

Seven Factors of Awakening –A Year Living These Treasures- Home practices #8

*****(Next class 10/4/24 at 6:00-8:30pm).** *HAVE FUN* with these practices!

Happy Autumn!

- 1) **Sit every day.** Try sitting for a minimum of 15-30 minutes per day. (More if you are able) Practice your meditation in silence.

Start your sitting practice remembering your intention to be

- Mindfulness is the 1st factor of awakening. **Asking:** "What is being known right now? Is Mindfulness present right now or not? (laugh if not).
- The 2nd is investigation **Asking:** Is there interest & curiosity about your experience? Begin to understand what wholesome/skillful states of mind are & what are not. "What is this?" or "What is happening in this moment?"
- The 3rd is energy. **Asking:** Is there energy right now or not? "Is this suffering or not suffering? Is this wholesome or not wholesome?" Check & see, Are you applying effort by striving or by softening?
- The 4th is joy. **Asking:** Is there joy or rapt interest, right now or not? Is there a spark of joy-delight or not?
- The 5th is Tranquility. **Asking:** How is the mind right now? Is there some sense of Tranquility, Calm, Stillness, Ease, Quietness arising right now or not? If there is some sense of agitation how might that release? As the agitation settles down, the mind/heart becomes quieter and quieter. If Tranquility feels like a stretch connecting to what registers as calm may help us connect to the experience.
- **The 6th is Concentration.** **Asking:** Concentration better known as a stability of mind or non-distractibility or absorption as a sense of the mind-being completely and fully with whatever it is paying attention to. So right now is the mind calm, stable, steady, undistracted or not? If it's a bit scattered, can we (soften) so we can release whatever it is that is preoccupying us? As we practice softening, opening, loosening or softening, releasing, letting go, coming home to the object then we can experience deeper levels of steadiness. Samadhi is satisfying and absorbing.

- 2) **This month, Concentration, Steadiness, Samadhi- in Pali,-- the Sixth Factor of Awakening**

Concentration is the next calming factor. It is the ability of the mind to stay wherever we want it to stay. The mind is steady not wavering. The image is of a candle that is lit, and the flame isn't wavering because there is no wind. It's a focused mind. Both settled and composed. The mind is unified and one-pointed. Concentration is translated as calm, tranquil, serene, still, at ease, and composed. With Samadhi- Sam- means together, a- is bringing to a certain place, and -dhi is the energy of the mind. We collect the energy of our mind and direct it toward an object. With concentration, the mind is one-pointed, still, steady & quite naturally it stays focused on the object. To have mindfulness we need concentration. Once mindfulness is developed, concentration, in turn, becomes stronger.

Some obstacles to concentration

- Thinking that we should be more concentrated than we are
- Fear that we are failing at concentration feeling
- Thinking we need to succeed at Concentration- as if it's something that we need to get creates tension, pressure -

Remember for concentration to arise there does have to be some degree of ease, softening, some gentle sustaining of attention, on the breathing or brahmavihārā phrase, the sustaining of the attention whenever we get a chance. This awakening factor reminds us that happiness of heart and strength of mind comes from within so we are not so dependent on external conditions!

3) Below are reflections & practices for Concentration in daily life & formal meditation. Please choose & experiment with at least 2 of the following:

- a) **Reflections:** Can you remember a time when you felt present, composed, calm, absorbed? This may not have occurred in formal meditation, but perhaps when you were in nature or waking up after a nap. How did it feel to be calm-absorbed? How did it feel in your body? How was your mind state?
 - o **Practices:** During your daily meditation practice, see if you can evoke the feeling you had earlier in your life of being really present, composed, calm absorbed. You can use that feeling to guide your meditation by noticing when you feel more composed and less composed and the conditions that precede it.

- b) **Reflection:** It is difficult to become concentrated, absorbed when our minds are filled with hindrances (1) sensual desire, (2) ill will, (3) sloth/torpor, (4) restlessness/worry, (5) doubt. Hindrances operate in everyone and are not a personal failing when they arise. What is your relationship to the hindrances? Are you aware when they are present? What is your attitude towards them? Is 1 hindrance more persistent-prevalent than the others?
- o **Practices:** Notice when the Hindrances are present and take the opportunity to investigate them. What are their emotional, physical, energetic, cognitive aspects? What is the difference in your experience when any hindrance is present and not present?
- c) **Reflections:** Memorization and concentration are related skills. How do you feel about focusing, memorizing something, whether grocery list or poem? Do you feel you don't have the capacity or don't need to memorize things?
- o **Practice:** Memorize something that is meaningful to you and supports your practice. It could be a poem, a passage from a sutta, how does it feel to make the effort to memorize something meaningful? Does what you memorize affect you in any way?
- d) **Reflections:** Do you intentionally cultivate one form of meditation, or do you allow your meditation practice to unfold organically? Do you prefer choiceless or open awareness or concentration practice? Do you have any hesitation around becoming concentrated or entering states of absorption?
- Practice:** Intentionally practice concentration during meditation. Focusing exclusively on your breath. (count your breaths from 1-5 repeatedly). Repeat Brahmavihara phrases while meditating.

4) **Continue this month of practice:**

*When the awakening factors are present there is no room for the hindrances. The hindrances are absent. One simple way of understanding our practice is to nurture or let go-to release or let go of the hindrances and to strengthen or cultivate the awakening factors. It is possible to be mindful of the hindrances as an object of meditation **Both in formal practice & daily life practice!** **This Month explore how Steadiness or concentration can be a stabilizing factor with Restlessness and worry or how it can become a hindrance of desire.** **Recollect** that the awakening factors point to freedom-free from greed, hatred, delusion- We can experience that in clear moments when the hindrances are absent. Might be nanoseconds and those moments can begin to grow **Ahh...** **Awakening is a verb, a process!***

- 5) **Walking Meditation:** Be Mindful when you are walking. **Notice rushing-** when we are ahead of ourselves just walk, when standing just stand.)
- 6) **Gratitude Practices:** 3 things you are grateful for daily. Email or Text your buddies.
- 7) **Pause Meditation: (Several times in your day)**
- 8) **Thanissaro Bhikkhu's book, [Factors For Awakening](#), especially pages 35-38**
- 9) **Please read daily, The Seven Factors of Awakening:** Notice in sitting practice & daily life when any of the above states of heart or mind are present in your body, heart, and mind.
 1. **Mindfulness (sati):** Being aware of what is happening in the present moment
 2. **Investigation (dhamma-vicaya):** Investigation supported by wisdom. Understands what skillful/healthy/beneficial states of mind are and what are not.
 3. **Energy (viriya)-Diligence, effort:** Increased engagement with practice, especially freeing oneself from unskillful states.
 4. **Joy (piti):** Feeling of delight, rapture. Touching that which is refreshing and beautiful, both within and without. Arises when attention is absorbed
 5. **Tranquility (passaddhi):** Calming and stilling of body/ mind, Ease, quietness of mind, relaxation
 6. **Concentration (samadhi):** The mind is focused, settled, steady and composed. The mind becomes unified around what we're concentrating on, one-pointedness of mind.
 7. **Equanimity (upekkha):** Balance, spaciousness, and non-reactivity of mind, balance in the face of change, being aware of all phenomena w/o grasping or aversion. Sublime and extremely satisfying state of heart/mind
- 10) **Please get to know, The Five Hindrances:** Can you surround each with acceptance?
 1. **Sense-desire:** wanting, lust or greed, craving-fantasy.

2. **Aversion:** ill will, hatred, anger, fear, boredom, annoyance, irritation, impatience, judging- guilt.
3. **Sloth & torpor:** sleepiness, sluggishness, dullness, fogginess, lack of vitality.
4. **Restlessness and worry:** anxiousness, agitation, nervousness, jumpiness.
5. **Doubt:** Uncertainty, self-doubt, skeptical doubt, uncertainty/indecision

A Gentle Hindrance Hint: How did-do we relate when these Hindrances arise in meditation & in our daily life? The best way to relate with skillfulness is to recognize, know what is happening in the present, to be mindful. Simply acknowledge the hindrance is that has arisen in this moment in your life, in your practice. If possible, touch them with your heart. To connect with tenderness or caring, to befriend the hindrance, do your best not to judge them.