



Managing Our Monkey Mind

Training our attention on the breath – Week 1

Developing awareness

Since being mindful is based on awareness, developing the skill of awareness is the foundation of mindfulness.

And because at its simplest level awareness is attention, developing the skill of awareness first starts with strengthening our ability to pay attention.

The most common approach for training attention is to focus on breathing.

Using the breath is useful for a variety of reasons.

1. It's always right there with us in a dynamic way, providing an ever-reliable object for our attention while also bringing us physically back to the present moment, an important place to be.
2. Breathing also plays a key role in regulating our nervous system, which we can use strategically to support well-being.
3. It's also really boring so it quickly reveals the nature of the mind and how it ceaselessly wanders – a key understanding when you are seeking to gain control of it.

Where the mind will take us

All over the place, that's where! But this wandering nature of the mind is like an exercise machine for awareness because what strengthens awareness is bringing your attention back once you realize that your mind has wandered off again. It's like doing reps. And because focusing on the breath is so boring and your mind is such a wanderer, you will be doing lots and lots of reps.

What's the use of that?

Out of this comes the ability to watch the ever changing landscape of the mind – watch the thoughts that fly through the mind, watch the sensations that rise up in the body, watch the mind struggle with itself, all the while steadfastly maintaining an anchor in yourself. The point of mindfulness meditation is not to NOT think, but to come into a wise relationship with our thoughts and everything that happens in our experience by developing this ability to watch without being carried away. Not only will we be able to feel calmer and more in control, we'll probably favor the behavior that comes out of us when we are mindful.

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