



When Distraction is Not a Distraction

This lesson focuses on using distraction as a focus.

OVERVIEW

This practice is an exercise in awareness. The focus of our attention always wanders in meditative practices. In this practice, we seek to be aware of shifts in attention rather than trying to stop these shifts.

Scripture

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

PSALM 46:10

Be still, and know that I am God.

Introducing the Practice

Our meditation today is different from most of our other practices. When distractions arise, we usually try to gently bring our attention back to a prayer word, a Scripture verse, our breathing, or some other grounding tool. Today when distractions arise, we are going to follow them. The point of this practice is not to mindlessly daydream. Rather, this is a practice in awareness. When we become aware that our minds are wandering, we can consciously choose to refocus our attention on whatever our minds have wandered to. The point of this meditation is to be aware of the moments when your mind drifts off as soon as it happens. It is an exercise in recognizing when your focus has shifted and consciously consenting to that new focus.

Preparing for the Practice

Have everyone spread out to find a comfortable place to sit where they can still hear the voice of the person guiding the practice.

The Spiritual Practice

Begin by finding a comfortable place to sit and closing your eyes. As your breathing becomes slower and deeper, center yourself in this moment and open your heart to the presence of God.

Focus your attention on your breathing. On each inhale...and each exhale.

If you notice that your attention has moved away from your breathing – perhaps you hear a sound outside, notice a smell, or feel an itch somewhere on your body – turn your attention to that, and begin to focus on that object or sensation alone, the way that you had been focusing on your breath. Each time that you notice your attention has drifted, simply adopt that new object or sensation as the focus of your attention and continue on.

If ever you find yourself daydreaming or have become distracted running through your thoughts, simply start back over by returning your attention to your breath. Only follow the distraction if you notice it soon after your attention has shifted and if it is a positive object or sensation that you can redirect your attention to.

Duration: 15-20 minutes

Discussion Questions

1. Did you find that your attention shifted a lot? Was it easy to notice and change the focus of your attention, or was it harder to focus when the object kept changing?
2. How did this meditation change the way that you view distractions in meditation?