

Dharma Orientation

A Collection of Key Points in Practising the Dharma

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Preface

The ocean of the Dharma is vast. There are countless pathways and explanations. This can be nourishing and inspiring but also overwhelming. Here you will find a sequence of short writings offering reminders of the key points which have been elaborated in my talks and books. If we are attentive to the key points of view, meditation and conduct then the result will start to ripen by itself.

We use clarity regarding the view to dissolve many obscurations arising from the afflictions and from misunderstanding. This supports us to take our ease as we simply sit. The view frees us from the need to employ the artificial techniques of effortful styles of meditation. Stability in the view is meditation and with this, activity flows easily in every situation.

The most basic limitation we have is our own unexamined commitment to our existence as autonomous agents. Yet our basis and source is shared by all sentient beings and all buddhas. We are already connected through this ground source and through the fact that all sentient beings have already been our own mother in previous lives. Moreover, we are alike in inhabiting the dreamlike delusion of the flow of events of our lives and in requiring to find the sole exit which is the nature of our minds. Awakening to the wisdom of the emptiness of all phenomena we awaken to the infinite kindness that embraces all who are unawakened.

Orientation

Duty, discipline, determination

Moving in the ocean of stimuli, consciousnesses are ceaselessly evoked. So much to react to, so much to do and so little time.

Our orientation to what occurs can be structured in three ways, 1) habitual, 2) intentional, 3) open immediacy.

Habitual

Mostly we operate habitually according to patterns, associations, tendencies, construals and so on, that were installed in our mind stream a long time ago. In this mode, a stimulus arises in the field of experience and is identified as being either 'external' environment or 'internal' thought, feeling or sensation. The stimulus evokes a habitual response such as excitement, boredom or fear. Then these responses lead to their linked pathways of action such as joyful mobilisation, depressed sinking, avoidance/retaliation and so on.

These pathways of response constitute our personality and feel necessary and 'natural' even when unpleasant, tedious, guilt-ridden and so on. In the flow of stimulus/response, time goes by, life goes by.

Once the basic structure of life is established it tends to run on automatically unless interrupted. New tasks can become a terrible challenge as they force us to alter the way we do things. That gives rise to the struggle to keep life on track, mobilising brief focused intentions to rectify new trends that cannot be normalised. This is the usual pattern of operation of the five skandhas¹ and is the basis for samsaric existence.

In this context notions of duty adhere to the constraints and requirements we adapt to in the course of our socialisation. We find ourselves required to carry out tasks under a sense of our importance and their necessity and it becomes our duty to carry them out in whatever is considered to be the 'right' way. This can apply to anything from ironing one's shirts to fighting for one's country. Lurking behind the continuing performance of these tasks is a sense of fear and anxiety arising from the sense that something is at stake, that negative consequences would arise from their non-performance. This brings forth a disciplined, though perhaps not very conscious, commitment to maintain the patterns that one has adopted. The determination to maintain these ways of being is often revealed in the sadness and confusion that arises when, due to illness, redundancy and so on, this is no longer possible.

Intentional

The second mode is governed by conscious intentionality organised around known guiding principles. This is the basis for any ideological/experiential system whether political, economic

or religious. The more the ideology strays from the actual, the phenomenological, the more chaos such intentionality can create (e.g. Stalin's five year plan, Mao's Great Leap Forward, religious murder of witches, and American native peoples and so on)

In the dharma systems, the ideological and experiential are linked through view, meditation, activity and result in each of the 'nine vehicles'². Intention is vital if clarity is to be developed, for intention not only establishes a path of linked tasks but illuminates when the path is strayed from. For all the vehicles, duty, discipline and determination are required because of the pervasive tendency to become distracted and to act in the habitual manner outlined above.

In the mahayana³ practice, duty is established through obligation and disciplined through vows. If all sentient beings have been our mother in a previous life then the care they offered us puts us under an obligation. Everyone we meet is someone we are in debt to - there is a non-negotiable duty to act for their welfare. This duty is supported by the hinayana⁴ duty of focused attention developed through shamatha and vipassana, meditations which respectively develop calmness and clarity, and through the vows of restraint. It is also supported by the vajrayana samayas⁵ which bind us to the regular use of powerful methods⁶ for the welfare of us all.

Duty is a sense of obligation. It is not the friend of the ego's flighty freedom, the desire to follow one's own inclination. When we accept a duty there is a diminution of the freedom to do as we like - although we may find a different kind of freedom within the constraints of duty. The fulfilment of duty requires the development of specific qualities notably those of the six paramitas⁷. In particular, patience is necessary for overcoming the irritation arising from the frustration of one's impulses by the necessity of the duty one is committed to. Duty often makes the ego sad which is why it helps to link it to a series of intentions: to help all beings, to do the practices necessary for this, to do the practices mindfully in spite of all obstacles including feeling a lack of interest. The expansive focus of the intention helps to contextualise situational difficulties and so keep them to their actual size.

Discipline supports intention by developing skills of non-distraction and the power to not be deflected or overwhelmed by contingent circumstances. Impulses can seem so vital and full of life - we often feel most alive when we are following them. Yet the impulse is like a river in the Sahara, suddenly roaring down the wadi only to vanish into the sand. Discipline implies being able to organise and manage one's time and energy so that tasks are attended to and completed in an orderly manner.

Discipline is dualistic in structure, with one aspect of ourselves keeping other aspects in check. It is a gathering of oneself, an aligning of small momentary intentions with the bigger enduring intentions to which we have committed ourselves. For most people, integration into the ground awareness is difficult if energy is very dispersed, so some degree of discipline is part of all the dharma paths and vehicles at some stage. A disciple is one who submits herself to discipline, who follows a path rather than wandering hither and thither. The goal is not gained without sacrifice, a sacrifice which is invariably resisted by the ego's need to maintain its familiar sense of self. For example, being on time requires being in time, submitting to the non-negotiable regularity of linear time. Finding, and aligning oneself with the specific, emergent rhythms of

the world requires an attention to the ever-changing pulsations, movements which are not determined by one's own wishes.

Discipline simplifies life by allowing the issues, events and practices that are privileged by our intention to remain figural while relegating to the background those aspects that are deemed important by our habits. This of course is using the intentional artificial to simplify the habitual artificial as part of the task of deconstructing the artificial into its own natural ground. Finding the middle way with discipline, neither too tight nor too loose, is not easy for it requires an adult, non-defensive and non-blaming acceptance of our tendencies to go astray.

Determination is the force of will, the power to carry on despite all setbacks. It is the courage and strength to shape events rather than be shaped by them. It involves a resolute intention that will block and remove impediments. Determination requires a clear sense of the goal in order to find the path through rugged territory, often in the dark. Not to give up, not to turn away, but to keep heading home. However, the ego seeks a home that is different from the home sought by awareness. The ego's sense of home lies in the good and pleasing object, the feeling of comfort arising from the satisfaction of our desires. Whereas awareness seeks only to abide in its non-duality. Objects encountered along the path can be misappropriated as homes for the ego, thus making the journey very long and confusing. Each false home adhered to will vanish, due to its own impermanence and the fickleness of our fancies. Each eviction or abandonment brings a degree of disorientation. Determination is the force that allows us to avoid these temporary distractions and to continue mindfully following the central intention whatever the terrain. The enemy of determination is leakage, letting energy and focus be dispersed through the porosity that comes from being interested in everything.

However, balance and perspective is vital otherwise duty, discipline and determination will reveal their shadow aspects of drudgery, distraction and depression. Where duty loses its enlivening inspiration and becomes simply a demand to do what must be done it becomes drudgery, and the person compliant with it a mere drudge, an empty anybody yoked to a task that has lost its meaning.

If discipline becomes enforced beyond a person's capacity they are likely to protect themselves with distraction. The too-tight disciplining of attention that will not allow any free movement will lead to its opposite, aimless distraction, for the mind's natural activity is movement not fixation. Over-coercion will lead to the compensatory search for release through undirected wandering.

When determination is applied to push through an unending stream of difficulties exhaustion of body and spirit is likely to occur and this leads easily into depression and hopelessness. A dynamic balance is required so we have to allow a pulsation between the polarities of effortful striving and effortless ease. The middle way is not a matter of being fixed to the middle but of not getting lost in the extremes.

Open immediacy

The third mode, open immediacy, places no restriction on what occurs because it is not looking for anything. There is no intention, no extension, no tension. Relaxed, open at ease, this is the state of completion needing nothing added to it. Unchanging, it is not a construct and so is free of beginning and ending; this is the truly indestructible vajra. In this state activity arises spontaneously without creating anything. The energy of openness performs all activity, is all manifestation, and so all the possibilities of samsara and nirvana arrive in it.

However, the relaxation that allows the letting go of conscious attention, also allows the arising of habitual patterns - and if they are not allowed to self-liberate, new webs of entanglement will begin.

Polarised notions of order and chaos can lead to an anxious over-involvement - a sense that it's all up to me and if I don't hold it together, everything will fall apart. This leads to busy pre-occupation which leaves no time or space to attend to the natural ordering of phenomena. Experience is, by its own nature, patterned, exhibiting form, structure and immediacy. Out of and within the ever-open purity of ungraspable being there is the immediate presence of the perfectly formed field of experience. Relaxation of anxious engagement is necessary to allow natural perfection to reveal itself as not what we thought it would be. Our thoughts seem to be the leaders and organisers of experience yet they express the after-the-factness of conscious intention. The act has already been initiated before it reaches consciousness. Egoic self-referencing consciousness is part of the post hoc narrative, the creation of an artificial order that follows the direct immediacy of the actual situation. The actual situation cannot be apprehended by thought yet it is revealed to open awareness unpreoccupied by thought.

This opens up a very different perspective from that embedded in the paths of striving. When we set a goal, such as developing compassion and wisdom, if we don't radically shift our frame of reference, we may find ourselves identifying our driven and constrained ego as the necessary vehicle of success. This is a big mistake as striving cut adrift from its ground of emptiness and lacking the motivation of compassion will simply become part of the problem.

Whether we follow a path of striving or seek a path of enjoyment we need to avoid collapsing into the object of our intention. In the arising of subject and object, whether in habitual or intentional ways, the key point of focus is the experiencer not the object of experience. Integrating with the simple state of experiencing presence is the always open door to ground, path and result.

In order to clarify this we can consider five ways in which we as the subject can relate to the arising of experience. The first three ways occur primarily as 'internal' experiences, as thoughts arising in myself. This is the domain revealed and questioned by meditating with a prefigured focus. The more we can move from states of habitual fusion the more freedom we have to engage creatively with the potential of each situation we encounter.

1. Total fusion with the arising: an unmediated imperative e.g. 'I must sit down', or 'I hate you', in which there is only unlimited identification with what is arising. Other arisings are devoid of impact, and I am just this uninterrupted fact.
2. Noticed fusion, for example, 'I feel tired and I need to sit down soon.' Or 'I am aware that I hate you', in which there is some recognition of the fused state. This recognition may or may not influence the sense of inevitability of the trajectory of the state.
3. Defusion, which is achieved through recognition and the availability of the sense of agency able to manage the relation between 'myself' and the arising I am tempted to fuse with. For example, 'I know I'm tired, but I'll get a rest soon so I'll just keep going' or 'I know I can feel hatred for you but we have to work together so I'll keep it in check.' The balance or choice point of identification/disidentification is present in consciousness and can be tipped by an act of will, for here conscious intention is stronger than habitual assumption, impulse, foreclosure and so on
4. Recognition of flow, where the 'unbiased observing' viewpoint is settled into, allowing a sense of seeing what is going on in both 'object' and 'subject' arenas. Thus both the environmental field and its impact on the senses, and the experience of thoughts, feelings and sensations and all that is taken as constitutive of I, me, myself, are opened up to focused attention. This brings a sense of the impermanence of experience so that the intensity of the moment has less power to capture identification and thereby create a small world. Thus 'I am tired', or 'I hate you' remain as part of the field; not removed or ignored yet also not able to dominate and control.
5. Non-dual awareness, where, by resting in open awareness, the movement of subject and object is unimpeded as the flow of non-reified experience. Presence is pervasive and so always already there, formless and without essence yet the illuminator of all. Its indestructibility is free of hopes and fears connected with gaining or losing any particular pattern of arising, whether 'subject' or 'object'.

Generally, the development of conscious intention helps to clear a space free of habitual pre-occupation. In this space focused activity for the benefit of others can be performed in the manner of a dream. This reveals activity as always already in integration with open immediacy.

Developing duty, discipline and determination are not lower practices but vital aspects of the falling away of intoxication by the fantasies of ego's imaging. For the activity of dharma to continue they are necessary aids, the supports that ease the passage back to the source that has not been left. Staying on track may sound restrictive but it opens the already open door.

James Low 2011

¹ The five skandhas or heaps are the five basic components of a person according to the buddhist tradition. They are form, identified as shape and colour; feeling, identified as positive, negative or neutral responses to form; perception, identified as the interpretive response to feeling and form; associations, identified as the formulation of experience; consciousness, the mental apprehension of experience.

² The nine vehicles or yantras describe nine different views of our lived situation, each with their own corresponding methods of meditation, activities and results. They range from an attitude of renunciation and avoidance through embracing all beings to the perception of the divine nature of all appearance to the effortless, spontaneous liberation of all phenomena.

³ Mahayana or great vehicle refers to embracing the emptiness of all phenomena and the compassion that flows from that. Although we move in a world of seemingly real entities there is actually no phenomena, including ourselves, which has an inherent, self-defining essence. In recognising the illusory nature of experience great compassion arises for all those trapped in attachment to fictitious entities.

⁴ Hinayana or lesser vehicle refers to an approach to life marked by carefulness made necessary by the dangerous nature of the world we inhabit. Enmeshing involvement is available on all sides and therefore renunciation and clarity of intention is required in order to avoid attachment and its inevitable consequence, suffering.

⁵ Vajrayana samayas are commitments of the indestructible vehicle, the path of tantra or transformation. By binding oneself to a practice of identification with a divine being, the habitual patterns of interpretation and action embedded in our usual sense of self is loosened so that a new sense of freedom is awakened.

⁶ Powerful methods are those which work with the energy which manifests as the illusory appearance of the world. In recognising the lack of fixity in our experience creativity is released to effect the necessary changes.

⁷ The six paramitas or transcendent qualities are generosity, patience, endurance, determination, discipline and wisdom. The development of these qualities provides the basis for sustaining the bodhisattva commitment to work for the benefit of all beings until they are enlightened. The qualities are transcendent because they are grounded in the understanding that all beings and all phenomena are devoid of inherent self-nature. This opens the way to a path without limit.

Splitting and integration

The wish to gain more of what we deem to be good and have less of what we deem to be bad seems to be a universal human desire. We seek the good in the items of our daily life, for example in the taste of food or in the quality of clothing. And we seem also to seek for the good in areas that are less easy to define, for example love, truth, God, the meaning of life. The belief that human beings, or at least the group of them that we belong to, are good appears to be a generally held one, expressing a hope that we are basically okay.

Goodness can be seen as a quality of special beings, of God, of saints, of yogis, of altruistic healers, or as a basic human potential requiring political or psychological or spiritual awakening. It can be felt to be located in the past, in the notion that we are fallen creatures exiled from the ease of paradise, as indicated in, for example, the Old Testament of the Bible or in the ancient Greek and Indian notion of a gradual decline from a golden age to an age of lead, of the dregs, when all beauty, love and truth has almost vanished. The hope of paradise can also be projected into the future through the belief that science, or communism, or capitalism, or free trade, or the return of the Messiah, or gaining enlightenment, or being reborn in a buddhist pure land, or some other ideal will bring about the end of conflict and sorrow. Paradise can also be located in the present when, for example, the enthusiasm of love brings about a lessening of anxiety and a sense of the simple fulfilment to be found in the company of the beloved.

There are many, many such hopes and beliefs to be found across human cultures and revealed in creation myths, initiation ceremonies, cargo cults and so on. Yet somehow the hoped-for paradise is elusive and even if we get a taste of it, it does not last long in its fullness. With the sense of being cut off from wholeness, completeness and the easy flow of paradise, diverse cultures have developed many notions of the skills, methods and efforts required to gain or *re-gain* that state where all will be well.

The gap between what we currently have and are what we would like to have and to be, indicates a splitting and separation, a drifting apart of fantasy and reality. Do we dream of paradise as a compensation for the troubles that pervade our reality, or is there a 'spiritual reality' which is hidden by the fantasies, beliefs, habits and urges that constitute our daily life?

Many cultures and spiritual traditions have been troubled by the question of why this world is so full of difficulties—especially if it is believed that the world was made by God. The various answers offered usually begin with a choice—for example in the Upanishads it is said that one day God was lonely so he made the world and its inhabitants in order to give himself something to relate to. He did this by splitting himself, creating a knower and a known, a meta-subject experiencing an ever-unfolding drama to intrigue, delight and annoy.

In the ancient Greek myth Kronos castrates his father Uranus and rules the world until he in turn is overthrown by his son Zeus. Kronos wields his sickle inflicting a cut in the integrity of his father thereby separating potency from stability. The cut creates a gap between heaven

and earth which sets in motion the flow of becoming, of change, time and human history. Kronos is equated with time and is a continuing presence in our culture through the images of Old Father Time and death as wielders of the sickle, reminding us that life is no longer infinite.

From its roots in the Bible there is the elaborated story that having made the world as a perfect place, God makes Adam, the first man, and from him, Eve. Adam is split by rib-removal to make Eve. They make a complementary pair, enjoying everything without effort as they wander in a realm of rich variety yet without the duality of either/or. They have perfect freedom and immediate satisfaction - a world free of choices and decisions. Yet there is one choice that hangs in the air, the choice to ignore the prohibition on tasting the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The site of splitting is already established and there is a kind of inevitability in Eve's move towards the apple, the unknown, and the loss of ease. Non-paradise is split from paradise creating the realm of cause and effect. Now it is no longer God who is the source and cause of everything, for human beings must rely on their own effort to make the world work for them - hewing wood and drawing water, sowing and reaping. They have gained a freedom to act, but with all the responsibility and anxiety that this can bring.

From one point of view these stories and many others like them can be understood in terms of crises in infant development, the collapse of healthy narcissism in the face of an environmental demand or indifference. The paradise-like satisfaction of life in the womb is replaced by an environment in which satisfaction, warmth and ease are temporary and require the effort of others to ensure their establishment. As the primary caregiver becomes less and less able to meet the ever more complex, and often contradictory, wishes and demands of the infant, there is likely to be a sense of lack and frustration and with this an urge towards agency. The notion of paradise can be taken as the projection of the infantile carefree self-at-the-centre experience. Unhealthy narcissism is then a later attempt at resolution of the pain of duality by identification with the totally satisfying and non-frustrating other, the other who is in fact a reflection of oneself. This is a falling in love with a representation of oneself as if it was oneself, making an 'I am' out of that which I am not.

From another point of view, the infinite nameless presence that is called God, the great 'I am' that I am 'splits or differentiates as the creation. This differentiation is without inherent reification - yet the very process of naming installs a sense of separate independently existing entities. Thus the 'vertical' split between the God, the source, and its manifestation is followed by a 'horizontal' split manifesting as the binary opposition that establishes the categories which generate our sense of meaning and control. Thus we have male/female, animate/inanimate, humans/other creatures, good/bad, self/other, mine/yours—oppositional pairings that create by the act of exclusion rather than an act of intercourse.

No later attempt to create completeness by joining, by intercourse, can fit the two 'halves' together again, as they have been further transformed and differentiated by their search for each other. This splitting also structures our intra-psychic experience as we establish our own personal constructs within the categories of like/not like, happy/sad, energising/depressing and so on. Choice divides up the world as our agency both creates and moves within a world

of options and diverse paths leading to an infinity of possible outcomes that we can never see clearly from wherever we stand.

Our identity, the fragments we call ourself, cannot find a way back except through the future, in the hope of salvation of one sort or another. As with the trapping tunnel in a lobster creel, getting in is very easy but the way back is blocked, and so we must go on, pursuing the many goals and urges that catch our attention. Peace cannot be found within or outwith this movement onwards, for there is nowhere to rest for those trapped in time. Eventually old age and death insist and the goals we pursued fade into the past, whilst lingering like ghosts and echoes to haunt our final days. All that was meaningful has lost its context and all we can do is say weakly, ‘It seemed a good idea at the time’.

There are many, many different approaches to understanding these experiences. Here we will focus on two of them, buddhism and psychoanalysis. They are both attentive to the phenomenon of splitting and hold out hope of the possibility of an improved accommodation and even integration between the remnants of the split.

I will briefly outline the way splitting may be understood according to views held generally in the nyingma school of Tibetan buddhism. Other schools and styles of buddhism may offer different views. This view differs from psychoanalysis in that splitting is held to occur prior to the existence of an individual psyche that might need protection from an invading or abandoning environment, and is not considered to be defensive. Indeed splitting is seen as the originatory moment of the fallen realm of samsara, a splitting or forgetfulness which continues as the basis of our experience of ourselves and our world. Our efforts to organise the confusion resulting from this split further distracts us from the natural perfection that has been lost sight of. Yet underpinning all experience is basic presence, infinite awareness which is also primordial being. This is not a God or something Other but is the direct, immediate ground of our being. Splitting is the momentary ‘slippage’ that presents experience as something existing in its own right. This is a slippage within the unborn field of experience—it does not create anything existing in truth. Splitting brings forgetfulness of the ground and a simultaneous perception of self and other as two independent domains.

Self and not-self continue to split and differentiate giving rise to the complexity of individuals and environment, both perceived as reified domains constituted out of discrete entities. Within this domain of lostness each individual participates in diverse forms of splitting, both conscious and unconscious, as they are obliged both to make sense of what is going on and to hold themselves together. A huge and ongoing busyness is generated by the primal split—and it is this that we experience as ourselves, getting on with our lives, acting and reacting, creating and destroying, but often with a sense of some sort of fundamental lack or *dis-ease*, a sense that our identity is not quite secure. Paradoxically the lack is not a lack of something but rather of nothing, of the open spaciousness of being which is the basis of integration.

Splitting leads to duality, to objectifying, compartmentalising, repressing, disowning, projecting, dissociating, fixating, depersonalisation, alienation and so on. The effects of being cut off from the ground of one’s own being are painful and long lasting and the attempts we make to protect ourselves from the anxiety and confusion resulting from the split lead to a

further diminution and intensification of the few strands of identification with which we weave our fragile sense of self.

The totalising tendency of the ego seeks mastery through knowledge - naming, defining, judging, summing up people and situations to install a sense of reliable truth. But this is a house built on sand for it rests on the false supposition that there are truly existing entities. Isolation leads to desolation. It is only in relating that we awaken to the dynamic nature of our being. Greater ease of relating to others is grounded in being at home in ourselves. Not in self-constructs but in the immediacy of the welcome of being as it reveals itself through the ceaseless flow of relating.

The function of meditation is to bring the dynamic flow of experience and the basic ground of our awareness into coincidence. Although the original split is deemed to be illusory, occurring in the manner of a dream, none-the-less when this is not recognised, it is as if we are cut off from our source. Tasting the non-duality of the infinite ground or field and all the unique specific moments of finite experience, we are released from the anxious burden of managing a solitary self. Nothing has to change in the forms of experience we encounter; we simply awaken to the fact that appearances are not what we have taken them to be.

If this meditative approach seems too radical, too different from the realm of our daily assumptions, then the path of tantra offers a way to transform the illusion of being apart by resituating us as part of the whole, as deities within the mandala. All aspects of ourselves and our world, even the most 'demonic', are recruited into the divine mandala where they are transformed into and recognised actually to be aspects of the energy of the centre, of the source, of the divine. Here we have orchestration as symphony rather than the polyphony revealed in the space of becoming. In tantra the centralised harmonisation of function replaces the cacophony created by individual impulsivity.

Psychoanalysis, particularly the Kleinian trend, has also been attentive to splitting and its consequences. The phantasy that the safe can be separated from the unsafe, the nurturing from the harmful, the good breast from the bad breast, is one that holds out the promise of omnipotence, of the annihilation of all that is troublesome and the securing of the paradise of the good object. However, as Klein indicates in her paper, *Symbol Formation and the Development of the Ego*, there is no such thing as a free lunch. The baby's phantasy is redolent with the fear of punishment for the gain of sustenance is felt to be based on theft. The gift is not to be trusted because it is always part of a deal, the implicit contract of exchange that binds self and other.

Even with the possibility of moving from paranoid-schizoid splitting to the depressive position, there is still an on-going tension between the vectors which are being held in proximity. Because we experience love and hate as opposites no real integration is possible. Either one wins or the other wins or they cancel each other out; they cannot truly collaborate. So ill-at-easeness becomes our companion.

The buddhist concept of interdependent co-origination points to the fact that because subject and object are movements within one field they are inevitably mutually influencing. The

individual is in fact a part of an infinite dynamic interactive unfolding. The fact that we give names to people and things does not mean they have inherent self-existence. Due to causes and conditions we expand and contract, are happy and then fearful. There can be no stability because there is no unchanging essence in the individual or in anything they encounter.

From the buddhist point of view the direct taste of the non-duality of the unchanging ground of awareness and the ceaseless experience of movement cannot be achieved through developing and changing the patterns and contents of movement. This opens up a space different from the terrain of psychoanalysis. When we work in the clinical setting, two people engage in a range of interactions, both conscious and unconscious. Valuable as this work is, it cannot escape the mesmerising pull of duality. The formation of the self is indeed a dialogic process through which we can develop great richness of personality with concomitant enjoyment of life. Yet the ground of our being requires a direct seeing that is probably best achieved in the simple practice of meditation, of being present without bias with whatever is occurring, neither observing from a distance nor merging into it. This has some similarity with the analyst's free-floating attention, traditionally advocated as the supportive factor for the patient's free association. However, in that situation the frame is still that of a two-person interaction.

For me buddhist practice opens a space of presence that is facilitative of relaxed spontaneous engagement with whatever the patient brings. Nothing formally 'buddhist' needs to enter the session. Love as open acceptance of our actual situation deconstructs the basis of judgement and allows both parties to make contact within unbiased equanimity.

I believe this approach to be more ethical and respectful than the prevailing tendency to decontextualise buddhist practices and select bits of it to construct techniques such as 'mindfulness'. Expert-led interventions of this nature cause further splitting as their focused intention increases subject/object differentiation.

"Who is the one who protects themselves when engaging in splitting?" This question, if taken up as a direct enquiry rather than as food for thought, may open the door to that which is given, the basic continuity of our presence prior to and co-terminus with all our experience, whether split or otherwise.

Clinically the critical factor for me is to find a way to remain unsplit, whilst within the maelstrom of splitting and projection that frequently occurs. Resting in the openness of the givenness of integration allows a degree of fearlessness, a sense that one's own basic presence and therapeutic availability will not be lost, no matter what arises in the force-field of transference/countertransference. It is this, I believe, that gradually awakens the patient to the possibility of freedom.

James Low, October 2012

View

Ground path and result

Ground

The basis of all experience is ungraspable simplicity free of artifice: uncompounded, uncreated; spontaneous, self-arisen; infinite; inconceivable; inexpressible presence eluding capture by concept, categories, definitions. This, the ground of your presence, is other than anything you know yet not something apart. The open ground has never been lost or limited. It is always already whole and available. This truth is self-valid in the immediacy of awareness and does not rely on concepts.

Path

This openness is always available to those who are available. Preoccupation with thoughts, feelings, plans, sensations, memories, interpretation and so on generates the illusory unavailable self. Letting go of the dualistic habit of reifying self and other allows self to relax into its basis, and then the other, the object, arises and goes free by itself. Relax and release. Striving will not help for we have never parted from the source we seek. Relax and release till clarity dissolves the clouds of habitual activity and doubt loses its power to disturb.

The path consists of View, Meditation and Activity.

View

The open ground of all appearance and experience is empty of self-substance. Although empty of anything graspable by concepts, it shows its potential as all that is revealed to our awareness, our instant presence.

The primordial purity of the inseparability of space and awareness is the true freedom we seek. It is freely available if the patterns of obscuration, identification, judgement, assertion and so on are seen to be merely sinking rafts on a stormy sea. Paradoxically, relaxing our reliance on these rafts calms the sea and all becomes clear as it always has been.

Meditation

Relax and release intention. Many diverse experiences arise. They will go free by themselves if we do not involve ourselves.

We involve ourselves in three main ways. Firstly, by reification, taking self and other to be truly separate and real in themselves. Then, following either desire or aversion, we either seek more

of what we like, or less of what we don't like. This dynamic selectivity, the unfolding of duality, is a delusion manifesting due to our belief in the real and the energy of our commitment to it.

Since all that we experience, including ourselves, is merely captivating illusion, the path to freedom is simply to relax belief, arousal and involvement.

Activity

At rest in unchanging openness there is clearly no other source for anything which occurs. Being present with the revelation of the radiance of the source is the activity as this radiance is the clarity of the non-duality of the compassionate play of illusory subject and object.

Result

The result arising from view, meditation and activity is the peace and contentment of being free of seeking experience as if one had a lack or a need. This is called the dharmakaya. From this openness, illusory manifestations of sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya arise to facilitate dreaming beings awakening to the source they have never left.

The openness of the mind itself is infinite, encompassing all that is referred to as time and space. All that is experienced is within it. If this truth becomes self-evidently clear for you there is no need to go looking here and chasing there. The unborn integrity of openness, clarity, and responsive presence is the buddha, unchanging compassionate liberation from the delusion of reification, duality and karma.

James Low. November 2017

The Play of ignorance

With the seeming separation of subject and object, the subject is marked by lack.

The primary lack is the absence of stable identity with the consequent sense of vulnerability to fluctuations in experience, whether this appears to be internal or in the environment.

This existential lack feeds a sense of lack of the features that surround the subject which are taken to be attractive. This generates pulsations of desire, need, longing and a sense of frustration when the object is not quite what we want.

The primary lack also feeds a sense of danger, in that by opening myself, to what I want, I am also open to aspects that I don't want and so aversion easily develops, ripening as anger and hostility.

Subject and object are born together and are mutually sustaining. They arise from the thickening of energy when its patterning is repeated in order to create the semblance of stability and reliability.

Actually, each moment of the pattern is fresh, for 'repetition' is an illusion based on the delusion of the real existence of enduring entities.

There is no essence or substance to what we take to be 'subject' and what we take to be 'object'. These appearances only seem real and substantial due to the activity of reification.

This activity, the creativity of our mind, generates the delusion of self and other, subject and object, as really existing entities. If we see that this is true about either subject or object then both dissolve.

Imagining that subject and object are separate and self-existing, the energy/activity of grasping at them, shaping them and attempting to control them, is the dynamic that sustains 'them'.

Our investment of focus and identification in the emergent 'object' fluctuates, moving rapidly across the spectrum between the polarities of distanced observing and identificatory fusion.

The unborn primordial ground or basis or source which is open and empty effortlessly gives rise to energy patterning which we experience as 'me' and 'not me'.

Me includes body, voice, mind, identified through the activities we know as thoughts, feelings, sensations, movements, gestures and so on. We take the source of these arisings to be something internal, inside ourselves, the core of 'me'.

Similarly we take everything else to be external, with each 'not me' being generated by its own individual thingness.

This dualistic interpretation is how the display of the ground arises without awareness of the ground and so seems to generate its own self-creating and self-deluding ideas about what is occurring.

The ground becomes apparent when we awaken from the dream of duality. The ground is the ground of both awakening and dreaming. There is no other door to freedom than awakening to the ground.

James Low. November 2017

The Generous ground

View

1. Mind is empty and full.
2. Experience is all that is available.
3. Experience is the imagination of the ground:
4. This can be unmediated; the awareness of the ground shows integral non-dual manifestation as it actually is.
5. Or it can be mediated by unawareness of the ground leading to all the possibilities of samsara.

Meditation

6. Primordial purity is invulnerable, indestructible, unchanging and so
7. Relax and release. Rest in and as the unborn open
8. Available for whatever manifests, whether seemingly as subject or object, without reification, bias or judgement.
9. This self-liberation of phenomena, including self, directly shows the unshowable ground.
10. The ungraspability of ground open emptiness, infinite translucent clarity, and evanescent co-emergent participation is liberation itself.

Activity

11. Manifesting as appearance and emptiness, apparitional forms mutate as connectivity of the energy of the ground is privileged above all.
12. Accepting projections without being bound by them, presence remains integral within the modes of splitting that display as our own known worlds.
13. With unchanging awareness of the emptiness of illusory manifestation, myriad forms arise according to the needs of those believing in inherent separateness.
14. Whatever occurs is non-cumulative and so there is no residue of energetic charge; all is within the avadhuti and so empty naked freshness is the mode of availability and responsivity.
15. Ungraspable, uncatchable, this is the enigma of the presence that helps by facilitating the dissolving of the delusion of the duality of the existence of the one who needs help and one with special qualities who kindly offers help.

Result

16. The result is non-confusion in the midst of chaos.
17. The ground and its clarity are inseparable from participation without contamination.

18. The primordial purity (Tib. *sangs*) of mirror-like open empty awareness shows myriad (Tib. *rgyas*) appearances of connectivity.
19. Participation in the field inseparable from the clarity of the field and its ground is the dreamlike quality of apparitional forms.
20. Delusion (Tib. *kun brtags*) is dissolved by awakening to illusion (Tib. *lhan skyes*) revealing the self-liberation of reification, attachment and discrimination.

Practice guidelines in retreat or in daily life

The Tibetan term for a retreat is *Tsham* indicating a limit or boundary. You go into retreat and keep the world outside. This can be useful in the short term but our focus of practice is the ever-open nondual integrity of the whole.

Whether in retreat or out of it we should gently align ourselves with the View, Meditation and Activity set out in our Dzogchen texts

View

Mind itself is ungraspable, an open infinite presence like space.

Mind's radiance is ungraspable like sunlight in the clear blue sky.

Mind's kindness is ungraspable as ceaseless unborn appearance, like rainbows and clouds.

1. Relax and release till mind itself is your source.
2. The immediate presence of the mind itself is ungraspable. Being free from the fabrication of entities, potential is unobstructed however it is.
3. This bright clarity is without bias and appearances arise without forgetfulness of the inclusive source. Your own apparitional appearance is nondual in this ever-changing field unconditioned by the delusion of reified subject and object.

Meditation

1. Guru Yoga of the White A or ཨ is the effective way to relax and release yourself from your dualistic preoccupations. We are opening to the intrinsic openness of our mind so that unimpeded sky to sky presence lets all obstacles and distractions self-liberate. Sit comfortably and imagine a white letter ཨ or A in the space in front of you. It is surrounded by encircling rays of light: blue, green, red, yellow and white. The A is the presence of primordial purity and the rays of light are the potential of instant presence nondual with primordial purity.

We make a slow and steady sound of A three times, dissolving all involvement with whatever arises. With the last sound of A the image in front of us dissolves in space and we remain relaxed and at ease. Whatever comes, comes - and goes. Self-appearing and self-disappearing. Resting with the presence of awareness the non duality of open emptiness and ceaseless unobstructed appearance become clear.

Maintain this openness as you get up and engage with the forms of the world. By not entering

into judgement and by not entertaining commentaries on what is occurring all that arises is present in nonduality.

2. 5 questions till clarity of source is present
 - a) Does might have shape and colour?
 - b) Does mind have size, big or small?
 - c) Does it come from somewhere?
 - d) Does it stay somewhere?
 - e) Does it go somewhere?
3. Do Phat! when fusion with arisings occurs. Open to the opening revealed by Phat! Rest in that opening so that all that occurs is within it. The one-pointed force of Phat! disrupts the delusion of the flow of time and the fixity of place, opening us to the freshness of immediacy, the nakedness of presence, awareness free of content.

Activity

Move in the revelation of the senses without conceptualising self and other, inside and outside. Dance and sing with the five elements. Free of the need for artificial meaning constructed with concepts, remain relaxed in openness undefinable by concepts, untainted by opinions about self and other, and unwoven on the loom of comparing and contrasting entities.

The world as it is is not dangerous; it is what we make of it that is dangerous. Our own mental formations identify phenomena to be rejected and phenomena to be adopted. The actuality of all phenomena is their non-duality with emptiness. Moreover, the awareness that illuminates their arising and passing is also non-dual with emptiness. Everything is the mind and yet this mind has never been established as an existent. We are neither advancing towards a distant goal nor retreating from present difficulties. Rather we are releasing our identification with the deluding ego-nexus so that its ephemeral constituents can dissolve. Grasping at entities reifies both grasper and grasped at.

As the subject side thins and vanishes, unborn awareness shines forth. As the object side thins and vanishes, unborn space, the source and site of all phenomena, is clearly inseparable from awareness. Non-dual presence is simply present and intrinsically free of advance and retreat.

Sit in the seven-fold posture of Vairocana if you can. If not, then as far as possible ensure that your skeleton is aligned with gravity so that your weight rests on it without muscular tension. The seven-fold posture is as follows: legs crossed, hands in lap, spine straight, shoulders dropped and open, chin slightly lowered, lips and teeth resting naturally, tongue touching upper palate. Eyes slightly open with gentle focus on the tip of the nose. Breath is gentle and unforced.

Having settled in the body, as the body, attend to the experience of the body. If your mind is easily distracted focus on the breath, on your posture or on sensation in the body. By being

mindful of these occurrences, attention settles on its chosen object and becomes less prone to distraction. The body is sensation, the experience of sensation. Sensation arises and passes without effort. The body itself offers nothing to cling to. If there is clinging, it is clinging to thoughts and feelings about the body.

Maintain the sense of the body as shifting patterns of energy appearance within ever-open awareness. If this is difficult then stand up, stretch and move about while keeping your attention on your experience of your body. Then lie down on the floor on your back letting your feet fall outwards with your hands palm upwards. Let your breath settle, long and even. This is the corpse pose, neither waking nor sleeping, free of effort. There is nothing to gain, nothing to do. As if you were a corpse you have nothing to do with anything. Let go of bias, judgement, adopting and rejecting. The ego-self is busy with self-maintenance. But as a corpse you are released from these demands. The experiencer is the ego, the self which is born together with the object. Let go of identification with anything which arises, whether it seems to be self or not self. The person who wanders in samsara is dead. The body is just there, not asleep but as if dead. Awareness is present and unimpeded by swirls of involvement. Awareness has no fixed or personal content. It is open, unconstructed, uncontrived. Whatever comes comes, whatever goes goes. Uninvolved presence. This is an excellent basis for practice. When uninvolved presence is stable return to sitting upright.

James Low, April 2022

Integrating with the integral

- 1 We begin with the inseparability of ground, path and result.
- 2 The ground or source or base gives rise to both awareness and unawareness of how the whole actually is.
- 3 The ground is inclusive and integral. It is unmade, self-occurring, infinite, inexpressible and beyond the categories of samsara and nirvana. It is the sole ground of everything and there is no other ground.
- 4 When there is no awareness of the ground its openness seems to be oblivion and there is no recollection. This gives rise to duality and the delusions of sentient beings who take their experiences to be real.
- 5 Awareness has no need of a path. The many dharma paths are taught for those who wander in samsara.
- 6 The path is revealed through the lineage coming from the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra. It is presented as view, meditation, activity and result.
- 7 The view is the integrity of essence, nature and expression. This is how the non-duality of the ground aspects of primordial purity and immediate presence appears as the path. This is the first key point of Garab Dorje: **AWAKENING TO THE INTRINSIC ABSENCE OF TENSION.**
- 8 The meditation is the non-meditation of resting in how it is: not merging with or avoiding any arising. This is the second key point of Garab Dorje: **RESTING AT EASE UNTOUCHED BY THE DUALISTIC STRUCTURE OF TENSION.**
- 9 The activity is intuitive spontaneity free of conceptual commentary. This is the activity of the non-dual display inseparable from the ground. It manifests as unlimited expression free of owner and agency. This is the third key point of Garab Dorje: **ENDLESSLY EFFORTLESSLY FREE OF TENSION.**
- 10 The result is the ceaseless presence of the three aspects of buddha: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya. Nothing has been gained or lost in this simple presence of the infinite whole dzogchen. Intrinsically free of duality and all the polarities it offers no basis for tension or reactivity.
- 11 From the very beginning, the body, voice and mind of all sentient beings have been free of inherent existence. Their bodies are pure appearance devoid of any personal essences or individual factors establishing true difference from the ground or from its instant presence.
- 12 Without cause or condition, there is unawareness of the ground. There is blankness and oblivion. With the arising of the energy of the ground, non-dual with the ground, this arising is bewildering. The vibration of anxiety manifests the polarities of subject and object. Due to this there appears to be something along with one who apprehends that something. This something has no existence of its own and is inseparable from nothing and yet simultaneously it is falsely held to be something. As the delusion of somethingness becomes established the many different somethings are organised according to

signs and names. This process strengthens the subjects', the apprehenders', sense of agency, of being the doer, the maker. However, not understanding the nature of cause and effect the subject accumulates tendencies and traces of past actions and this karmic force manifests the further delusion of being a sentient being wandering in the six realms of samsara.

- 13 Thus, if born in the human realm, we find ourselves in a human body already carrying the tensions of our hopes and fears arising in relation to sensations, perceptions, feelings, thoughts, memories, plans and other aspects of our imagination. Due to all the factors mentioned above we experience ourselves as separate individuals moving in a world of other separate individuals. We fear loneliness and abandonment and so seek closeness, yet we also fear invasion and overwhelm and so seek apartness.
- 14 We then move along and back a spectrum of being a mind in a body, being a mind having a body, being a body having a mind, being a fully inhabited body-mind. The ever-changing environment and our ever-changing flow of mental and physical events interact as a ceaseless stream of experiences generating tension and release. This tension and release does not shift the underlying tension arising from ignoring the ground and imagining entities.
- 15 The function of integrity or yoga is to make us conscious of how much tension we both arise from and give rise to. This tension determines our activity. Yoga or inseparability from the natural is a branch of meditation through which we can become more conscious of how subject and object arise and pass. We can then see that although we can identify as subject or object we are neither. The body is the expression of the energy of the display inseparable from the ground. Through yoga we can gain release from the dualistic tension underpinning consciousness and open to our intrinsic unborn awareness.
- 16 With the body as the effulgence of the ground there is no basis for our deluding ego-identity to apprehend it as an entity. Our body is an aspect of our ongoing non-dual conversation within the openness of display.
- 17 This body is an interplay of the five elements within the field of display of the five elements. When there is tension thickening and controlling the ego, the profound intrinsic relaxation of awareness is functionally inaccessible although actually always available. Then water, fire and wind can easily cause disturbance. Space seems too ethereal to be availed of and so again and again the ego turns towards the earth element, establishing rules, choreographies, restrictions, containments, and many other modes of imposition. The structure of the resulting imbalance can be released by opening to the open and so allowing experience free transit in the space it is inseparable from.
- 18 The ego is porous whereas awareness is not. The ego leaks out and is flooded in. Renunciation, control and avoidance can help to titrate the quantity of inflow and outflow but it cannot bring them to an end. If we are identified with the ego we will always be vulnerably at the mercy of the happenstance of events. Rather than having to continuously seek to balance or antidote the ever-shifting field of energy, we can attend to our intrinsic awareness which is open, undefended and unaffected by the flux of events. No event can improve or harm awareness. Whereas the ego is being constantly formed and reformed in the shifting vectors of arisings.

The Ideology of self and the presence of freedom

The ground is not changed by its display.

This display is the play of awareness, of presence inseparable from the ground.

The ground seems not to be present when there is absence of presence inseparable from the ground.

This absence has no other source than the ground it is not aware of.

To be unaware of the ground is to be unaware of the actual origin of ourselves and everything that occurs for and as ourselves.

This absence of simplicity, integrity and clarity manifests as the energy of the ground appearing as subject and object, self and other.

These polarised ideas are taken to be real self-existing, seemingly self-originated, entities possessing both essence and substance.

Identifying as self, other is displaced, pushed out and away as forever not-self.

This delusion is maintained in the face of everyday connectivity such as breathing, eating, moving, speaking.

This gives rise to so many entities. There seems to be too much stuff. For the ego, only selectivity can prevent overwhelm.

Then our restricted selective attention is fed by attachment to the seeming givenness of what is apprehended.

The impact of the apprehended arising has a consequence, for we react by either adopting or rejecting what ever we think has impacted us.

Being symbiotic, the subject needs the object to avoid going unconscious.

Hence the subject recruits the turbulence of desire, aversion, pride, jealousy and so on to maintain the vivifying play of excitation.

For the anxious hungry ego, attending to the unadulterated simplicity of what is occurring generates boredom and dullness.

This experience returns the ego self to the busyness of distraction and excitation.

Yet the unchanging ground is always available, always present, always inseparable from whatever is occurring.

Therefore relax and release. Relax body, voice and mind. Relax fusion with habitual tendencies of arousal and mobilisation.

This relaxation is itself releasing, revealing the self-liberation, the self-vanishing of all that arises.

Resting in this primordial purity, openness and ungraspability of awareness, we find that all display is intrinsically free.

With this we are free. Free, relaxed, contented and without need for either subject or object although they may continue to arise in the manner of a dream.

The Deep and vast freedom of the dharma

The Tibetan word for 'buddha' is *Sangs-rGyas*. '*Sangs*' indicates pure, awakened, clear, free from all defilements, limitations, and wrong views. '*rGyas*' indicates expansive, vast, full of all good qualities, and infinite compassion. Buddha is the presence of the inseparability of the depth of wisdom and the vastness of compassion. His wisdom is free of obscuration and illuminates the infinity of emptiness within which all appearances are devoid of inherent self-nature. His compassion manifests as his freedom to manifest whatever form and to perform whatever activity will help sentient beings in all the six realms of samsara. Thus the buddha is free from limitation and is free to act according to each specific situation. To become a buddha like this is our goal, for we too have the potential, the buddha nature, which can awaken as full buddhahood with these two freedoms.

The ground of our awakening is the intrinsic purity of our mind. Although we experience ourselves to be limited beings with many faults, deficits and shortcomings, these limitations are contingent, arising due to causes and conditions. The beginning of freedom is to recognise that our limitations, although powerful in their functioning and in the way they generate karma, are in fact devoid of defining self-essence. In fact they only function because we believe in them due to ignorance, attachment and the power of deceitful dualistic vision. Due to identification with the reified patterns of appearance which we take to be self and other, we live in ceaseless waves of impulse and reactivity and so are never at peace. Yet the basis for awakening, for peace, for wisdom and compassion, is already present within us.

Buddha Shakyamuni pointed out that all compounded things are impermanent. If we had to make our own buddha potential then it too would be impermanent. If we were truly, completely generated by ignorance, awakening would be impossible. Even if you were to wash a piece of coal every day for a year it would not become chalk because it lacks chalk-nature. But our buddha nature or potential for enlightenment is the inalienable ground of our experience. This is the basis for our freedom to awaken.

However we have accumulated many karmic tendencies and obscurations during our long sojourn in samsara. Not only is our own true potential hidden from us by these fruits of our own deluded activity, but we strongly identify with our karmic patterns and take them to be our true self. We have so many ways of defining ourselves, '*I am this, I am that.*' Yet these definitions are based on language and concepts and have only a conventional validity. They cannot reach or touch or sully the infinite absolute truth of our unchanging buddha nature. When clouds fill the sky it is as if the sky is made of clouds. Yet clouds are impermanent and will vanish while the unchanging sky is open and present whether filled with clouds or not.

Seeing that this is the case, the path opens for us and we can start to engage in study and practice to gain the discerning wisdom that never confuses the clouds with the sky. On an outer level we work to free our body, speech and mind from gross habits. On an inner level we see

that these habits are empty of inherent self-nature. On the innermost level we see that the clouds are the playful creativity of the sky, its self-display, and as such are also intrinsically empty as the radiance of emptiness itself. This wisdom frees us from dualistic involvement as we progress from adopting the good and rejecting the bad to neither adopting nor rejecting but simply abiding in spacious sky-like awareness free of gain and loss, coming and going.

With this wisdom, our compassion manifests. At first it arises as an aspiration, *“May all beings be happy.”* Then it becomes the heart and motive of our practice as we develop bodhicitta and hold all beings in mind. Then compassion arises effortlessly as compassion free of reification, compassion that effortlessly helps all beings in the manner of a dream.

Now we have the freedom to become whatever is required by others, however they are. We are not operating from a template; we are not trying to be good and helpful according to some rules or principles. Rather, we are open and available and able to respond in the freshness of the co-emergent moment. Because we have found wisdom that is free of limitation, we become free to free all beings from their limitations, and facilitate their awakening to their own Buddha potential.

Freedom in buddhism is the freedom to be a buddha, to awaken to who we truly are, and so to free others to find their own intrinsic freedom.

James Low, November 2017

Freedom lost and found

Wherever we are, whatever has happened to us, whatever we have done or not done, the basis of our existence is good, open, pure, and unchanging. If we open to this open ground, to this still, radiant source, we can find contentment. As we know from our own painful experience getting lost is easy. However, although we have wandered here and there chasing dreams and fleeing pain, we have never actually strayed from the ever-open ground of our being.

Where we are is not where we think we are. Being at home where we are is revealed to us when we allow ourselves to be present and not distracted by the ideas and judgements that are currently passing through our mind. However due to our attachment to ideas, due to our belief in the patterns we have inherited and created so far in our lives, we are prone to surrender to habits, tendencies, and impulses. Being caught up in these transient seductions we wander in dreamtime and it is as if we are being led astray from where we actually are.

Healthy growth for all living forms - animals, trees, people, plants - requires balance, the 'middle way'. Not too much, not too little; neither invasion nor abandonment. Too much sun and the plant dries up. Too much rain and it collapses and rots before the ripening of its potential.

When we were young we yearned for the constant presence of supportive love, love to enrich our capacity for enjoyment and freedom. But unfortunately this was not our constant daily experience.

Due to the intentional or circumstantial unreliability of those to whose care we were entrusted we have all experienced degrees of invasion and abandonment. This can be mild or extreme. Invaded by rules, by demands beyond our capacity, by the overwhelming desires and preoccupations of others, our bodies and minds can be invaded, sexually, by violence, or by denigration. We can also be abandoned by not being cleaned or fed, not being seen or listened to, not being met or valued and so on.

Invasion and abandonment bring sadness, loneliness, a lack of trust, and an increase in anxiety and agitation. So many sensations, thoughts and feelings arise and we are so little prepared to deal with them. Our own behaviour becomes volatile and our avoidance and impulsivity generate new problems for us.

Invasion and abandonment by others leads to lack and excess in ourselves. We lack calm and contentment, confidence and dignity, in fact we lack all that can be nurtured by enabling love. Smothering love also leads to lack as there is little space to breathe and grow when parents cannot let go. With this lack, this sense of not being whole, complete, enough, at ease, there arises an excess of anger, frustration, helplessness, and worthlessness. This excess fills us and preoccupies us so that we are often blind to the healing potential of new situations.

However when we find the tantalising medicine of alcohol and drugs, chemical calming becomes available. This chemical feel-good, this artificial well-being, is an instant relief that no one has so far provided for us. I may be a mess but 'me plus substance' is not worried, is free for a moment. The high must be maintained or the low is even worse than before. We become needy, desperate, driven and then our unskilful actions lead us into trouble and finally into prison.

The pains we have experienced have complex causes, for those who hurt us have also been hurt and harmed and are unbalanced by their own anxiety, rage and suffering. Blaming others or ourselves will not help. But seeing how the situation emerged can aid us to manage the disturbances in our energy and find more harmony, dignity and simple enjoyment. Dignity is not an artificial inflation nor a defensive posturing but the calm strong presence that manifests when we are fully embodied and open to our potential. Our anxious ego learns how to posture and pretend but underneath there is fear and agitation. Lack of trust keeps us hyper-vigilant and ready to react even when the situation is one we could enjoy. Yet deep dignity is always available when we do not abandon who we truly are.

It is a painful fact that if we do not take responsibility for managing the effects of what happened to us we will continue to be under the power of habits, reaction-formations, tendencies and impulses. This may seem unfair but as we painfully come to see, this world is not fair. We have to work with the situations we find ourselves in and continue to develop our capacity to do this.

Just as we have been invaded and abandoned so we continue this pattern, invading our bodies with substances they don't need and abandoning our bodies and our hearts by denying them the healthy sustenance we *do* need. Moreover, our preoccupation with our own habits and impulses leads us to invade and abandon others, as we do not attune to their actual needs and wishes.

We all know how easy it is to make a decision to change but then not be willing or able to carry it through. This is often due to our being divided in ourselves. We have aspects which seek ease and healing and we have aspects which seek excitement, self-abandonment and even self-destruction. When these aspects function separately, without communication with the other aspects of ourselves, our voice cannot speak for all of us and so our 'yes' is never a full 'yes' and our 'no' is never a full 'no'. When this is the case, our unresolved inner conflicts make us impulsive rather than decisive, avoidant rather than attentive, and in this way we sabotage our lives.

Struggling to control our thoughts and impulses is exhausting and it is tempting to give up. Yet there is a middle way between struggle and collapse. We can make friends with our mind. There are two aspects to our mind: what arises in it as thoughts, feelings, sensations, hungers, and so on; and the mind itself, the basic clarity that reveals each and every experience.

By learning to be mindful we can start to free our clarity from all the tumbling, demanding thoughts, memories and cravings that arise in the mind. Focusing on the flow of our breath and learning to be contented with the simplicity of this is a great freedom. It is the inner freedom

that frees us to move in the world in a kind and present way without being led astray by old tendencies and new temptations.

To explore our potential for calm clarity we sit with an erect yet comfortable posture so that our spine supports our weight letting our muscles relax. We are always breathing and this gives rise to subtle sensation at our nostrils as we inhale and exhale. We focus on this gentle sensation. Our intention is to have this as our sole focus of attention. When we find that our attention has wandered off to follow a thought, a movement near us, or whatever catches our attention, we gently bring our attention back to our focus on the breath at the nostrils, without blame or further thoughts about how and why we wandered off.

If we persist in this we will find that we are gradually becoming free of our habitual tendency of going under the power of whatever is occurring. Something arises and we get caught up in it. Who is the one who gets lost in the object, who merges with the thought or feeling or sensation as if it were all that we needed or wanted? It feels as if it were 'I, me, myself' who gets lost. I get lost when I merge with the thought. I did not have that thought a moment ago but now it has arisen and it feels like me, feels relevant to me, is telling me about me. For example, it might be, 'I need a cigarette.' This might feel true, so I take one from the packet and light it. I am obeying a thought because I believe it tells me the truth. Yet it is just a thought. It can only catch me if I believe in it. If a thought arises, 'I need to score', then I start thinking about how to get the resources to get the drug. Why am I believing that thought? Of course it is not just a simple thought but is a thought rich in habits, memories and feelings. This makes it feel powerful and true.

Yet if I pause and observe the thought I see that it vanishes. The thought that could catch me and lead me into extreme activity and lostness is itself transient and without inherent power. It is my belief in the thought that gives it its power! When we see this the door to profound freedom opens. I do not need to hook on to and follow my thoughts, feelings, habits, impulses, random desires, flashes of anger, sadness, and all the wild and strange weather that passes through the open sky of my mind.

A thought arises in my mind and I respond. In the moment of my responding I am a thought. 'I' is empty of its own content. It fills itself with 'not-I', with opinions and attitudes it has adopted from the environment and calls it 'I'. In the course of an hour we experience many forms of 'I': happy, sad, distracted, tired, interested. 'I' fills with, and shows, and seems to be, whatever occurs.

The more we focus on a simple object like the breath and then relax, the more we can be aware of the flow of arising and passing moments of experience. Awareness is not 'I', the self, the individual subject. Awareness is the simple presence, the clarity which reveals all that comes and goes, all that we take to be self and other. Seeing this, our freedom opens ever deeper and wider. This open awareness has no fixed content yet is always filling and emptying like the wing-mirror on a car.

Being alive, being here, now, open, I am returned to my potential as the limiting definitions put by self and others lose their hold. Now so much more is available and I am so much more

available to receive and respond. Life is lighter. The puppet-strings of habit and defended vulnerability are cut. Life is playful and after all the dark years I can play again.

James Low, November 2017

Intrinsic freedom

Freedom is intrinsic to awareness. It does not have to be gained and it cannot be lost. However due to the power of ignorance this ever-present freedom is disregarded as the energy of the mind becomes focused on generating the experiences of the six realms of samsara.

How strange and sad that sentient beings, although inseparable from the unchanging freedom of the ever-open ground, find themselves addicted to the dualistic limitations conjured up by their own imagination.

The ground of freedom is uncompounded, spontaneously arisen, infinite, inexpressible and beyond the reach of the terms 'samsara' and 'nirvana'. This is the base or source or true sphere of all sentient beings. This ground, the ground of everything, has two paths, the awake path and the dream path. Although all beings have the same ground what arises for and as them depends on which path is followed.

With the path of awareness of the ground there is the inseparability of openness, clarity and empathic co-emergence. This ripens as the three modes of the buddha: dharmakaya, the sky-like mind of the buddha with the freedom of contentment; sambhogakaya, the speech of the buddha with the freedom to enjoy the unceasing non-dual display; and the nirmanakaya, the body of the buddha with the freedom to respond without limitation according to need.

However with the path of non-awareness or ignorance there is forgetfulness of the ever-open ground even though the open ground is the actual ground of forgetfulness. Unfortunately, when this mis-taking, this unaware dullness, this dark oblivion, arises there is no recognition of error and so no return to the openness which is always already present.

Instead the creative potential of the ground, the openness of emptiness, flows ceaselessly and is apprehended by the delusion of duality arising within it. The unborn openness appears as self and other, me and you. I am me: you are you. The other is all that is not me, and I am all that is not other than me.

These categories of self and other are artificial; they are constructed compounds which are clearly false when we examine them. "I am an autonomous individual. I am my own person. I decide how I will live." These familiar statements seem convincing until we see the basic fact of our embodiment. We are inseparable from the environment, in fact we are part of it. We are enworlded and are not isolated observers who can decide whether to engage or not. I breathe in the air which is other. Other become self. I breathe out and the air that was self becomes other. I eat and defecate. I drink and urinate. We 'exist' as part of the interactive play which is the actuality of life.

The other and the self are conventional signs that we rely on to make sense of the world. They function for us because they are polarities and we identify ourselves as one pole and exclude the other. Yet there is no clear boundary between these poles except the shifting definitions of our own ideas about them. We imagine duality. Or rather, with the manifesting of duality as

an organising principle all the differentiations which generate our experience of the six realms arise. I, the 'I' that feels like me, is an idea, a concept. It is not the word made flesh but the word generating the illusion of flesh, of inside and outside.

All this flow of evermore complex experience arises like a dream from the open ground. It is an illusion, like a mirage or a rainbow. When we do not identify illusion as illusion it manifests as delusion, as an encapsulating hallucination within which we take self and other to be real, substantial, and essentially different. This is how ignoring the ground and the consequent dualistic attachment to illusion as reality generates the suffering of the six realms.

Within these six realms of hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demigods, and gods there can be moments of happiness, moments in which we feel free. But such moments are transient and arise due to causes and conditions. When the power of the causal activity is exhausted the moment of seeming freedom comes to an end. In the drawings of the wheel of life depicting the realms of samsara we revolve through, we see that the buddha looks on from the outside with compassion and points to an empty sphere. This is the empty open mind, the inseparability of awareness and dharmadhatu.

In terms of practice we seek freedom from suffering, from attachment, from the five poisons, and from all the other limitations. In order to achieve this we take refuge and practice mind-training and shamatha.

We also seek freedom to benefit all beings, to transcend our limits and to become truly useful. In order to achieve this we take the bodhisattva vow and include the well-being of others in everything we do.

We also seek freedom as form and emptiness, clarity and emptiness, awareness and emptiness. In order to achieve this we practise tantra and emerge as a translucent divine form in a mandala inseparable from space.

We also seek freedom with whatever occurs, enjoying the inseparability of primordial purity and instant presence. In order to do this we release the habit of adopting and rejecting, and rest in the unimpeded integrity of ground and manifestation.

If we want to find true unchanging freedom it helps if we look where freedom is to be found. Freedom lies in our non-dual awareness and not in the efforts we make to improve our dualistic consciousness. Consciousness (*Tib. rNam-Par Shes-Pa*) cannot access our own open ground which has never been constrained. The obscurations which seem to hide our ground, our open potential, are themselves the play of the ground. Seeing this we can relax and release our reliance on the illusions that have bound us. All phenomena are impermanent. All that arises for awareness is self-liberating. Doing less we find that we are infinite. Doing more, struggling and yearning, we generate more limitations. Our freedom, our unchanging freedom, is the freedom of the ground we have never left.

James Low, November 2017

Intrinsic wholeness is all there is

1. Intrinsic wholeness is always already present wherever and however you are.
2. It is open, empty and other.
3. Open, as it is infinite, fresh, raw, free of defilement and change and of the fear of defilement and change.
4. Empty, as it is without content that defines it; it does not come from anywhere nor go anywhere, it cannot be lost or found.
5. Other, as it is not an entity, a substance, and is ungraspable by concept or any other means. It is not like any 'thing' else. It is as is. It is I am.
6. Intrinsic wholeness has no 'ground' of its own; it rests on nothing yet supports everything.
7. Intrinsic wholeness has its own light, the basic light of experience; it is the non-duality of awareness and infinite hospitality.
8. Intrinsic wholeness is generous, effortlessly providing the field of experience within which we find ourselves in ceaseless movement as part of the flow of co-emergent experience.
9. All that appears is within it; there is no loss, no lack, no ignorance, no division.
10. It is itself non-dual integration. There is no other basis of integration and thus no effort is required with regard to integration. All effort is merely the energy of intrinsic wholeness and cannot create anything apart from its own ground.
11. Although there are concepts such as ignorance, attachment, defilement, affliction and karma these are made of words, the non duality of signs and emptiness, and require no antidote.
12. By making no effort, neither grasping nor rejecting, one may put oneself in the way of that which is always already there. Whether one avails oneself or not, nothing has been created or destroyed.
13. Volition and habit are the energy of the ego. The ego is like the moon, with no light of its own. The non-duality of presence and infinite spaciousness is like the sun. Whatever the phase of the moon, the light of the sun is continuous and without cease.
14. What is needed is always already here. No special skills or tools are required to find it. It is not lost or hidden. The space of openness, the space of clarity, and the space of gesture are inseparable.
15. Every experience, whether taken to be that of a subject or an object, is a momentary gesture, a brief occurrence in the flow of unfolding which is the space of clarity.
16. The space of clarity is not something high or holy or symbolic or only available to the wise. It is the field within which we exist, and we exist as aspects of this field and not as separate entities.
17. Without effort or method, the presence which is always already the heart of your existence is the revealer inseparable from the revelation.
18. Effort is something you think you make. So release that thought and do nothing as you do whatever is to be done. Not doing, not making, involves no effort. The moon goes dark, yet the illuminating power of the sun is undiminished. The sun shows itself through its gift of light. The moon needs to know what she receives.
19. Nothing has changed, it is as it is - the inseparable integrity of openness, clarity and gesture.

20. Intrinsic wholeness heals all wounds, though they continue to bleed. Talking won't reach it, concepts seem to send it away - yet it is here and does not move.

21. Our only work is to rest easy and not do what we do as we do it.

James Low, October 2012

The Resolution of anxiety

A) Origin and development

1. The ground of all experience, and therefore of everything, is nothing other than our own presence. Neither the ground nor the basic given facticity of our own presence exist as entities. Although ungraspable by hand or thought or machine they are always available as the inalienable basis of each moment.
2. Whenever we have an experience and experience ourselves as the experiencer of the experience, both subject and object aspects of this are revealed by the illuminating qualities of presence, just as the mirror shows the reflection of both my face and the room I am in.
3. Commotion in the interplay of subject and object generates intensity of attention and identification, the arousal of which generates new patterns of experience. The subject, a mode of energy manifesting as a quasi-experiencer mediated through language, appears to be, that is, is taken to be, an entity, an enduring self-substance. This identification generates a 'personal identity' which is oblivious both to its own contingency and to the actual ground it arises from and moves within. The ground is forgotten by its own children, creating for them a burdensome 'freedom' and responsibility—even although these 'children', the play of subject and object, are never apart from the ground itself.
4. Who is responsible? No one! The happenstance of the transient patterning of ephemeral moments is both the taker to be of something, and the something that is taken to be. Within this story, this play of shadows on the wall, there is the unfolding of what 'we' take to be our self and our world. No one made it happen. From the very beginning nothing substantial, nothing having its own self-defining essence, has occurred—except as a concept.
5. With the felt experience of self and other as truly existing separate entities, subject and object continue to be related but apparently across a gap. Seeing opens up a field of separate objects that have to be made sense of. Being seen opens up the sense of being an object while also being a subject. One is defined by oneself and by others. In this tangle of opinions and judgements there is no simple truth to be found. This gives rise to the feeling of being isolated, lost and confused—with the consequent wish to establish order, predictability and control.
6. The uncertainty generated by the actual lack of a personal essence is inseparable from the activity of identifying with a 'self', with something taken to be stabilisable within the indeterminate flow. This is the root anxiety, an 'existential' anxiety arising from feeling a need for a ground other than one's actual ground. The yearning for the imagined and desired but intrinsically unavailable substantial ground, whether taken to be an object, an idea, or a sense of ego self, generates fear, anxiety and compensatory activity while the actual, always present ground is not attended to.
7. This manifests as dialogic experience which is itself the energy of non-duality. The 'polarities' of the dialogic exchange are themselves insubstantial moments of the expression of the energy of presence.

8. The relational dialogic is prone to entropy, manifesting as loss of trust in the free play of spontaneous patterning. There is a loss of meaning, involvement and direction, creating an unpleasant unravelling of the sense of self. This leads to the development of an attempted antidote in the form of creating a choreography of role-based fixed identity, including the internal dialogic structure of the 'self'.
9. However the patterns that provide a predictable sense of how I am and how things are only work if they are adhered to. The saving antidote brings a foreclosure of possibility through the demand for conformity.
10. Although no actual division has occurred, the intoxicating drama of the felt sense of the initial splitting and reification of subject and object generates the double moves of attraction/repulsion, attachment/aversion, fusing/avoidance, and so on.
11. The instability of this 'structure', the lack of an enduring reliable ground within the field of the forgetfulness of the actual ground, leads to anxiety, worry, unnecessary planning and a stream of blame and recrimination.
12. The fantasy of control which generates a sense that life is knowable and understandable, engenders a sense of dismay at the fundamental unpredictability of each situation as it actually unfolds. Unknowability is felt to be persecutory.
13. This can manifest as anxiety about one's own or others' behaviour. Wondering what other people think of me hooks in many other fears such as not being good enough or being unlovable. This can be further intensified by worrying about the fact that we can never really know what others are thinking.
14. If knowledge is taken to be the guarantor of security and safety then one is condemned to struggle to know in advance what will be experienced. This generates endless procedures which, if followed, are believed to ensure safety. But compliance with procedures is to privilege the abstract over the actual, creating a map and a plan that is often impossible to install in the complexity of concrete evolving situations.
15. Anxiety arises from the 'loss' of one's own ground. This loss is in fact an impossibility since the ground is the actual basis of our experience. Thus anxiety is the vibration of alienated misapprehension, of a reliance on concepts rather than on a relaxed and open trust in the givenness of presence. In imagining that one needs something one doesn't have, there is an ignoring of what is always already here. This has not been lost, merely lost sight of through pre-occupation. It can't be lost or found since 'it' is not a thing nor is it separate from the one who might seek it.

B) Liberation

16. The key point is to work with circumstances as they manifest. This means not relying on assumptions, which in turn requires us to recognise the actual nature of each of our assumptions.
17. To do this one has to examine the one who relies on assumptions. This 'one' is itself a complex patterning of assumptions. Becoming aware of the nature of cognition and affect

as flow phenomena allows the lived experience of the priority of being. This releases us from reliance on thoughts, techniques and so on as methods that can stabilise our identity and our situation, for their seeming stability and reliability is itself an assumption which 'exists' only in reiteration. The repetition of the general shape of a moment creates the sense of an enduring form—although in fact there is nothing but movement.

18. With this enquiry, stability is recognised as the quality of the actual ground rather than of that which the ground manifests. The play of the ground cannot be stabilised since it is movement. Awakening to and as the ground is itself liberation.
19. A question that often arises in relation to this is, if the ground is open, when and why would limitation occur? Some texts talk of 'ignorance' as the cause as if it were an active agent. Ignorance merely describes the fascination of the subject for the object which occurs when attention is governed by the dualistic frame. Why does this occur? There is no answer to that from within duality. And from the perspective of non-duality it has never occurred in truth so there is nothing to explain. Like a reflection in a mirror, appearances manifest without essence.
20. There is the further question of why does the subject merge into thoughts, feelings and so on and become both caught up in them and distracted by them and so inattentive to all else that is occurring. Since the subject has no defining essence and neither has the object, they have no resistance to merging. We may choose to merge with this and try to avoid merging with that—but the subject, in its emptiness, can merge with anything. This brings both the richness of our varied lives and the torment of being caught up in things we can't release ourselves from.
21. There is no way to protect subject from object and *vice versa*—our existence is dialogic, interactive and fundamentally non-dual. Thus the subject cannot be protected from situational anxiety, depression and so on. Rather than expending time and energy on this impossible task we will be better served by attending to the ground of manifestation itself, infinite being from which arises the co-emergence of subject and object.
22. When the mood of anxiety seems pervasive and peppered with specific anxious thoughts, then gently and carefully attend to the one who is having this experience. Being present with the one who appears to be the experiencer, the experiencer changes, vanishes, and seems to re-appear in a newly constituted form, which in turn changes and vanishes. Not only is this 'subjective' experience of being the experiencer changing, but the field of experience is also changing. The only unchanging quality is presence itself.
23. Presence is the true or fundamental live awareness, the actuality of the experiencer, while individual consciousness, our felt personal sense of being the experiencer, the subject, is in fact the play of the energy of presence.
24. Again and again, attend to the immediate presence that reveals all experience. This presence is always free of anxiety—even when the experience it reveals is one of anxiety. Anxiety is movement, presence is stable. Without effort anxiety is self-liberating when left just as it is. The same applies to phobias, depression, compulsions, impulses and all the many kinds of intense experiences that can seem to catch and control us.
25. However, if, when the 'subject' is troubled by the experience of anxiety (which appears to be the 'object'), effort is made to shift it, this is not helpful. Neither merged in what is arising, nor standing apart from it, presence offers hospitality to everything without harm

or benefit. Tasting this brings freedom from hopes and fears, and from the need to make unnecessary effort.

26. As long as we identify with the subjective sense of self as being our true nature, believing in the seeming facticity of our totalisable existence, then the self-referential interpretations that spiral around it will hide the openness of being. This openness is not in opposition to our ordinary sense of self but is the illuminating presence which reveals the self as movement, as energy.
27. Relaxation, trust and availability allow freedom to show itself. These are not activities but are qualities of the given. Whereas although effort, control, demand and intention may briefly 'secure the territory', this comes at the cost of reinforcing the sense that 'it's all up to me'.
28. The burden of being the lonely hero is a prime stimulus to the arising of feelings of anxiety. The sense of being responsible for events one cannot control is punishing and fosters guilt and shame. Even when events seem to go 'according to plan' and we might feel proud and competent, this further traps us in our isolating sense of agency.
29. The door to freedom is always open whatever occurs. Indeed there is no door to freedom for whatever occurs is always already within the space of freedom, the space of presence. That space is one's own ground, the heart of one's being. It cannot be lost or found; it is who we are, even when we are busy constructing fantasy identities.
30. But how can I relax when I'm anxious? The exit proposed, simply to relax, seems cruelly impossible. Well, don't try to relax, simply be present with the one who is anxious and unable to relax, neither merged nor apart. Nothing new is being created so no constructive effort is required. However, if one is taken by the seeming seriousness of the situation then one will be impacted and then react, leading to a further spiral of concern and anxiety.
31. Whatever is occurring is always freshly occurring, that is, it is not the sequential showing of a fixed substantial state but a dynamic unfolding of the mutual influencing of every aspect occurring at every moment. The seeming fixity of the patterning is the auto-entrapment of the anxious ego itself. This manifests as a game with rules. The first rule is that we believe, 'this is happening to me and I cannot change it'. The second rule is that we believe, 'this should not be happening to me'.
32. Without changing the manifest form we simply need to see the constructed nature of the game and through that, to relax our belief in its rules. This opens the space of deconstructive play whereby the rules of the game lose their grip leaving the field open for play which frees itself moment by moment. Improvising with the resources of the whole field, spontaneous play deconstructs the limitation of constructs without altering how they manifest.
33. Seeing the construct as a construct deconstructs the 'construct-as-given', liberating it without any effort being made. This requires seeing rather than acting. Not doing is itself auto-healing, the self-liberation of obstacles, limitations and confusions by not investing them with the reification of a seemingly continuous essence.
34. This is not the ordinary sense of not doing where we desist from gross activity yet continue our subtle engagement with thoughts, feelings and all the other contents of experience. Radical not doing is not different from radical not knowing—they both rest in an openness free of volition, impulse, habit, assumption. This openness is free of demand and necessity,

for nothing is at stake since openness itself is ungraspable, beyond reification, harm or destruction. The path to it is very short for this openness is always already available. The method for traversing this non-path is non-meditation, the relaxation of all effort and involvement.

35. Relaxing one's identification and grip means letting go of the fantasy of the subject/object split and its consequent entanglements which generate all the entitative phenomena constituting the experiences of duality. Letting go means being space, not resting on any particular arising but being directly present as the inseparability of awareness and openness. This is not a volitional move for it is the effortless generosity of participation in co-emergence. This is liberation itself, the freedom from limitation that is inseparable from the simultaneous freedom to manifest whatever is required.

James Low, December 2012

Meditation

Finding yourself in open presence

1. Come to know that open presence might be possible for you here and now.
2. Develop faith and trust.
3. Sit and see the busy flow of experience. Release the misleading discrimination of outside and inside.
4. Subject and object are both within this flow of experience. Awareness is not in the flow, yet it is not held apart from the flow. The ego self is in the flow and is unaware of its origin and actual status.
5. Gain instruction in a method to free yourself:
 - a. If this is renunciation, avoid stimulation so that there are fewer clouds in the sky and develop trust in the protective simplicity of mindful attention illuminating the world like the rays of the sun.
 - b. If this is analysis and compassionate intention, come to understand the emptiness of all phenomena and your unbreakable connection to all sentient beings. Take responsibility for their awakening and vow to clear all empty clouds when you enter the unborn sun.
 - c. If this is transformation, through initiation enter the mandala, and abide in that vision in all circumstances in the confidence that clouds shine within the mandala of sun-like illumination.
 - d. If this is direct, through having pristine purity and instant presence indicated to you, awaken to your sun-like presence forever free of clouds which are merely the play of the ground.
6. However, as long as the sun is not your living presence you are in the domain of clouds and duality, therefore relax in the openness of the unchanging ground.
7. If, with humility, you imagine that the sun is far away then you are your own jailer.
8. If you believe that you are a cloud, you are imprisoned by your own imagination and identification. Subject and object are nothing more than modes of imagination and identification. Who is the one who identifies and imagines?
9. The ludic complexity of the display of the ground frees the playful and enchains the serious. Therefore it is vital to see the limitations of striving. Relax and release and take your ease.
10. Abiding peacefully is to rest in the openness of intrinsic purity.
Seeing clearly is to open to whatever occurs for instant presence without accepting or rejecting.
Guru yoga is to relax and release into the non-duality of abiding peacefully and seeing clearly.

James Low. November 2017

The Sequence for opening to the open

In general

1. Reflect on impermanence. All outer things are impermanent. Our own bodies are continuously changing, as are our thoughts, feelings and sensations.
2. These changes occur within the field of interconnectedness. Each thing, each experience of an entity, is woven into a complex matrix of relationships. On the basis of certain factors particular manifestations arise. All things which appear to be separate, autonomous, possessed of the inherent existence, are merely contingent. This principle of interdependence of co-origination lies at the heart of all experience. Examine all arisings, outer and inner, until you are certain that there is only dependent co-origination.
3. With this awareness examine the relation between language and experience. All that you see, feel, experience, is only a name put by the mind. You yourself give names to be experience. They exist for you through sign mediation. Through applying a word to an arising, an identity is attributed to the arising which it does not inherently possess. The name creates the illusion of an essence, of an inherent self-existence. Decide that all phenomena are only names put by the mind.
4. What is this mind that puts these names? What shape is this mind? What colour is it? Where does it come from? Where does it stay? Where does it go to? Again and again investigate the nature of your own mind. What's substantial essence does it possess? What does it exist in relation to? Whenever you seem to find a substantial basis examine it again and again. Be aware of who is attributing these meanings.
5. Having realised that mind has no substantial essence, relax into the open dimension of your own presence. Use the slow outbreath or the three 'A' practice to support this.
6. When you lose this openness through identification with arisings as if they were yourself use '*Phat!*' to cut unborn presence free of clinging to limitation and foreclosure.
7. If you find yourself caught up in an identification you can also simply relax and allow your awareness to gently separate from the experience with which it is identified. When awareness is mixed with a subjective experience we experience ourselves as a separate 'I', a unique self-entity. But when awareness is relaxed it manifests as itself, empty, open, unborn, beyond all conceptual definition. Awareness is never an object, it cannot be grasped by thought.
8. Key point is to maintain an awareness of stillness and movement. Our own presence, open awareness, is unchanging. Stillness has no essence or form which can be grasped - it is like infinite depth, shining space. Movement is a shimmering surface which cannot be caught. We are both simultaneously.

James Low 18/11/2018

Healing is integration

Healing is the becoming whole of that which is experienced as torn, damaged, broken. This dis-integration is brought about by trauma, which has two aspects. Firstly there is the tear, which rends the integrity of experience into the fragments of self and other. Then this isolated self faces the intrusion of that which does not fit and the absence of that which is required. The first level of trauma is woven into the fabric of our experience and is usually invisible. It is this experience of non-integration that meditation seeks to heal through awakening to non-duality.

If this first level is not healed then the second level cannot be healed and then interventions can only aim at helping, at improving the ‘content’ of the dualistic structure. Within the view of duality, of taking self and other to be separate entities, it seems obvious that ‘I, me, myself’ has to be protected from the bad and nurtured by the good. Being careful and selective is therefore the way to thrive. Thus there is effort to get more of that which seems missing and is taken to be helpful and to get less of that which seems invasive and is taken to be unhelpful.

The view of non-duality points out that there are no intrinsic essences within what we take to be ‘real’, and therefore appearances arise and pass due to causes and circumstances without any true identity being established for any ‘individual’. The givenness of healing is revealed through relaxing anxious involvement in the comings and goings of illusory appearances. Through this, misleading identifications are let go of and being is revealed where it always has been—at the very heart of each sentient being’s existence.

Being effortlessly shows itself, discloses itself, reveals itself, unfolds itself. This is not the ‘as is’ of being *per se*, which is never an object, but rather is the ‘as is’ of showing. This presenting or displaying of becoming requires a reception and a welcome, for it is only fully revealed as it is by being received by one who is available to receive infinitely, and that is being itself.

Only being awakens to being. Being awakens to itself. The ego, as ego, cannot awaken to being. The ego can only awaken to its actual role in the flow of becoming, which is non-dual with being. The person as being requires no interpretation—just seeing, listening, being with and responding from the site of being, the infinity of the co-emergence of the field of unchanging presence, beyond totalisation and diagnosis.

What can be formulated is the dualistic habit of denying being by asserting the measurable, the reified ‘this’-ness and ‘that’-ness of what is taken to be substantial. Absorption in this very effort to define and control and correct becoming distracts from the simultaneous presence of the non-duality of being and becoming.

Formulation gives a story, and allows the nature of story to be revealed. Story is a way of relating. This can be based on reified construction, creating entities out of mere appearance, or experienced as the flow of compassion, the energy of awareness touching and welcoming those who believe in stories.

Each person is a sentient being, alive and experiencing. Yet they can be taken to be an object, and made to conform through the active imposition of conformity eliciting passive conforming adaptation. When this occurs there is a gradual or sudden non-attention to openness, a 'forgetfulness' of being part of the infinite whole, resulting in a retreat into that which can be defended.

In hiding in and acting from the seemingly defensible site of me-ness, there is a shaping of identity, a predictability that allows each form, including our own, to be known and captured, by both self and other. It is the site of the forgetfulness of being disguised as the revelation of being—a charade in which the surrounding others collude: 'We all can and must give an account of ourselves, show who we are by showing what we can do.' Thus the infinite is not awakened to but its shadow is deployed in the service of the finite.

Therefore a healing response needs to avoid affirming limitation while pointing towards the possibility of recognising, or rather of freshly seeing, one's own actual participation in the ongoing field of becoming/disclosure. This requires the healer to be attentive to detail, not as something to be caught and hung on to as a key part of a story, but as the shimmering unique specificity of the moment.

By helping the sleeper, the dreamer, the entranced to attend to the particular vitality of each moment, the magical power of immersion and taking for granted is dissolved. When not relying on abstraction to 'make sense of' what is going on, the going-on-ness is gradually revealed as the going-on-ness, not of things, entities, substances, but of being itself.

This requires the dreamer to awaken to their own availability, to a sense of being more than, other than that which they had taken themselves 'to be'. This is an experience that can be troubling and disturbing, as the false ground of assumption evaporates leaving the space of being, the ungraspable ground of all experience. To accept and integrate with and as one's own openness is unsettling, for there is nowhere to settle and no-one to settle.

To aid this the healer needs to be at home in the space of welcome, endlessly relaxing rather than grasping, working with rather than controlling. This involves participating as part of, rather than standing apart from, the co-emergent field of becoming. The site of apartness is an illusion generated by the loop of self-referencing thought—a flow of interpretation which creates that which it seems to describe.

The self which seems to be, feels to be, truly existing is consensually taken to be a given, something that is always already there as the prime entity, that with which my world began. Yet in fact, in observable fact, it is a stream of constructs that are moments of movement. The juxtaposition of these ephemeral constructs generates the patterns which create a sense of continuity for 'I, me, myself'. When we use these terms 'I, me, myself' they seem to be inherently meaningful, yet their capacity to be useful everywhere is based on their being inherently empty signs, signs which encourage the endless interplay of signifier/signified.

Like the moon, the self has no light of its own. Instead it uses the light of sun-like being, a light too bright to look at directly, as if it were its own. This appropriation is the root of all our woes for its stolen light cannot reveal its own falsity. Releasing the habit of relying on the

opaque light of self we awaken to the full light of being shining forth, as always, as the ground of all experience. Directly seeing the experience of self to be the radiance of being heals the illusion of separation, lack and mastery.

The healer welcomes from the space of infinite hospitality, and the dreamer gradually becomes available as the shrouds of night dissolve. When the welcome and the availability meet in their fullness, true healing occurs as the walls of the finite are integrated as patterns of becoming within the infinite field of being.

But what of those who do not become available, who remain wandering within the limited pathways of their habitual orientation of body, voice and mind? Although being itself is always free from the veils to being which are themselves the play of being, it appears that freedom must be sought. Yet even from this viewpoint only being can free itself and it does this, or this occurs, at the crossroads, the choice point where habit and groundlessness meet.

The facilitation of welcome may aid this choiceless choice but it is not guaranteed for it is not a question of agency but of putting oneself in the way of finding oneself in and as that which is always already there. Karma, luck, gift, epiphany, ripening ... who can say? Becoming a seeker may or may not help. Striving can blind us to seeing what is here.

The healer must avoid the fantasy of magical agency, of being able to heal everyone, for that is the hubris that leads to despair and a sense of failure. All that can be done is very little, for the key point is to resist the urge to do, and instead to trust, again and again, in the face of all introjects, beliefs and aspirations, that presence is the one true midwife of being. This baby both is never born, for it never leaves the womb of space, and is always already born, as the ever-fresh, never ageing flow of becoming. The mystery of being is beyond the problem-solving agency of the ego.

Only if the healer can rest in being can their spaciousness welcome the fledgling awakening and avoid confirming the pull towards asserting control, continuity, narrative-building and so on. This is not a betrayal of the many who may demand more help but an acceptance of the mystery of the disclosure of being—a music that is always playing yet is not so easy to hear.

Healing is not helping. Helping is an activity that aids activity, supporting the individual's ability to get on with their own life, while healing is the revealing of that which just is. Intention, method, self-reassuring skills, knowledge, diagnosis, conventional assumptions and so on, can all limit healing but may aid helping.

Helping gives a sense of agency, purpose, value, competence and confidence, whereas healing does not. It is common for healers to experience that the healing passes through them, that they are 'just' a channel, or that 'the work does the work'. Healing is grounded in availability, welcome, and attending, opening to and as the space of listening within which a response may or may not arise.

The general factors that promote availability to receive the welcome include a desired-for conception, ease in the womb and at birth, space for the newcomer, attention to their needs, acceptance of and collaboration with their personality, education that is suitable in both

structure and content, support in finding one's own way, avoidance of trauma and rigidity and so on. In other words what has been called 'secure attachment', a basic sense that one has a viable place in a world that is okay.

Deeper factors promoting availability include experiences of beauty, trust and love, which support the capacity to be alone and to be contented when alone, enjoyment of the company of others but with no desperate need for it, having little to hide, and a sense that nothing is lost by sharing.

The deepest factor supporting availability is to not experience objectification and to remain as open presence, free of both fixed content and of desire or aversion towards fixed content. Thus unreifiable awareness, the pure presence of being *per se*, is both welcomer and welcomed.

Factors which inhibit, hide or distort availability include self-preoccupation, dogmatic fixity, inability to listen and receive due to distraction and lack of interest and a feeling of lack leading to a sense of being cut off from the emerging field.

Health can be seen as the immediacy of dynamic balance, and healing as the experience of being in contact with the actual without being distracted by our many habits of over-invested activity and anxious pre-occupation with their possible outcomes. By the 'individual system' being 'reconnected' with its actual ground, health can be 'restored', for the illness as something one suffers from arose from the double move of 'forgetfulness' of that ground and the attribution of a new and false ground of reified entities. This forgetfulness establishes a 'system' that is off-balance both in its origin and in its attempts at self-rectification, for grasping at entities as a means of restoring balance, is the very means of ensuring being off-balance.

The making of meaning, as opposed to being present with the givenness of value and satisfaction, is the burden that arises with the forgetfulness of the ground, the as is.

With givenness nothing is to be or can be established and thus we see that the effort of establishing meaning is in fact mere flurries of energy within the flow, the arising and passing of forms, moments, events. Pre-occupation with the endless task of making meaning hides the ground, whereas by resting in the given, meaning as ungraspable pattern is revealed through participative activity.

Being available for healing and being available for helping are not the same. The former requires a radical paradigm shift while the latter does not. Is this true? Can it be that no ripening in the 'patient' is required, that the field of presence revealed through the healer is enough? Whatever their manifest state, the patient is always already within presence.

Givenness is health, wholeness, completeness, for it just is, as it is, and can be no other. And this givenness does not come from anywhere and so is always available. It is this givenness of availability that welcome communicates with, without having to cross a boundary or go over a bridge. This is the non-duality of infinite hospitality. Nothing can impede this always already connectedness yet it may be ignored by focusing on the details of this and that, for example, on the symptoms or on the life narrative.

The unavailable is that which is turned on itself, being self-referential rather than participative, holding back and apart with its own agenda and concerns. This pre-occupation installs an illusory foreclosure on the openness of being. Reification, objectification and judgement generate a miasma in which appearances are taken to be other than they are. Appearances are moments of experience, and, whatever stories are told about them, they cannot transcend their status as experience.

However, concepts arising within and as part of the flow of experience install the illusory sense of stasis within the flow. The seemingly obvious truth they assert, e.g. 'this is a table' disguises the status of the statement as a transitory insubstantial gesture incapable of establishing anything in truth. In aligning with this illusion, there is non-attention to and non-presencing in and as the actual dynamic unfolding. Presence in the field of becoming reveals identity as shifting co-emergent gestures in time rather than as essence or entity.

The fact that appearances have patterns which are commonly taken to indicate that they have a substantial existence does not establish substance as a fact. The pattern is part of a wider context from which it cannot be separated, indeed the entire field is interactive and co-emergent. Every 'thing' appears only in a context, as part of the matrix of happenstance. It is only by the misguided activity of taking an appearance to be a self-existing entity that it appears to be intrinsically separate from its context.

The context *is* space manifesting as place and time. Space and its manifestations are non-dual. Only by ignoring this can something be identified as just itself in itself, as if defined by itself alone. With awareness of the context or ground or field, no definite meaning—one that is enduringly true under all circumstances—can be given to any appearance. Our habit of reification invested in the name is the dynamic force which generates the sense of there being fixed entities, things that can be defined and known in and of themselves.

The name as indicator of substance and on-going identity gives us the sense of knowledge and agency, of telling the world what is there. Once installed as our paradigm, this objectification is endlessly reiterated in our attempt to find stability and security. Thus, rather than working with the freshness of unfolding experience with minimal hampering by expectations and assumptions, we resist allowing what is now to be now.

Integration is a given. The healer works with this fact by not working, while the helper does what they can within the fantasy of duality.

However, there is no need to make another duality, one between healing and helping; from the very beginning stillness and movement are inseparable. Whatever we do or don't do, we are appearances playing within the unborn field of illusion.

James Low. December 2012

Activity

Indicators

1. The source I arise from is pure, open, unartificial, simple.
2. Ignoring this, I imagine that I am self-existing and become intoxicated by the creativity of my own ceaselessly manifesting delusions.
3. These delusions and false beliefs seem to be valid, and to constitute the totality of truth.
4. Yet they generate suffering and facilitate the accumulation of tendencies which operate before we know what is going on.
5. Struggle does not help. It feeds further enmeshment.
6. Seriousness, anxiety, and concern all feed struggle and the felt need to be active in changing what is occurring, or in avoiding what occurs by hiding in the small, or in seeking oblivion.
7. Therefore relax body, voice and mind. Relax and release fixation on patterns. Allow all that is arising to come and go freely.
8. The energy that manifests as mental activity and involvement in appearances will relax where it is if it is not indulged.
9. Remain in open awareness at all times and in all places.
10. Manifestation and source abide in non-duality unreliant on concepts.

James Low. November 2017

Turbulence is transparent

Turbulence is the experience of unpredictable movement whether seemingly within us or outside us. It is impactful, even if denied.

This is the display of the ground.

If this is awakened to, there is transparency, translucency.

If this is not awakened to, our sense of self easily becomes the victim of circumstances.

When everything is taken to be real the freedom to see options and makes choices becomes very precious.

Accepting and rejecting demonstrates that I am not a slave.

We are moved to choose, and then to act, to write, to speak, to partake, to accumulate. By having these movements flow through me, I become the 'doer', the 'maker', the 'shaper'.

Where the movement comes from I do not see but only imagine/ interpret after the event and in reliance on the concepts that my culture offers me.

The felt sense of being myself, the givenness of being me, is my anchor, the ground I stand on, the site of my activity.

And yet what is mine is shared; language, molecules, food, light. Mine is mine only in the saying and believing and so to say I am the starting point is merely self-creating and self-deceiving.

Don't speak about something; don't think about something. The something-ness of our world arises by thinking about it as if there were already something there to think about.

Stay with the fresh clarity that requires no thinking or talking.

Relax this pulse of reactive/proactive movement, relax and release identification with all that comes and goes.

Identity dissolves in the shimmering space of presence; the vanishing of me returns me to my home.

How strange to see that I myself hid me from me.

James Low. November 2017

Embodiment, karma and freedom

In samsara action is not an option - if you are embodied you have to act. With a body, even if circumstances are favourable, you cannot escape the fundamental force of reificatory assumption, desire and aversion. Whether the power seems embedded in the subject or in the object, subject and object are bound together and the autonomy of the subject is an illusion. The eight worldly dharmas or concerns, gain and loss, happiness and suffering, fame and notoriety, praise and blame preoccupy us and have us chasing the ephemeral and making self-centred choices from amongst the limited options our karma offers us. The subject cannot control events and is free merely to move between confluence with object, contact with object, and isolation from object.

Meditation offers a chance to see that the three wheels that drive samsara, the subject, the object and the connection between them, can turn in space free of the linking of cause and effect. If we have little sense of the space we move in, and cannot at all see that it is our source, ground, field, essence then when we act we impact and shape the interpreted environment we inhabit. Our selective attention gives us access to only a little of the potential we are part of. The environment also acts on us, shaping our feelings, moods, memories and all the other self-aspects which inform our being in the world with others. Shaping and being shaped is the basic dialogic pulse, the mutual interaction and development of subject and object.

Karma highlights the truth that what do you do matters, matters a lot, and is actually a vital part of the world that you share with others. No matter which of the six realms of samsara you are in, your way of participating strongly influences not only what is occurring for you now, but what will happen for you in the future. We are not mere observers or bystanders but are implicated in all aspects of the experiential field which manifest for us.

With dualistic vision it can appear that there is always already a world out there, existing quite independently of us. However no school or strand of buddhism gives credence to this view.

The theravada focus on renunciation and mindful self-control highlights the ease with which subject can get lost in the world of objects.

The mahayana focus on wisdom and compassion highlights that all phenomena, whether seemingly subject or object, are empty of inherent self-nature since they arise dependently. Moreover we are already connected to all sentient beings through countless interactions in previous lives. Specifically, all beings have already been our mother and have taken care of us and so we owe each and every sentient being a debt of gratitude.

In the vajrayana we see that all experience occurs within the mandala of the enlightened deity. Abiding in this pure vision there are no self-existing entities for our habitual tendencies to attach themselves to and so they dissolve.

In mahamudra and dzogchen the non-duality of awareness and experience is ground, path and result, so that we awaken to the primordial integrity free of all splitting, polarisation and reification.

Buddhism emphasises that there are truly no victims and no persecutors. These are merely transient roles in the ongoing drama of the patterning of experience. Blaming self and/or other is a waste of time. Where am I? Who am I? What am I? How am I? We need to inspect our capacity and our circumstances again and again so that we come to see that each action is in fact simple and self-liberating, arising and passing like a cloud or a rainbow. Both blaming and excusing merely intensify the delusion of the separation of subject and object, self and other.

At each moment the doors of samsara and nirvana are open. This is freedom. But are we free to be free, to free ourselves from our habits of identifying with finite entities and so find ourselves free to go through the door of freedom?

James Low. November 2017

A. Finding stillness in movement

In times of crisis our attention is drawn towards the ever-changing course of events. We find ourselves ceaselessly involved in what is going on outside of us, and our activity comes to define who we are. This can be very exhausting, so exhausting that even when we have time off we cannot relax.

We can rectify this imbalance by becoming more aware of the stillness which is the basis of movement.

Sit in a comfortable position with your spine straight and your skeleton supporting your weight so that your muscles can relax. You can have your eyes open or closed as you prefer. The duration suggested for each stage is the minimum. If you have more time than each part can be practised according to your need.

Pay attention to how you are breathing. When water is poured into a jug, the jug fills from the bottom up. With this image in mind, relax your diaphragm and as you breathe in imagine the air is going to the bottom of your lungs and gradually filling them up. Then slightly contract the diaphragm and breathe out from the bottom of your lungs. Keep your chest relaxed and avoid effortful breathing.

With relaxed easy deep breathing...

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

Let this become the sole focus of your attention, only the breath, only the breath.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

The air of the world is flowing into you, replenishing you - simply receive the air and let it leave.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

Simply aware of this movement of accepting and releasing, there is nothing to think about, nothing to do. Simply be aware of the filling and emptying of your lungs.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

Your awareness illuminates what is occurring; like a mirror it clearly reveals what is occurring without getting involved. Remain relaxed and spacious as the ceaseless flow of the breath carries on without any effort.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

Breath comes and goes
Thoughts come and go
Sensations come and go

Feelings come and go
Memories come and go
Worrying thoughts come and go
Anxious tensing comes and goes

Life is pulsation revealed in the mirror of our awareness. Awareness is the basis of all our experience: it never changes. Experiences such as plans, accidents, thoughts and memories are fleeting, here and then gone.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

Open like the sky, awareness lets everything arise and pass. All that occurs is clearly revealed as it is. Nothing that occurs leaves a mark on awareness. It is movement which patterns movement so ease yourself out of unnecessary involvement in the flow of experience.

Sit in open awareness without merging in experience, and without rejecting or altering anything.

Sit quietly for one minute.

Movement and stillness are not in opposition. The stillness of open awareness is the field within which movement occurs.

Sit quietly for one minute.

As you move back into your busy life, into the intoxicating domain of ceaseless activity, whenever you can release yourself into the still space of awareness which is always present.

B. Moving in stillness

You are trained to be competent. Yet in order to respond to whatever requires your attention you need to be both relaxed and alert, neither too tight nor too loose.

When there are ongoing, unrelenting crises and you are carrying so many people's hopes and expectations it can be difficult to let go and relax. If your time off is not truly replenishing then you are likely to go back to work with a spiraling accumulation of tension, worry and exhaustion.

Therefore it helps to employ an easy way to unite relaxed presence with your professional focussed attention to detail.

Firstly we focus on the breath as it comes in and goes out. We welcome and then release the air. The vitalising resource of the world comes into us and is then released carrying away what we do not need.

Breathe in - absorb and replenish.

Breathe out - release the depleted air.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

As you breathe in imagine that all the fresh energy of the spring buds on the trees, the blossom, and the flowers in the forest is dissolving into the air that is entering your lungs and permeating every part of your body.

As you breathe out imagine that all the tiredness in your body, all the tension in your muscles, all the worry and mental busyness of managing your clinical responsibilities, and all the anxiety you hold for your family, friends, co-workers and for yourself is dissolving into the breath and flowing out of you to be dispersed in the wind and dissolve in space.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

As we do this we spring-clean the contents of our body, voice and mind refreshed by the ever-fresh. All that we experience, including the content of our mind, is constantly changing and yet we often feel we have to be in control, that we have to stabilise systems that are actually in flux. Between over-rigid control and hopeless giving up there is the middle way of staying present with the flow without either avoidantly climbing onto the bank of the river or being carried away by it.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

As the breath flows so does sensation, emotion, thought, memory - flowing on and on- new patterns are ceaselessly emerging so there is no need to hang on to what has already occurred.

You are here, you are present.

You are this open awareness within which all experience comes and goes, arising and passing.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

Do not interrupt the flow. There is nothing for you to do so simply remain open, relaxed and present as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures reveal themselves and pass.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

This open presence is the ground of your being, always here, always available. It is often ignored and forgotten in the demands that new experiences seem to make.

The basis of our experience is our aliveness, our being-here-ness, our presence - it alone remains as everything else passes. Relax and look and see for yourself that the openness of awareness and the flow of experience are present together: they are not in opposition. The more we relax the more we see that this is true.

Breathe in for 5 seconds ... Breathe out for 5 seconds... x 3

We are here with this moment, here with this moment of flow.

Now we focus into the flow and feel the vitality of thoughts, plans, actions as we prepare to return to work. Work is our co-emergence with our setting, our flowing in the wide river of the care home, the clinic, the hospital, wherever and however we work. Events arise and pass and we are present with them. Awareness is always open and relaxed even as it reveals the interdependent emergence of our patterning of body, voice and mind as it collaborates with the manifold patterns of our world.

Maintaining stillness, we allow movement to flow. The result is the effortless integrity of view, meditation and activity.