

To begin ...

We begin our time together examining four items. On this first page we will find: 1) The Core Practices; 2) Direct Experience; and 3) the Self. On the second page we will explore 4) a basic Breathing Practice.

A- The Core Practices

Before we breathe together we will consider CORE PRACTICES for meditation. Remember “*True meditation has no direction or goal,*” these practices will support *being with* each other in each situation:

- 1) Listening – *Listening involves all of the ways we become aware of, perceive, and observe the world and ourselves. At its fullest, listening consists of a radical openness of mind, heart, and will that expands awareness of self, focuses attention on others, and generates meaning from deeper intention.*
- 2) Inquiry – *Inquiry is a way of questioning and addressing the deepest existential issues confronting every human being: Who or what am I? What is life? What is Satisfaction? What happens after death? What is the absolute Truth of existence?*
- 3) Contemplation – *Contemplation is the art of holding a word, phrase, or experience patiently in the silence and stillness of non-reactive awareness until it begins to disclose deeper and deeper meanings and understandings. Contemplation supports us in holding and testing what’s revealed from listening and inquiry in the world we engage.*

Consider your participation as an intention to deepen your core practices

B- Direct Experience.

We will share our direct experience during our time together. We endeavor to tune into our body to experience what’s arising. We may also reflect on an experience to share.

- **Direct experience** or immediate **experience** generally denotes **experience** gained through immediate sense perception. Many philosophical systems hold that knowledge or skills gained through **direct experience** cannot be fully put into words.
- **Direct experience** is the process of acquiring knowledge by fully and directly participating in an activity. Generally speaking, this produces more usable and vivid knowledge than **learning** about something with indirect **experiences** such as a game, video or book.
- *What we are aiming for is practice to learn to trust direct perception -- increasingly, and gradually more than we rely on conceptual constructs*

C- Self.

In addition to Core practices, and Direct Experience, we acknowledge this view of the self:

- **THE COMMUNITY NATURE OF THE SELF.** When somebody asks us to talk about ourselves, we talk about family, work, academic background, sports affiliations, etc. The self is not a thing, but a *point of view* that unifies the flow of experience into a coherent narrative -- a narrative striving to connect with other narratives and become richer.
- Constituting the self happens only in a community. The community supports certain ways of being and constrains the expressions of individuality to certain patterns of behavior. A systems view of life suggests that the self is never "given" and is always in the process of transformation.

D- Breathing Practice

This basic practice guides us through a focus on body to breathe.

Gather self and attention.

Find your sit-bones and take your seat with strength and dignity. This is your point of commitment. This commitment is your essence, your resolve to be here, now. It will support you to bring coherence to your posture, breath and mind.

Focus on posture at seven points:

1. feet (feel floor);
2. thighs/legs;
3. lower belly/abdomen,
4. back straight;
5. shoulders back;
6. neck bowed slightly;
7. eyes resting (either closed or slightly open).

Feel the breath enter and exit through your nose.

Take two or three deep “purging” breaths to ground yourself and allow what is sitting there to be released, such as:

1. Two or three deep *inhale breaths* your nose;
2. Then *exhale breaths* through your mouth in a forceful manner to release the breath.

Bring yourself in the room. Notice any sounds, thoughts, sensations that are right there.

BREATH: Bring awareness to breath: focus on where it enters and exits the nose; or to the belly as it rises and falls, or to the back of your throat.

EYES: If you are tired, leave eyes slightly open to stimulate self; if you are awake, bring eyes to rest with eyes closed.

FOLLOW THE BREATH: Follow the breath saying *inhale* (in-breath); *exhale* (out-breath); *inhale*; *exhale*, etc.

Also, by counting:

Breathe in, then out, and then mentally count “One”

In-out, “Two”

in-out, “Three”, “Four”, “Five”, etc. until you get to “ten”.

Once you arrive at ten, then:

Backwards: in-out: → “Nine”, in-out, → “Eight”; in-out, → “Seven”, etc.

Continue this: starting with 10 minutes and expanding to 20 minutes. As you practice, bring more intentional breath/breathing into your daily life.