This will not be a training in *what to think,* but in how direct your attention in order to widely and deeply perceive “What Is”. To uncover an awareness that is ***free****,* ***both prior to and beyond*** the ego-centric perceiving and thinking process.

**How it works**: Brain Science and various Buddhist meditative traditions.

**How to practice**: Open aware, mindfulness during formal sitting and informal daily practice/life.

**What it does**:

* Creates a **Freedom** from the restrictive ego-self viewpoint. Establishes an expansive clarifying wisdom that renders the fetters of the ego-self transparent and relatively *in-affectual*
* Opens the awareness to a **Love** that *effortlessly* fills the space left by the absence of conflict with ***“What Is”***.
* Establishes **Compassion** for the now, *fully realized*, suffering of all sentient beings. Compassion becomes a *natural*orientation when *“What Is”* becomes fully known and all hope of a different present perceptual reality is gone.
* Creates a **Gratitude** for ***any experience at all,*** now that the strivings of a singularly important sovereign self is seen for the hopeless delusion that it is.

Tipitaka, Udana section 1.10, The Buddha said to the ascetic Bahiya:

…“Bahiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be *only* the seen. In reference to the heard, *only* the heard. In reference to the sensed, *only* the sensed. In reference to the cognized, *only* the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. *When* for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, *then,* Bahiya, *there is no you in terms of that*. When there is *no you* in terms of *that*, there is no you there. When there is no you there, you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. *This, just this,* is the end of stress*."* Translation Bhikkhu Bodhi. *\*Italics mine.*

Sattipatthana, Exposition by Analayo



NOTE: a “Percept” is any external or internal object or feeling available for conscious/subconscious perception.

Reference tables by James Austin MD Neuroscientist and Zen Practitioner

\*Italics mine

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **EGO-CENTRIC PROCESSING STREAM****Self-Referential** | **ALLO-CENTRIC PROCESSING STREAM****Other Referential** |
| **Main Theme** | Spatial processing in \**relation* to the personal Self.Inherently more subjective | Object processing in \**relation* to other things in the environment.Inherently more objective |
| Internal Course | Occipital-----parietal | Occipital-----inferior temporal |
| Major Crossroads | Superior occipital region, superior parietal lobule | Inferior occipital region, fusiform Gyrus,para-hippocampal gyrus, superior temporal gyrus. |
| **Adjacent Avenues and Interactions** | Proprioception and Touch “Where is it?” pathway. Location in space | Vision and hearing. “*“What Is”* it?” pathway.Object identification and semantic interpretation.  |
| Metrics | More absolute, and action oriented | More relative and abstract.  |
| Operational Aspects | Faster and more accurate | Slower and less accurate |
| Nearby Local Attention Resources | Higher, in posterior intraparietal sulcus | Lower, in superior temporal sulcus |
| Early Thalamic Contributions to Each Stream | Dorsal tier of pulvinar sub-nuclei, lateral posterior and lateral dorsal thalamic nuclei | Ventral tier of pulvinar nuclei |
| Ordinary Level ofActivity | The sovereign self dominates the mental field | More passive *subliminal* contributions |
| **Mental Field During Kensho** | Self-processing is deactivated or bypassed | OTHER is overtly manifested Meaning is amplified |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CONENTRATIVE MEDITATION | RECEPTIVE MEDITATION |
| A more effortful, sustained attention. Focused and exclusive.  | A more effortless, sustained attention, unfocused and inclusive.  |
| A more deliberate, one-pointed attention. It requires ***voluntary***, ***top-down processing***.  | A more open, universal, bare awareness. It expresses ***involuntary*** modes of ***bottom-up*** ***processing***.  |
| **More Self-referential**. *\*\*What does this percept mean to “me” or any “self”?* | **More other referential**. *\*\*How does this percept relate to other objects in the perceptual field?* |
| May evolve into absorptions.  | May evolve into intuitive, insightful modes.  |
| Paying Attention.  | A bare, choiceless awareness.  |

\*\* Additional sentences added by me, Jim Garrido

**On the cushion: Suggested Meditative Open Mental Posture:**

1. Take a deep cleansing breath then settle into paying attention to your abdomen rise and fall with the breath.
2. Allow it to rise and fall at its own pace. Just observe the breath gently, almost peripherally. Don’t attempt to control the breath nor focus on the breath as a *concentrative* focal point. Just be passively aware.
3. At the same time, you are peripherally aware of your abdomen rising and falling also remain aware of *what* happens inside just this *present* moment of consciousness. Let the movement of the abdomen be as a string tied to a space filled of awareness.
4. Notice that thoughts, feelings or bodily sensations arise in the space of awareness unbidden and without your conscious intention.
5. If your mind wanders off on judgments, elaborations and stories gently bring your attention back to the movement of your abdomen. Then slowly and in a stable way, move your awareness back up into the open space of consciousness.
6. Try to become a barometer, observing you own “inner weather”. Stay aware of ***changing levels of pressure or energy*** of any thoughts, feelings or bodily sensations. Be aware without creating a story about them. Just stay with the shifting energy of each appearance.
7. Notice as the inner weather changes on its own, is realized and then again changes also on its own.
8. Stay with the felt character and intensity of what arises and refrain from fabricating a story of a “you” from which to anchor judgments.
9. Let the felt character of theenergy itself tell *its* story *to* your awareness, only. You are only here to listen not to judge nor justify.
10. Do not cling to the pleasant or seek to move on from the unpleasant.
11. Allow your awareness to nimbly move along as the character of conscious experience changes.
12. Try to be aware of the space that allows all percepts to appear, then disappear.
13. If your mind wanders notice also that *upon a return* to mindfulness, this return *happened unconsciously* while your mind was lost in thought!

**Off the cushion: Suggested Open Meditative Posture**

* Whenever possible, settle into this practiced open aware space in any available moments throughout your day.
* Returning to open awareness is a trait skill that is both intentionally developed and ***subconsciously learned***.
* The moment you realize are lost in a self-referential story, inquire *What Is* the emotional energy underlying *this* story? Fear, protection, anger, self-aggrandizement? *Don’t judge, just see*.
* The functioning of the ego-self is most clearly seen *in relationship*, in response to outer and inner perceptual happenings. *As they are happening*.
* Try the trick of speaking in the third person to yourself. This establishes your “Ego self” as just another dynamic object among other dynamic objects in your conscious perceptual field. From such an exercise you begin to recognize not only the conscious thoughts that occur, but as well, the underlying feelings/Bayesian credence’s and evolutionarily derived psychic structures that drive those thoughts. All while not being egotistically attached to judgments about such contents.
* Or pretend you are a Martian anthropologist and sent to study life on earth. What are the dynamics of these living organisms? How are their desires and drives manifest and made actionable? Perception - Physical Emotions – conscious -feelings – time based narrative stories of a self in a world, then actions? Look without judgment, simply acknowledge *“What Is”* **as it is** *happening*.

**Things you may learn on the path.**

* Self-referential thoughts can never end themselves. By their nature and purpose, these thoughts only create more thoughts.
* Notice that what arises in consciousness, always arises *“In Relationship”*. Things occur in the external world or the internal milieu. Then the body, the subconscious and consciousness react. Nimbly watch this process with great interest and the love and care of a parent watching a child play.
* Only a choiceless awareness can see and experience *all* that life is showing us. Anything less is ***conflict*** with “*“What Is””* and a***created ignorance***.
* “Self” acts as a regulating valve on experience, wisdom and *love* for *“What Is”*.
* One must know ***what one is***, not what one wishes to be. Without this knowledge all our responses will be inaccurate and end in conflict with *“What Is”*.
* Narrative stories are always relative to, times past or times future, imaginings occurring in the now.
* The past is only re-animated in the ***now*** where it can either be loved and accepted or judged and suffered with again.
* Without an established wisdom and love, the future imagined is always in conflict with *“What is”* at present and what will be present in the future.
* The history of evolution, your genes and your upbringing all color how you experience percepts in the now through subconscious mechanisms. Open awareness has greater access to these felt machinations and archetypal structures than does the later smaller thinking mind. Creating a deeper wisdom.
* Learn from repeated experience that the acquisition of true wisdom ceases upon the arising of a judgmental self.
* Only when the energetic motivation of a thought is experienced ***as it is****, as it arises and*without the story of self is added, will it be allowed to rise on its own and indeed then pass on its own. Leaving behind the wisdom of *“What Is”* in its wake to be realized, *effortlessly*. ***Once fully known, not to be bound by again.***
* **Love** is what both *effortlessly* and naturally fills the space left by the absence of conflict with *“What Is”*.
* Love cannot be*given to you*by someone else. You have to discover it in an aware open state of mind, ***in* *each moment***. A mind that fears and attempts to control *“What Is”* will never know such a ***present*** love.
* Yes, someone can respond lovingly *to you*. But without your own, present established love, with what will you respond to them when such a needed time surely arises?
* **Compassion** for the suffering of all sentient being is your ***natural*** orientation when all hope of a different present reality is gone.
* **Gratitude** for ***any experience at all*** is *what is* left when the strivings of a singularly important sovereign self is seen for the hopeless illusion that it is.
* Perceiving beyond a clinging or aversive self, removes our **pain of separation** from experience, nature and all other sentient beings. We then experience life not with a narrow lens of judgment and denial but with **gratitude**, **compassion** and **love**.
* To be bow gratefully and accepting of any and all of phenomenal life is the only selfless love. It is the highest love. It is the love for life itself, for Love is the felt character of life itself.

**My Synopsis of Mahamudra Practice**

Try not to establish a *thing* to be recognized *or* a *recognizer self*. This would be an incorrect dualistic view. After repeatedly *experientially* *being* aware *as* awareness, you will taste the characteristic contentless, yet cognizant nature of this view. Remaining established in awarenessas everyday thoughts and feeling *arise within* and *dissolve back into* this same awareness. Over time you will come to re-identify and perceive as awareness itself and not the individual egos thoughts & feelings contained within this awareness. This view establishes an accessible peace beyond all transient thoughts and sensations of mind. *To establish an effortless, clear aware state from which to experience all formations of internal and external percepts is to gain freedom from identification with all these transitory and empty mental formations*. Experience without judgment or clinging is the only lasting and durable freedom available to us as human beings. Once you are ***free of identification*** with the ***self***-centered activities of the clinging and aversive mind, then all experience is accepted and indeed lovingly welcome and learned from. Mahamudra practice establishes wisdom beyond words, concepts, cultural bias or personal motives.