

## Essay 5

For this essay, I chose to practice the Buddhist tradition of vipassana meditation for three days. I chose this form of meditation because I really have a hard time understanding the concept of mindfulness meditation. On the other hand, shamatha meditation, or the concept of calming or focusing one's mind is clearer to me. Before I began I felt it was important to try to understand the concept of mindfulness meditation. I found a very informative article at <http://tucsonbuddhistcenter.org/article.html> that was written by Ajahn Sarayut Arnanta, a monk and founding abbot of the Wat Buddhometta: Tucson Buddhist Meditation Center. In the article it explained, almost in a step by step format, how to practice mindfulness meditation. He listed two qualities of the mind that need to be developed for mindfulness meditation. The first is the ability of the mind to stay focused on the object without moving away from it in the moment. Secondly, mindfulness is the ability of the mind to be aware, to know, to identify the object or condition (of concentration) in the present moment. It is this second quality that is the most confusing to me. To have awareness and to know an object while focusing on my breathing for example is very difficult for me to understand. However, as I was reading this article, I think I figured it out! If I'm focusing on my breathing then that would be the object of my concentration that I would be aware of and know. I originally thought you focused on your breathing (because that is what you did to meditate) and then would somehow be aware of something else.

The first day I sat down in a quiet room at home reread the article I had found and then began. The first day I felt that it actually took awareness to concentrate on my breathing. I was always drifting off into thoughts about other things. Sometimes I would simply stop thinking about anything at all including my breathing. I will say that it was a completely stress-relieving experience. I decided for that first day to meditate until I felt 'done'. I stopped meditating and felt as if I had spent a considerable amount of time and when I emerged from the room and looked at the clock, I realized that it had only been about 20 minutes. A very helpful piece of information in the article was that if your mind wanders, you should acknowledge it by repeating gently, "thinking, thinking, thinking" and then guide your mind back to your breathing or whatever object you might be focused on. The same information applied to moving. If you find yourself moving, you should gently acknowledge it by saying, "moving, moving, moving" and then guide yourself back. The instruction on what to do with distractions was so very helpful.

One evening while lying in bed trying to fall asleep (which I tend to struggle with), I decided to practice the mindfulness meditation. Once again I focused on my breathing, but the aspect of my abdomen rising and falling. I would like to be able to report how this session went, but I fell asleep. It certainly is a very good tool for clearing one's mind and relaxing.

I have actually found this to be a very useful tool. I have used it at times of frustration such as when I need to leave to get to work and might already be running later than I would like, and my Labradors decide it is time to run sprints in the yard, chase each other and have crazy wrestling matches instead of coming when called. I have used it in the middle of my work day if the day is particularly busy or stressful. I have also tried using it when I have been working on one particular project for an extended period of time and it is complete, before I move on to something else. That has helped with changing my focus from one thing to another. Before using this technique, it was hard to get my mind adjusted to another task if I had spent a long time already on something else. This almost feels like erasing a chalk board and being able to start on the next assignment. And as stated before I have used it when trying to fall asleep.

I am considering visiting this meditation center and taking some of the classes offered.

## REFERENCES

<http://tucsonbuddhistcenter.org/article.html>