**Expanding Awareness Practice**

In your 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 recording, 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 and nobility 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…

Sitting in an upright position with your back straight and yet

relaxed. Dignified… Embodying confidence… Feeling the

floor or chair or cushion 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…

Bringing curiosity and freshness to this moment… and

noticing where you feel the sensation of breath most vividly

now… and centering 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 center 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 center, 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 cushion… 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 harbor 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 center of attention…

If body sensation arises, letting that be the center 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 predominate, 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, realizing

that by practicing mindfulness you are intentionally

deepening your ability to be fully present in your daily

life…

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 health, well-being and freedom…