyed doing this exercise, since Buddha does not refer only to a historical personage but to an enlightened state of body and mind. However, a Christian practitioner could also use: “Let Jesus walk. Let Jesus breathe,” since, according to Christianity, we are all children of God.

Exercise Two

Relaxation

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Breathing in, Buddha | Buddha breathing |
| is breathing gently. | |
| Breathing out, | I enjoy breathing |
| I enjoy breathing gently. | |
| 2. Breathing in, the Buddha | Buddha is |
| is lying down comfortably. | lying down |
| Breathing out, I enjoy | I enjoy lying down |
| lying comfortably. | |
| 3. Breathing in, there is peace | Peace while |
| while breathing gently. | breathing |
| Breathing out, there is joy | Joy while |
| while lying comfortably. | lying down |
| 4. Breathing in, peace | Peace is |
| is the gentle breathing. | the breathing |
| Breathing out, joy is the relaxation. | Joy is the relaxation |

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 5. Breathing in, Buddha | Buddha |
| is breathing gently. | breathing gently |
| Breathing out, Buddha is resting. | Buddha is resting |
| 6. Breathing in, I enjoy breathing gently. | I enjoy |
| | breathing gently |
| Breathing out, I enjoy resting. | I enjoy resting |
| 7. Breathing in, there is peace | Peace while |
| while breathing gently. | breathing |
| Breathing out, there is | Joy while resting |
| joy while resting. | |
| 8. Breathing in, peace is | Peace is |
| the gentle breathing. | gentle breathing |
| Breathing out, joy is the resting. | Joy is resting |
| 9. Breathing in, Buddha | Buddha |
| is breathing gently. | breathing gently |
| Breathing out, | I enjoy |
| I enjoy breathing gently. | breathing gently |
| 10. Breathing in, Buddha is free. | Buddha is free |
| Breathing out, I enjoy the freedom. | I enjoy the freedom |
| 11. Breathing in, there is peace | Peace while |
| while breathing gently. | breathing |
| Breathing out, there is joy | Joy while free |

while feeling free.

12. Breathing in, breathing gently is peace. Breathing is peace

Breathing out, freedom is joy. Freedom is joy

This exercise is to help people relax in either the sitting or the lying position. The one who is guiding the exercise can repeat the phrases as many times as she feels is necessary to induce total relaxation. The important thing is to guide the practitioners in such a way that they do not need to make any mental effort and can relax completely. We can use it for ourselves when we are lying in bed to relax totally as we fall asleep.

Exercise Three

1. Breathing in, the Buddha Buddha breathes

is breathing with my lungs. with my lungs

Breathing out, I enjoy the breathing. I enjoy
the breathing

2. Breathing in, the Buddha Buddha sits

is sitting with my back. with my back

Breathing out, I enjoy the sitting. I enjoy the sitting

3. Breathing in, the Buddha dwells The Buddha dwells

in the island of self. in the island of self

Breathing out, I can dwell in I dwell in the
the island of myself. island of self

4. Breathing in, the Buddha has arrived. The Buddha

has arrived

Breathing out, I enjoy arriving. I enjoy arriving

This exercise, like the preceding ones in this chapter, is to help us be in touch with the Buddha nature in ourselves directly. It can be used when we are anywhere, even for a very short time, when we need the support of the Buddha.

Exercise Four

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Seeing the Buddha before me in | Buddha sitting |
| the seated meditation position, | |
| I breathe in. | |
| Joining my palms in respect, | Joining palms |
| I breathe out. | |
| 2. Seeing the Buddha in me, | Buddha in me |
| I breathe in. | |
| Seeing myself in the Buddha, | Me in Buddha |
| I breathe out. | |
| 3. Seeing the boundary between | Buddha smiles, |
| myself and the Buddha disappear as | no boundary |
| the Buddha smiles, I breathe in. | |
| Seeing the boundary between the one I smile, | |
| who respects and the one who is | no boundary |
| respected disappear as I smile, | |
| I breathe out. | |
| 4. Seeing myself bowing deeply to | Bowing deeply |
| the Buddha, I breathe in. | to Buddha |

Seeing the strength of the Buddha Strength of
enter me, I breathe out. Buddha in me

This meditation exercise has been applied for more than a thousand years in countries with a Buddhist tradition. In Vietnam, it is used at the beginning of ceremonies before people bow deeply to the Buddha. The traditional wording is: *Since the nature of the one who bows and the one who is bowed to is empty, the communication between us is perfect.* This meditation is rooted in the teachings of interbeing, emptiness, and nonduality. According to the teachings of interdependent arising, both the Buddha and the person who bows before the Buddha are manifested by cause and condition and cannot exist in separation from the rest of all that is. This is what is meant when we say that both are empty. In this context, emptiness means the lack of an autonomously arising, independent entity. In myself are many elements that are not myself, and one of those elements is the Buddha. In the Buddha are many elements that are not the Buddha, and one of those elements is me. It is this insight that enables me to realize the deep contact between myself and the Buddha, and it is this insight that gives the ceremony of paying homage to the Buddha its deepest meaning. It is rare in religious traditions to find this equality between the one who pays homage and the one who is paid homage stated in such an uncompromising way. When we pay homage like this, we do not feel weak or needy. Instead, we are filled with confidence in our capacity to be awakened in the way that the Buddha was.

This exercise can be practiced in sitting meditation or as we bow deeply before the Buddha, Christ, the bodhisattvas, and so on.

Exercise Five

Mindfulness of the Awakened One

1. Seeing the Buddha before me, Buddha before me
I breathe in.
Seeing myself join my palms Joining palms
in respect, I breathe out.
2. Seeing the Buddha before me Buddha before

and behind me, I breathe in. and behind me
Seeing myself join my palms Joining palms,
and bow my head in respect to bowing
the Buddha before and behind me,
I breathe out.

3. Seeing Buddhas in the ten directions Innumerable

as numerous as the sands of the Buddhas
Ganges, I breathe in.
Seeing before each Buddha there One of me
is an image of myself bowing, bowing to each
I breathe out. Buddha

This exercise is a continuation of the preceding one. It has also been practiced for more than a thousand years in the Buddhist tradition. The original wording of the exercise goes something like this: *The practice platform that I see before me is the jewelled net of Indra, made of countless precious jewels. All the Buddhas of the ten directions appear reflected in each of the precious jewels, and my own image standing before each of the Buddhas is also reflected in each of the precious jewels. As I bow my head before one Buddha I am paying homage to all the Buddhas in the ten directions at one and the same time.* The source of this meditation is the Avatamsaka sutra. It is based on the principle that one is all and all is one. The exercise helps us to see ourselves beyond the scope of the five aggregates, which are always limited by the framework of space and time. It also helps us to see how we interpenetrate every wonder of our universe.

This exercise, like the preceding one, can be practiced in the sitting position or as we bow deeply.

Chapter VII. My Parents, Myself

There are many ways we can usefully apply the teachings of no self in our daily lives. One of the most effective and easiest ways is to see our parents and our ancestors as non-self elements of what we call “myself.” “Myself” is nothing more than an appellation for a whole line of ancestors whom I represent. This truth of no separate self is fully borne out by the findings of science, in particular the science of genetics. In spite of this scientific truth, it is not always easy for people to see that they are their parents. Some people want to have nothing to do with their parents. In fact, if we cannot feel love and compassion for our parents, we cannot love ourselves.

Exercise One

Looking Deeply, Healing

1. Seeing myself as a five-year-old child, Myself five

I breathe in.	years old
Smiling to the five-year-old child,	Smiling
I breathe out.	
2. Seeing the five-year-old as fragile Five-year-old

and vulnerable, I breathe in.	fragile
Smiling with love to the five-year-old	Smiling with love
in me, I breathe out.	
3. Seeing my father as a Father five

five-year-old boy, I breathe in.	years old
Smiling to my father as a	Smiling
five-year-old boy, I breathe out.	
4. Seeing my five-year-old father Father fragile

as fragile and vulnerable, I breathe in. and vulnerable

Smiling with love and understanding Smiling with love

to my father as a five-year-old boy, and understanding

I breathe out.

5. Seeing my mother as a five-year-old Mother five

girl, I breathe in. years old

Smiling to my mother as a Smiling

five-year-old girl, I breathe out.

6. Seeing my five-year-old mother as Mother fragile

fragile and vulnerable, I breathe in. and vulnerable

Smiling with love and understanding Smiling with love

to my mother as a five-year-old and understanding

girl, I breathe out.

7. Seeing my father suffering as a child, Father suffering

I breathe in. as a child

Seeing my mother suffering as a child, Mother suffering

I breathe out. as a child

8. Seeing my father in me, Father in me

I breathe in.

Smiling to my father in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

9. Seeing my mother in me, Mother in me

I breathe in.

Smiling to my mother in me, Smiling

I breathe out.

10. Understanding the difficulties Difficulties of

that my father in me has, I breathe in. father in me

Determined to practice for the release Releasing father

of both my father and me, and me

I breathe out.

11. Understanding the difficulties that Difficulties of

my mother in me has, I breathe in. mother in me

Determined to practice for the release Releasing mother

of both my mother and me, and me

I breathe out.

This exercise has helped many young people re-establish happy and stable relations with their parents. At the same time, it has helped them transform accumulated hatred and resentment that began gathering in them at a very young age.

There are people who cannot even think about their mothers and fathers without feelings of hatred and sorrow. There are always seeds of love in the hearts of parents and children, but because we do not know how to water those seeds, and especially because we do not know how to resolve resentments when they are newly sown, both generations often find it extremely difficult to accept each other.

For the first step of the exercise, the practitioner observes herself as a five-year-old child. At that age we are so easily hurt. An overly severe glance or a threatening or reproachful word wounds us deeply and makes us feel very ashamed. When father makes mother suffer or mother makes father suffer, a seed of suffering is also sown and watered in the heart of the child. If this happens repeatedly, the child will grow up with many seeds of suffering in her

heart and will blame her father or her mother throughout her life. When we see ourselves as vulnerable children, we learn to feel compassion for ourselves, and that compassion will have a deep impact upon us. We must smile at that child of five years with the smile of compassion.

In the next stage of the meditation, the practitioner visualizes his mother or his father as a five-year-old child. Usually we think of our fathers as strict and severe, hard-to-please adults who only know how to resolve a problem by using their authority. But we also know that before a father was an adult, he was a little boy, just as vulnerable, just as fragile as we ourselves were. We can see that that little boy cringed, fell silent, and did not dare open his mouth to speak whenever his own father fell into a rage. We see that small boy may also have been the victim of the hot temper, scowling, and roughness of a father. It is often helpful to seek out an old family photograph album to find out what our mothers or fathers looked like when they were young children. In our sitting meditation, we can welcome the children who were our mothers and fathers and smile to them as we would smile to dear friends. We see their fragility and their vulnerability and a feeling of pity for them is born in us. When this feeling of pity wells up in our hearts, we know that our meditation is beginning to bear fruit. When we truly see and understand people's suffering, it is impossible not to accept and love them. The accumulated resentment toward our parents will gradually be transformed as we practice this exercise. As we grow in understanding, so we grow in acceptance. We shall be able to use this understanding and love to go to our parents and to help them transform too. We know that this is possible because our understanding and our feelings of compassion have helped us transform ourselves, and we have already become easier, sweeter, calmer, and more tolerant people. Tolerance and calm are two signs of authentic love.

Exercise Two

1. Breathing in, my father is breathing Father breathing

in with me.

in with me

Breathing out, my father is breathing Father breathing

out with me.

out with me

2. Breathing in, I am sitting with

My father's back

my father's back.

Breathing out, I am breathing with My father's lungs
my father's lungs.

3. Breathing in, I feel light and at ease. I feel light
and at ease

Breathing out, Daddy, do you feel Daddy are you
light and at ease? light and at ease?

4. Breathing in, my mother is Mother breathing
breathing in with me. in with me

Breathing out, my mother is Mother breathing
breathing out with me. out with me

5. Breathing in, I am sitting My mother's back
with my mother's back.

Breathing out, I am breathing My mother's lungs
with my mother's lungs.

6. Breathing in I feel light and at ease. I feel light
and at ease

Breathing out, Mummy, do you Mummy are you
feel light and at ease? light and at ease?

There was a day when, in my sitting meditation, I said to my father, who had already passed away many years ago: "Father, we have succeeded." I meant that we had succeeded in realizing the stopping and peace that is the fruit of meditation. While my father was alive he was a civil servant and hardly ever had the time to practice sitting meditation and feel the joy of stopping. Now as I sat in meditation, I saw that as I meditated, my father was also

meditating.

In meditation you realize that your parents are in every cell of your body. When your parents die they continue to live in you and in others. If you never knew your parents you learn to look deeply into your five skandhas in order to discover your parents there. Feelings, emotions, and ways of perceiving the world come from your upbringing, education, society, and friends, but there are also vestiges of the feelings, emotions, and perceptions of your parents. Mindfulness of your feelings and mind in daily life helps you recognize these vestiges.

You may have an idea of your father and mother outside of you. When you meditate, as in the above exercises, you will also have an idea of your mother and father within you. These two different ways of perceiving your parents interare and influence each other. If your father and mother never had an opportunity to practice meditation in their daily life, now, in a new continuation, they can enjoy the lightness and ease that meditation brings. If your parents are still alive, you will see that they benefit from your practice of breathing with them.

Appendix: Reciting the Five Mindfulness Trainings

Opening verse:

The Dharma is deep and lovely.

We now have a chance to see it,
study it, and practice it.

We vow to realize its true meaning.

Brothers and Sisters, it is now time to recite the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Please, those who have received the Five Trainings kneel with joined palms in the direction of the Buddha, our teacher.

Brothers and Sisters, please listen. The Five Mindfulness Trainings are the basis for a happy life. They have the capacity to protect life and to make it beautiful and worth living. They are also the door that opens to enlightenment and liberation. Please listen to each precept and answer “Yes” silently every time you see that you have made the effort to study, practice, and observe it.

The First Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of people, animals, and plants. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

This is the first of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study and practice it during the past two weeks?

(bell)

The Second Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivate loving-kindness and learn ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, and plants. I am determined to practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on earth.

This is the second of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an

effort to study and practice it during the past two weeks?

(bell)

The Third Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivate responsibility and learn ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to protect couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

This is the third of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study and practice it during the past two weeks?

(bell)

The Fourth Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, using words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

This is the fourth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study and practice it during the past two weeks?

(bell)

The Fifth Precept

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivate good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I vow to ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest

food or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in my self and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

This is the fifth of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Have you made an effort to study and practice it during the past two weeks?

(bell)

Brothers and Sisters, we have recited the Five Wonderful Mindfulness Trainings, the foundation of happiness for the individual, the family, and society. We should recite them regularly so that our study and practice of the mindfulness trainings can deepen day by day.

Hearing the bell, please bow three times to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha to show your gratitude.

Closing verse:

Reciting the mindfulness trainings,
practicing the way of awareness,
gives rise to benefits without limit.

We vow to share the fruits with all beings.

We vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers, friends, and
numerous beings
who give guidance and support along the path.

Exercise One

Touching the Earth[\[1\]](#)

With undivided concentration,
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha,
Which are in the ten directions
And also in myself,
Which are in all Dharma realms
Transcending past, present, and future,
Prostrate and surrendering
I wholeheartedly go for refuge.

This poem can be used as we stand with joined palms before the object of our respect and when we bow down before the object of our respect. As you or a member of your Sangha reads or chants this poem, on the first, third, fifth, and seventh lines, you breathe in. On the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth lines, you breathe out. When you touch the earth, you bend with a slow, graceful movement toward the floor. Before placing your knees on the floor, position your hands, one on each side of the place where your head will be. Finally, lower your forehead to the floor. The back of your thighs rests on your calves so that your whole body is close to the floor. Remaining in that position for as long as you want, follow your breath and be mindful of the words of the poem. You do not have to be mindful of every line if that is too much to concentrate on. One or two lines of the poem may be sufficient for your meditation.

The ten directions are the eight directions of the compass plus above and below. We say that they contain the Buddha because the Buddha is the awakened aspect of our minds, which can manifest itself anywhere. We do not have to go to Bodhgaya in India to find the Buddha. The Dharma is the teaching about the way things are. If the awakened aspect of the mind is present, then anything can be used to teach us: a flower, a rock, even a harsh word. Sangha is a combination of elements, human and nonhuman, that helps us in the practice. The soft grass on which we sit and meditate, as well as our friends who sit with us, are our Sangha.

Within ourselves as well, we see that every cell contains the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The parts of our bodies that we usually see as clean and those we usually see as unclean are all Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Every cell in our bodies contains the earth element, and we prostrate ourselves on the earth. We could not be nearer to the earth, and we are not really different from the earth on which we prostrate ourselves. In this position, you may experience an overwhelming happiness. Tears may come to your eyes, and you will see that there are many fragrant flowers all around being watered by the rain. Even when the earth seems to manifest no living thing, it contains seeds that may become flowers. Even when you die, as you have done so many thousands of times, a new flower blooms to welcome you home. To touch the earth is to die—to die and be happy. Those of you who long to die and shake the red dust of this earth from your feet do not have to wait for death to call you. You can surrender yourself right now.

Dharma realms are the objects of our minds. Any element can be the object of our minds and can then be called a Dharma realm. A Dharma realm has something miraculous about it because, though it is phenomenal, it can

express the ultimate nature of things. The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha are thus found in everything we can conceive of.

We can transcend past, present, and future. Buddha is not just in the past, in the fifth and sixth centuries b.c.e. Buddha is here with us now, when we know how to be mindful. What were you before you were born as a human being? Were you a cloud? Buddha was in that cloud. Maybe you were a mosquito and Buddha was in that mosquito. What will you be in the future? Will you be a drop of rain? Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha will be in that drop of rain. We should not think that it is only in this life that we have the capacity to meet the Buddha. We have had many opportunities in the past to be the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, and we shall have many more opportunities in the future.

In touching the earth, we move down because we are becoming something very humble, and we move forward because we are becoming something very great. We are really nothing, yet at the same time we are in harmony with all the elements in the universe. When you practice meditation as you touch the earth, make sure you feel comfortable. You can just surrender and enjoy your conscious breathing. In this position, it is very easy to surrender all thoughts. You can surrender yourself and every thought about yourself. Surrender yourself until you are nothing. This means that there will be no more complexes in you. You will not think how intelligent or unintelligent you are, how worthy or unworthy. The complexes of superiority, inferiority, or equality are a burden that we are able to put down when we touch the earth.

[1] This important practice has a whole book devoted to it. See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Touching the Earth: Intimate Conversations with the Buddha* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2004).

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