



## Mindfulness Teacher Training Course – Stage 1, Week 8

### Expanded Awareness Meditation

#### Introduction

In this formal practice of sitting meditation, you are taking a seat right in the middle of your life. You are intentionally bringing yourself into a direct and intimate relationship with the present moment and what is arising in it for you — as much as possible without judging.

In this meditation, you have the opportunity to expand your attention to explore body sensations, sounds, thoughts, emotions, and, when you are ready, to open to all of these — to the full range of events within and without as they move and change, appear and disappear in awareness. You are taking time to become more familiar— moment by moment — with who you *are*, beyond all the wanting and having and doing...

In a sense, this practice is a perfect expression of your own unique presence in the world... So it is helpful to come to this practice with a sense of kindness and care for yourself ... and to bring a dignity that befits your special status to the time, place, and posture of your sitting practice... Setting aside a regular time, when you won't be interrupted... In a quiet and comfortable place that can nurture your practice... And sitting, whether on a chair or cushion, with an attitude of confidence and stability — not leaning into or moving away from anything, simply present with and open to what is happening now...

Note: Within this meditation there are many long pauses to allow the silence to facilitate the process of Expanded Awareness.

#### Expanded Awareness Meditation

Sitting in an upright position with your back straight and yet relaxed. Dignified... Embodying confidence... Feeling the floor or chair or cushion or bed beneath you, supporting you.

Feeling gravity holding you, the earth receiving you. Finding a point of balance where gravity is holding you comfortably upright, without strain. Allowing the body to become still...

And bringing your attention now to the sense of the body breathing, the breath entering and leaving the body...

Encouraging willingness to be present to whatever arises.

Orienting with the breath.

Bringing curiosity and freshness to this moment... and noticing where you feel the sensation of breath most vividly now... and bringing your attention there...

Simply breathing in and out... noticing that there is a beginning, middle, and end of an in-breath and a beginning, middle, and end of an out-breath... (long pause).

Watching the entirety of an in-breath from the beginning to the end.

Noticing the moment, the space, or pause, when it shifts to become an out breath... and then noticing the out-breath from its beginning to its shift as it becomes an in-breath... (long pause).

Realizing that no matter how many times the attention leaves the breath, awareness of that does arise, and there is an opportunity to choose and to bring the attention back...to this in-breath and or this out-breath, now... (long pause).

Allowing the breath to be at the centre of your attention and allowing any thoughts to come and go like clouds in the sky... (long pause).

If the attention has wandered from the breath, gently but firmly escorting it back, making the breath the centre, the focus of attention again... (long pause).

And now, when you are ready, expanding your attention beyond the breath to include also the entire body, sitting...

Becoming aware of sensation in the body... Perhaps sensations of contact with the chair or bed or wherever you are... Perhaps the touch of clothes on your body, or how your hands feel in the moment. Sensations of temperature. Being present with any sensations as they arise...

Noticing how sensations sometimes stay for just a short while, and how other times they linger... Noticing how they change in intensity, shift, and pass away as new sensations arise... like the breath, they have a beginning, middle, and end... (long pause).

Staying in touch with sensations in the body as you sit...If the attention wanders, noticing and making a choice to bring it back with care and kindness to the awareness of the body and the breath... (long pause).

If sensations arise in the body that are very intense, making it difficult to focus on the body or the breath, there are two ways to be with this. You may choose to change your posture mindfully, attending to the sensations of movement as you shift... *Or* you may choose to direct attention right into the intensity of the sensation itself...

Exploring it with a gentle curiosity... Noticing nuances of sensation... perhaps thoughts and judgments... Perhaps resistance or bracing... and, as much as possible, stepping back to observe, to open space in awareness, perhaps to soften... and attending to duration — noticing that sensations change, that they have beginning, middle, and end...(Long pause).

Now, allowing your attention to shift from the breath and the body to the sense of hearing... Not seeking sound, rather receiving whatever is available... from within the body and from the environment near and far... becoming particularly aware of hearing... Noticing how the awareness receives sounds without effort... (long pause).

Being aware of how sounds have a beginning, middle, and end... How some are very short and some are long...

How they are varied and textured... How there is space between sounds... Noticing how the mind labels sounds, has opinions about sounds, likes and dislikes certain sounds... Noticing any desire to move away from some sounds and towards others... as much as possible making space in which sounds can be experienced as they are...(long pause).

And when you are ready, allowing attention to shift from hearing, and letting it expand this time into thinking — the realm of thought... seeing thoughts not as distractions but rather bringing your awareness to the thinking process itself...

Noticing how thoughts arise, stay briefly, or for a more extended period, and then dissolve... beginning, middle, end... So, not getting lost in the content of the thoughts...allowing thought to be in the foreground of awareness with sound, body sensations, and breath in the background... (long pause).

Noticing thoughts... they may be about anything — about sleep, obligations, the past, the future... If you get carried away in the current of thinking, coming back to observing thoughts as separate elements that come and go... Thoughts moving through an open and spacious mind... (long pause).

Noticing also that emotions arise in the body and mind... Perhaps frustration, or restlessness, or peacefulness, or sadness, or joy, or fear.

Now bringing attention to emotion... to the mood state...What is here for you right now?... Noticing where in the body certain emotions seem to live... (long pause)...

Exploring emotion... Noticing how what is here may be wanted, or unwanted.... How there may be a tendency to cling to emotion judged as pleasant... and to struggle with others judged negatively — like sadness or fear... (long pause).

Noticing whatever emotions arise in the moment...knowing that they have a beginning, middle, and end...perhaps simply observing them in the body — letting go of supporting thoughts or stories... (long pause).

If at any time emotions or sensations become too uncomfortable, remember that you can always return to the breath... finding a safe harbour focused there until you're ready to venture out again... (long pause).

Moving now, if you care to, into a choiceless awareness...

Not choosing to bring your attention to anything in particular... Simply sitting here, fully aware of whatever is presenting itself to you in each moment ...

If sound arises, allowing sound to be the centre of attention...

If body sensation arises, letting that be the centre of your attention... Until the next arising, which may be another body sensation... or a thought about the body sensation...or an emotion... (long pause).

At one moment, the breath may be to the fore, and then, perhaps, sound might be most prominent... Simply dwelling with an open awareness, attending to whatever arises... (long pause).

Observing whatever presents itself to you in the moment... Being spacious with whatever arises... (long pause).

Sitting in stillness with whatever comes and goes...(pause)... Being present with it all... (pause)... Being here now... (pause)... Open to the totality of your experience...(pause)... Being fully human... (long pause)

Now returning the attention to the body as you sit...Feeling the breath coming and going... Staying fully present with body and breath... (long pause).

And as this meditation session comes to a close, realising that by practicing mindfulness you are intentionally deepening your ability to be fully present in your daily life...

So, if it feels right, perhaps congratulating yourself for having taken this time and energy to nourish and care for yourself...Remembering that practicing in this way helps create access to a wider, deeper, more open way of being in your life, in which you can see more clearly and make more conscious choices for well-being and freedom in every area of your life....

## **Reflection on the Expanded Awareness Meditation**

Reflect on the following questions, and write your reflections on the course journal sheet:

- How did you find this meditation?
- Did you manage to keep your attention focused throughout, or did your mind wander?
- Can you make any other observations about this experience?