

*why we should 'place attention' rather than use word 'concentration', the benefit of short times many times resting awareness on all of experiences that arise in the moment*

[00:05:35] So first, as always, to set the stage for our experience of practice... we will recite the refuge prayer together.

[00:06:00] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:08:50] So as we have done in previous sessions... it would be good if we could extend our understanding of the role of our awareness... and how that awareness works... from an experiential perspective. So, one thing is... we tend to give a great deal of credit... and blame... to our *use* of our conceptual understanding. So, in our previous sessions together we have primarily placed our awareness... on our experience. And, I'd like to do that again this morning with a small but perhaps important distinction. We often use two words interchangeably which should probably not be used interchangeably. Sometimes we say in our practice of calm abiding, sometimes we use the word concentration. ... We usually mean by that term concentration... that we would... stay with the object of our attention and not wander.

[00:12:23] But, if you think about it for a moment, you can see that just the *word* "concentration" excludes part of our experience. Concentration tends to *focus* in a way that is not appropriate in the practice calm abiding. Not appropriate when our intention is to rest our attention on the *totality* of our experience. In that approach to calm abiding, we do not want to exclude *any* experience. We want to explore... and inquire into... and *experience* the totality of our being. So, *anything* that is excluded from that practice... comprises the practice of calm abiding. And that compromise carries into our other practices... such as loving kindness... compassion and joy and equanimity. ... These things we cannot afford to compromise.

[00:14:41] So, rather than... concentration... perhaps we should use a word like attention. Placing our attention. Placing our awareness, not on *any specific* thing but on *all* of our experience as it is... in this moment. So that nothing is missed. And, we go further into the understanding of our *complete* being rather than just a part of it. ... So if you can make some momentary effort. Momentary because from the beginning we already know we cannot sustain it. It's too much. So, we make a momentary effort to rest our awareness on *all* of our experience, physically for our entire body, and emotionally for all of our non-physical experience.

[00:16:52] It's good to acknowledge in the beginning... this is *very* difficult. But, it's difficult because... we try too hard... and for *too* long. If you think for a moment, try for a moment, to abandon *all* of your expectations and rest your awareness with *all* of the experiences that arise in the moment, you will find periodically, at least, that sometimes you actually *have* the experience. Your mind encompasses all of the experiences you are having. ... So, it's better in this case to not make an effort to *sustain* the awareness. Not that it needs to be a mere snap shot. But, the effort to hold all of the experience we are having at *any* moment is an enormous challenge. ... So, I say that because... it's important to be able to forgive ourselves for not being able to hold it. It's more like something you see in the rear-view mirror, receding.

[00:19:16] But, it's so much more than just placing our awareness on something small, even as small as our breath. All of our experiences, our anger, our disappointment, our joys, they are all worthy of being *held* by our awareness. And by holding them in our awareness with no... other

agenda... we can go a bit deeper in the direction of more understanding of what we are and who we are... without judgment of any kind. That part is easy. Because each time we place our awareness on the totality of experience we are only moments away from doing it again. And, we discover easily that there are no two sessions even remotely alike.

[00:21:03] So, let's take our time to practice shamatha with this method if you will. ... Without making effort to *sustain* the focus. ... Without attempting to concentrate artificially. But, just gently resting the awareness on whatever the experiences are... for a short time. And when it feels like it's becoming... more than just our simple momentary total experience then, just stop... completely. Take a few moments, even a few minutes and then start fresh from that same place. Try it again as many times as necessary.

[00:22:47] *period of meditation*

[00:44:47] *dedicating the merit*