



11. MOUNTAIN MEDITATION

Become aware of the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture, whether sitting or standing, as though you are a mountain.

A mountain is completely natural and at ease with itself, however strong the winds that batter it, however thick the dark clouds that swirl around its peak. So like a mountain, let your mind be steady, knowing that all things pass. Allowing your eyes to close if that is possible or appropriate in this moment, otherwise keeping them open and in either case resting in an awareness of our inner experience. Sensing the body: the spine in a natural curve, the head lifted as though suspended by a golden cord, without any tension.

Opening to your experience and asking: "what is my experience just now?" As though before you is a vast ocean, open and limitless.

What thoughts are going through the mind? As best you can, note these thoughts as mental events, perhaps even becoming aware of their content and words. What feelings are here? Turning towards them and opening to any sense of emotional discomfort or unpleasant feelings.

What body sensations are here right now? Perhaps quickly scanning the body to pick up any signs of tightness or bracing.

And now gathering and redirecting your attention to focus on the physical sensations of the breath just breathing itself. Moving in close to the sense of the breath in the belly. Feeling the sensations of breath in the abdominal space, as it expands with each in-breath and falls back with each out-breath. With full awareness following the breath all the way in and all the way out, using the breath itself to anchor you in the present moment.

Practice this for a moment.

And now expanding the field of awareness around your breathing so that in addition to the sensations of the breath, it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and your facial expression. How do they feel from the inside? If you become aware of any feelings of discomfort, tension, or resistance, experimenting gently with breathing into them on the in-breath and breathing out from them on the out-breath. Perhaps feeling a softening and releasing with each out-breath. If you care to, perhaps saying to yourself with the out-breath: softening, releasing, accepting. "It is as it is. I feel it."

And now, as best you can, bringing this expanded, more spacious and accepting awareness to the next moments of your day, whatever circumstances you find yourself in, as it continues to unfold.