



Awareness.

ENTER >>



Self-Regulation using Relaxation and Meditation

The Ocean.



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To develop a deep state of relaxation it is helpful to consider the example of the ocean. If you think of yourself like a great body of water, like the ocean or a great lake you can see there are 3 levels.

The Surface ~ This can be calm or choppy depending upon weather conditions. This can be linked to *Thinking* and *Sensing*.

The Undercurrents or Middle Waters ~ This is the main body of water. Between the surface and the depths we have various currents. We can relate this to *Feelings* that lie within us beneath the surface.

The Depths ~ At the bottom of a great body of water like the ocean it is said the waters are very still. In the human *being* we are very still at the depths of our being. That is why we call deep states of stillness and relaxation *Being*.

Think,
Feel, Be.



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Think – Harvard studies have found we generate approximately 50, 000 thoughts a day. We live in a world of stimulation and are caught in our senses. In the same study it was also concluded that in one day of an average person's life, that person will process more information than a person who lived 200 years ago did in their entire life. Think relates to thought process and sensory stimulation.

Feel – To exit the constant state of thinking it is important to come back to the body and your touch sense of awareness. Starting to feel the presence of your body and your breath will help draw your attention away from external stimulation and constant thought in the mind.

Be – To experience the peace and stillness that resides deep within the human core. This state of stillness is called being. As we withdraw from thinking and sensing we naturally find the turbulence of distracting thoughts subside and as we feel deeper and deeper into our centre, we find that naturally deep peace and contentment arises from within.

The Film.



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When we watch a film at the cinema our mind is stimulated and we are captivated by the senses. If the movie is funny we laugh. If it is action, we are on the edge of our seats. Life is much the same. As long as we are caught in our thinking and senses, we are totally controlled by the external environment we find ourselves in at any given time.

The Tibetans have a saying,

“An untrained mind is like a feather in the wind. If the wind blows from the north the feather has no choice but to bend south. If it blows from the east then the feather bends west. The untrained mind is much the same.”

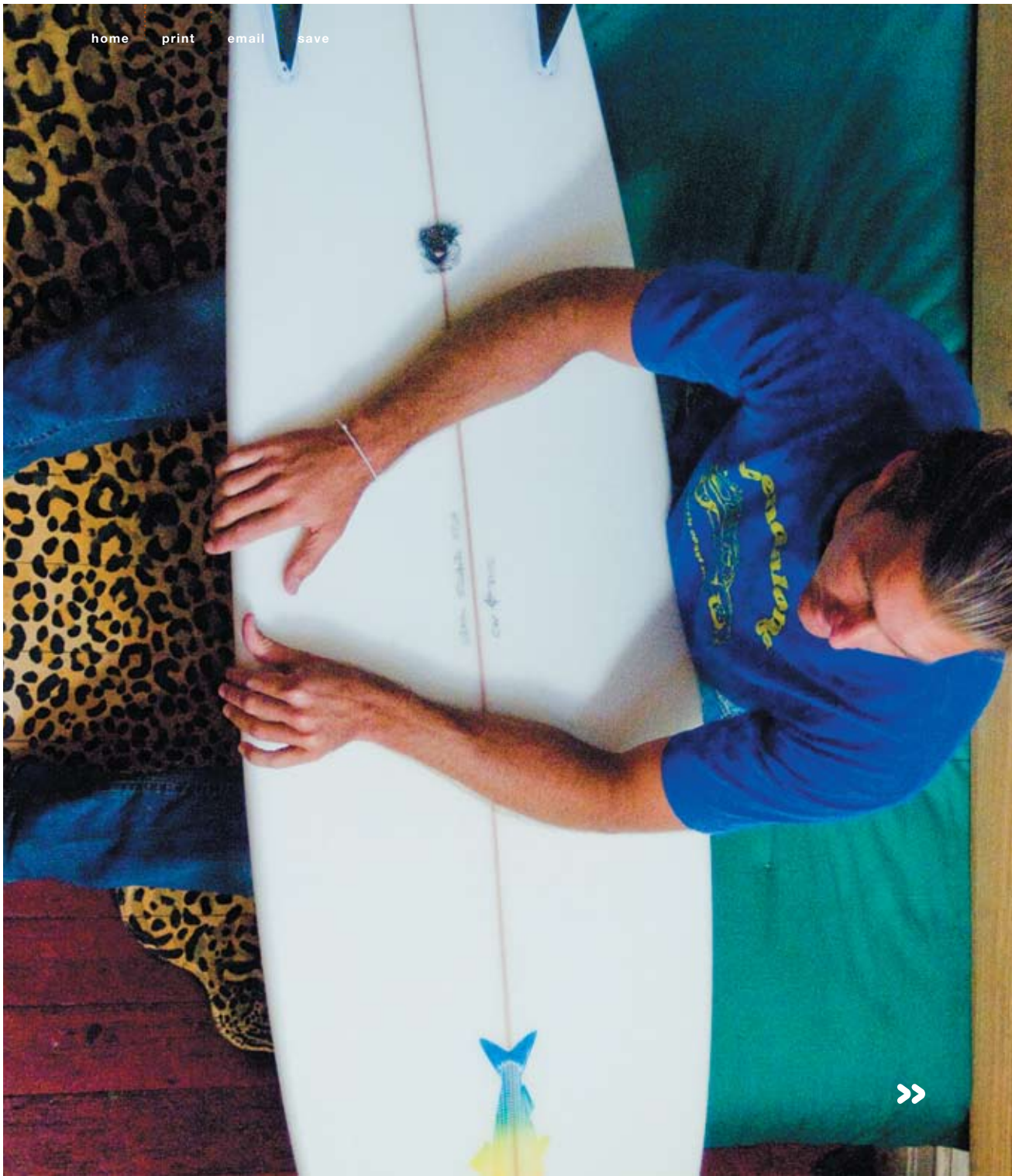
When a film gets too intense for the viewer a natural reflex is to shut the eyes and cover the ears. This is an instinctive response helping us to disconnect from this form of stimulation.

In the process of Relaxation and Meditation we do the same. We withdraw our awareness from the field of our sensory perception so we may feel our way in to the peace and stillness at our core.

Flow:

Accept, Allow
Surrender & Let Go





In order to be released from the senses and from constant thought it is helpful to use this simple model.

“Instead of resisting various distractions, just Accept. When you Accept, then you will find the senses offer little distraction. If you then chose to allow the thought, sound or other sensation to continue on its way you will become more comfortable. When you feel the tendency once again to resist, Surrender, breath out, just Let Go.

If you apply this formula you will find it very easy to withdraw from the external world of worry and distraction to a state of centeredness and calmness.”

Breathing.

“The breath is the
key to Letting Go”





Use the outward breath throughout the Relaxation process. Our automatic nervous system is closely linked to our breath. When we get stressed and the Fight or Flight Response is triggered we find our breathing becomes shorter and faster.

When we are Relaxed we find our breath is comfortable, long and slow. This is because the Relaxation Response has been triggered. The best way to do this consciously when in a stress state is to become aware of the breath and gently start to slow it down by emphasizing the outward breath thus releasing any tension held in the lungs and diaphragm.

This can be practiced during the relaxation and meditation session and also used in daily life.

“From time to time it is helpful to stop, become aware of the breath and slow it down.”

When your waiting for a bus or a train, when your stopped at a red light or when you sit down at your work place, Relax the abdomen and practice breathing out slowly, check where you are in your self, come back to the feeling awareness in your body. This will help to reduce your stress levels throughout the day.

The NOW.

**“The Moment is a
Gift, that is why it is
called the Present”**





Most of the time we live in a state of relative dullness. We tend to react to situations without mindfulness, without being truly aware. This is because we are often not living in the present moment. Come into the Now.

“To come into the Now we need to first be aware that we are in the Now.”

We start to observe ourselves thinking about the past or anticipating future events based on past experiences. As we become a mindful observer witnessing all our thoughts we start to direct our attention towards what is happening Now.

Start by becoming aware of sounds, smells and visual forms. From here we start to move inwards to feeling and then, as we gently let go of external distractions, we may once again find our center. This is what it means to be centered in the moment or the Now. When we are in the Now our creativity levels are greatly improved and we are much more responsive to people and events. This is helpful in all aspects of living. This is called living fully in the Now.

How it all works: Relaxation, Meditation & Integration





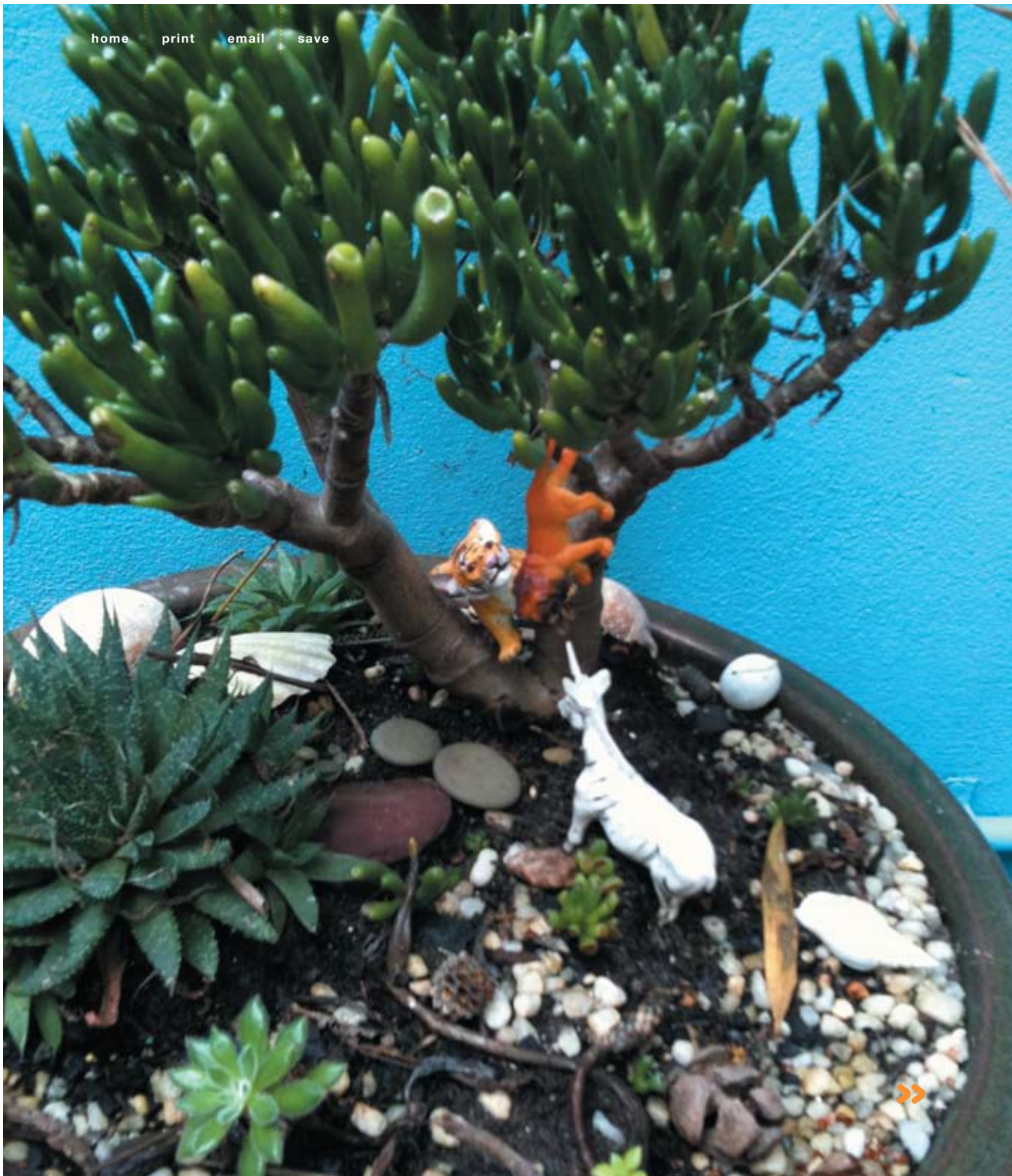
The purpose of relaxation is to calm the body and settle the nervous system. This is done through breathing out and softening into how the body feels in the Now. This helps the mind to slow down allowing the body to rest in comfort and stillness.

It is only after deep relaxation has been achieved that meditation may begin. Meditation in essence is training the mind to be still. This is achieved by focusing the mind single pointedly on a chosen object for an extended period of time.

“Often we are trapped in a state of constant stimulation & reaction.”

It is important to put aside a period of time in order to allow the body and the mind to become still. The benefits of practicing deep relaxation and meditation on a regular basis are truly amazing. You can read *The Relaxation Response*, by Herbert Benson or *Full Catastrophe Living*, by Jon Kabat-Zin for more information.

Stress takes its toll on a person's physiology and psychology resulting in poor health and poor concentration due to hypertension through a busy cluttered mind. Deep Relaxation combined with Meditation is one of the best known solutions to stress and can be achieved within just 15 minutes a day.



By understanding that relaxation holds the key to a balanced physiology and meditation aids in restoring mental clarity then it is easy to get motivated to practice these techniques daily.

When a deep state of relaxation is achieved and the mind becomes still through focusing in meditation, a deep peace and centeredness will naturally arise from within. The ability to intergrate these skills helps us remain calm and centered in daily life, this is essential for a happy and healthy life. We may not be able to permanently eliminate stress from our lives but we can adapt a successful method for working with it. In this way meditation is like a mobile phone:

“Once you get used to using one you wonder how you ever managed without it.”

Remember don't try – effortless effort. The more you push or try the more you are likely to stimulate your sympathetic nervous system and this will start to activate your thoughts and senses. It is important to remain in a calm relaxed state and always be content with whatever arises. There is no such thing as a bad meditation, there just is. So just *be...*



Suggested reading:

- *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle
- *A Path With Heart*, by Jack Kornfield
- *Sidhartha*, by Herman Hesse
- *What Makes You Not a Buddhist*, by Khyentse Rinpoche

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There is
nothing to
do just be.



In the world today it seems that the natural state of mind for a human being is one of business, thought and constant stimulation. It has been estimated that the average human mind generates around 50,000 thoughts a day. Thousands of points of contact constantly feed our thoughts, prompting us to respond or act in some way until eventually we are always in a state of reaction. Our minds and nervous systems are so overloaded by the constant sensory stimulation that the human consciousness has started to become dull just trying to cope.

It seems that as humans evolve, we are quickly making the transition from human *beings* to human *doings*. As you look around the world, and even your own mind, you see the constant movement and action that has risen out of unrestrained activity. This habitual conceptualisation and constant stimulation has created very short attention spans and an inability for simplicity and stillness. To restore the mind to a state of balance, peace and harmony we need to again reconnect to the core of who we are and the practice of self-regulation and centering.

Crazy Elephants

The untrained mind is often plagued by thoughts and impulses that are initially difficult to restrain or control. The Tibetans call the untrained mind "A Crazy Elephant Mind" because they know an untrained mind does what it likes. Like an elephant

that is rampaging, no one can control it or stop it from destroying a hut, a village or what ever is in its path. When the Tibetans speak of a trained mind they say it is like "A Well Trained Palomino Horse." When a horse is well trained it is effortless to ride. It is safe and reliable, obedient and calm. A well-trained mind is the same, and just as a well-trained horse requires many hours of training to become like this, the mind is the same. That is why the practice of concentration is the firm foundation that all further practices are built upon until the final state of Samadhi is attained.

To begin the practice of Centering it is helpful to understand and openly experience the business of the mind, to see through the surface, to feel into the depths and to rest at the core. In the Buddha's teachings it is said that the outer world is merely a reflection of the inner world, and that if you change your mind you will change your world. What you experience depends upon the state of your mind. An example of this teaching is the full moon reflected on the smooth clear surface of a lake at night. If the water is stirred then the reflection is also stirred. When the mind becomes still, undistracted by thought and no longer stirred by the senses we find a natural state of peace begins to arise from within. This inner peace or stillness arises once one has become centered.

To experience the still nature of the mind one must stop, quietly look within and focus upon a chosen object. The world will still continue to turn, sounds



“To restore the mind to a state of balance, peace and harmony we need to again reconnect to the core of who we are ... ”

will still be heard, sensations and thoughts will still continue to flow, but all you need to do is accept what is and let go of your reactions. The more you accept your surroundings and let go of your reactions the sooner you will enter a state of flow. When in this state of flow you can begin to look within yourself with clarity.

The Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikku, the renowned Thai sage said, "If there was to be a useful inscription to put on a medallion around your neck, it would be: *This is the way it is.*" It is a way of bringing acceptance into your mind, a noting rather than reaction, accepting instead of resisting. This accepting attitude is the key to moving into a state of stillness and peace. The more we surrender, the more we begin to end the cycle of action and reaction, allowing stillness and peace to arise.

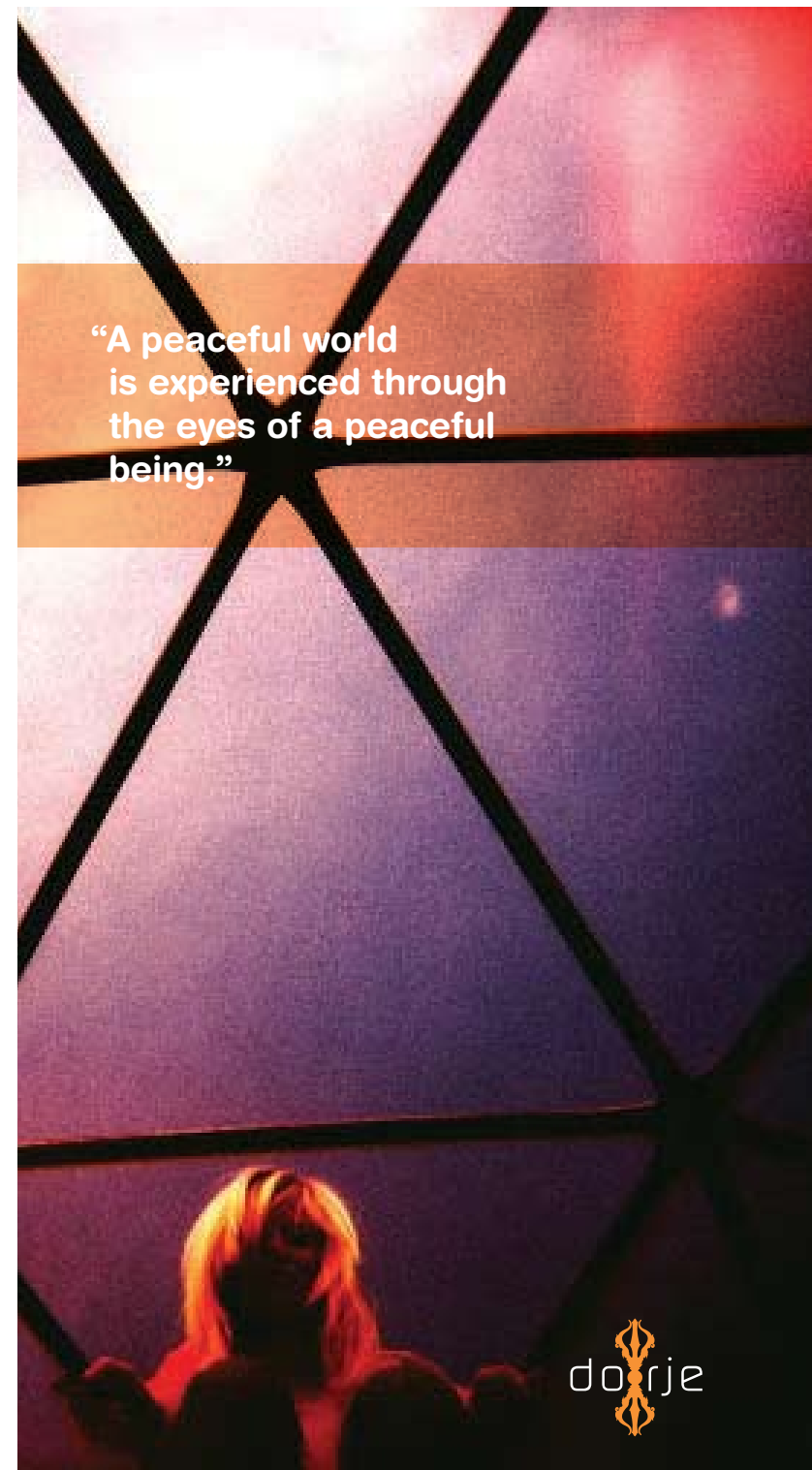
A peaceful world is experienced through the eyes of a peaceful being. At the depths of all beings there is stillness and peace. At the depths of the great oceans there is calm even when the surface is stirred by storm and the mind is the same. The depths of the mind are always calm and still, all you need to do is deepen your experience to the depths of the mind, let go of the surface and go within. As the Great Yogi Paramahansa Yogananda said in *Autobiography of a yogi*, "Go within or go without ... the choice is yours."

The untrained mind is unstable and dependent on

external conditions. It is said the untrained mind is like a balloon in the wind. If the wind blows from the north then the balloon has no choice but to go to the south. If it blows from the west then it must go to the east. To stabilise the mind in stillness and peace requires a certain depth of awareness. This depth is achieved through feeling into your core without reaction. Just as the middle waters of the ocean may have currents and some turbulence, as we go within ourselves we may find feelings and emotions that rise strongly. As the saying goes all you need to do with feelings is feel them. There is a great tendency to go back into the head when we experience strong or stirring feelings within ourselves. As we learn to feel without reaction we find that our awareness slowly begins to draw deeper within. The more that we resist or react to what we are feeling the more outward the awareness goes. So through accepting what you feel and by surrendering, you will find that slowly you start to experience more stillness and peace of mind.

Moving In

Imagine you had a house but you never went into it, what a waste that would be. We are all homeowners, whether you know it or not. Going into deep meditation is like going into your house. Great Yogis have been known to refer to going into deep equipoise as going home. If you imagine your body like a house and your awareness is the dweller.



The outside of the house is always subject to the weather, if it is hot and sunny then you are hot, if it is raining then you get wet. To dwell outside the house like this makes one venerable to whatever is happening outside. If the world is busy you get stimulated, if it is quite then there is calm. What if you were to withdraw into the house? What would that be like?

To withdraw the awareness from the outer field of sensory perception and to draw the awareness into the body away from external events it is important to accept everything that you sense in each moment. Accept all the sounds, accept the temperature, and accept the sensations in the body and thoughts within the mind. Just sit with what is and how that feels. Notice the mind's natural tendency to react, to want to move or struggle with what is, how this fuels thought. Keep coming back to simply what is and accept. Until external distractions are pacified by such a practice as accepting, it is going to be impossible to focus inwardly in a single pointed way.

However, once you become well practiced in accepting and non-reaction the external world will no longer distract or disturb you and you can then just be a witness. It is at this point you will find the body and mind start to become truly comfortable, open and relaxed. It is also that at this point moving in becomes natural and effortless.

Feeling then becomes your guide that takes you

deeper; it is the middle water that connects the thinking and sensing mind to the deeply centered inner state of stillness and peace. Feel the body by holding your awareness just on the body and nowhere else, start to narrow your field of perception. Imagine your drawing the field of your awareness to the surface of the body. There is nothing beyond the surface of the skin in which you are interested. Let all sounds be unattended as you start to observe only the body and its sensations. Do not get drawn into thinking about what you're feeling, just feel. The conceptual mind loves to give a commentary on what is or is not happening at any given moment, especially when there is a lack of outer stimulation. Just observe the relationship between the mind and what you are feeling. Whenever you feel a painful sensation note how the mind reacts out of habit, open up to what you are feeling and accept.

Acceptance is the key to letting go. All that is arising within you has always been there; it is just that you were not aware of it before. Just keep feeling deeper and deeper into the body. It may be helpful to use your breathing. As the Tibetans Lama's say subtle winds ride upon gross winds. This means that your breathing can affect your mind. The outward breath is a very calming and soothing vehicle that can be used to steady the mind when experiencing discomfort or an endless barrage of thought. Let the outward breath be the vehicle for removing the tension held within.



“Keep coming back to simply what is and accept.”

Bound Flow

Bound flow is tightness and holding that is the result of holding in emotion and not processing the feelings as they surface. Use the breath to remove the backlog of bound flow that has clogged the inner energy body. Apparently when some of the first Tibetan Lamas came to the west one of their observations was that western people needed to breath out more. Think back to the last time you experienced something that was challenging or painful. Did you hold your breath? To use the out breath to release bound flow, imagine yourself as a balloon full of hot air. Breathing out with the clear intention to let go. Accept whatever feelings surface and then just let them go.

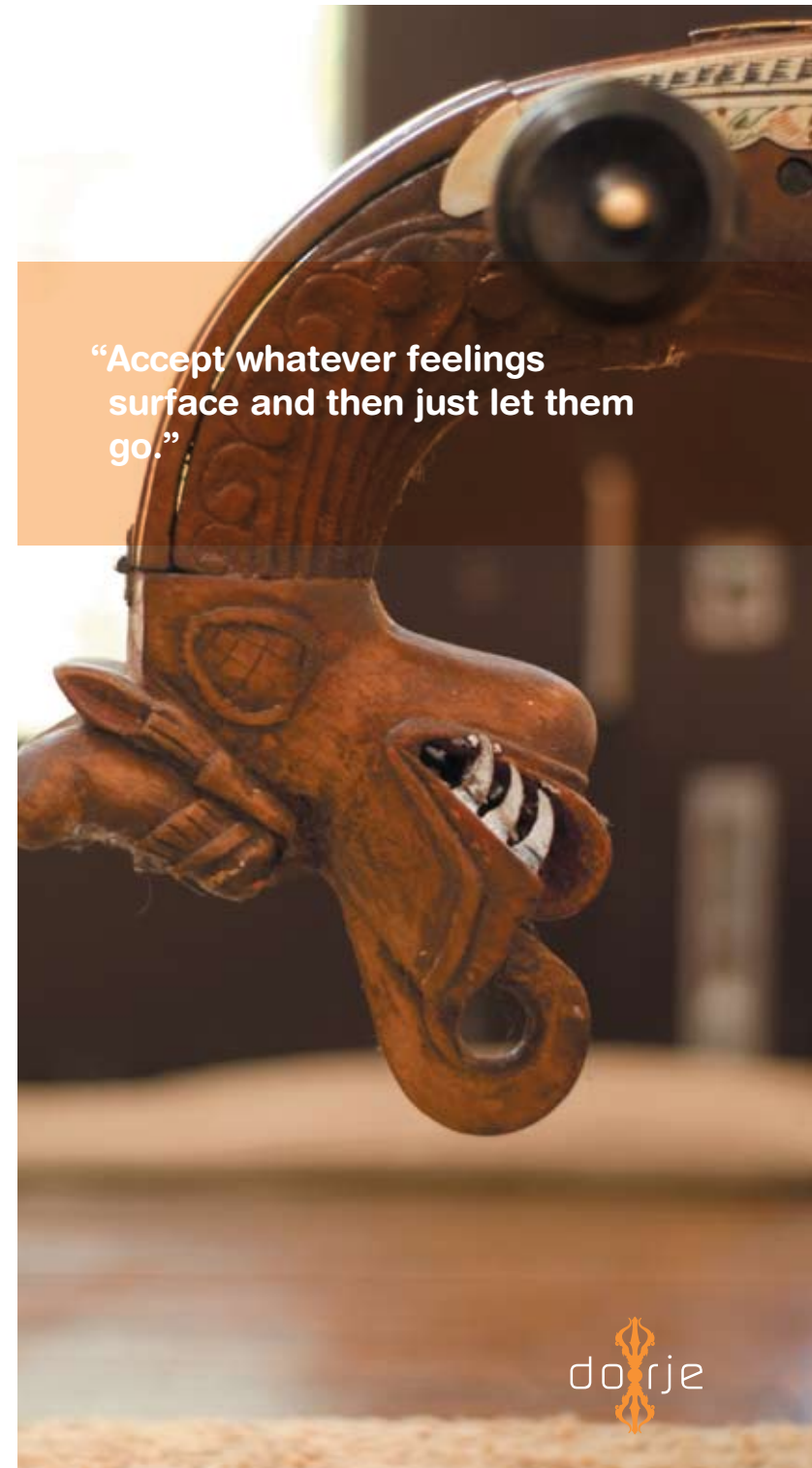
Breathe in to where you feel stuck or tight and accept how this feels. As you surrender to feeling you will open up the space, allowing it to move. As you breath out just let that feeling of tightness and discomfort flow through your body releasing it with the outward breath. There is no need to push. The more you relax the more you will find that all tension flows out of the body and you become very comfortable and content. When the body is feeling very comfortable and content it is time to move deeper within. Going within is a little bit like going from outside your house on a sunny day, into your basement. When you first walk into your basement all you can see is the vague outline of things, but if you sit there for a while and let your eyes adjust you will find everything becomes

clear again. As the meditation joke goes: “Don’t just do something sit there!”

As your practice of meditation deepens you may notice dullness creeping in. It is vital that at this point mindfulness is held and your mind remains focused. The inward breath is sometimes helpful at this stage. Use long slow inward breaths. Imagine drawing the energy from the breath deep into the abdomen. As you remain aware of the breath this gives you an object to remain focused on. The two extremes of mental sinking and mental wandering are what you need to work with until a state of mental balance has been reached. At this point it is like the meditator is balancing on a seesaw. To one side you have dullness and the other thinking and sensing again. To stand with one foot on each side and come to a state of perfect balance is the aim of this practice.

It is helpful to use the breath to aid this by using this simple rule of thumb. If the mind is getting excited and starts to move outwardly use the ‘out’ breath, accepting and letting go to bring it back in again. If the mind becomes dull and sleepy, start to use the ‘in’ breath and focus the mind more intensely, looking deeper for more subtle sensations within the breath to focus on.

If you remain mindful of the breath in this way, noting when the mind wanders or slips into dullness, you will start to develop a special type of subtle concentration. When this concentration is trained



“Accept whatever feelings surface and then just let them go.”

and tempered through many hours of practice in meditation, eventually a strong, balanced state of mental abiding will develop. It is at this point, in a state of meditative equipoise that your practice of concentration has truly been mastered. Equipoise is the balanced state of peaceful abiding in meditation. As the mind starts to find balance and stability naturally abiding within, it is time to take the one seat of stillness, to merge with your object and remain in stillness and peace for extended periods of time. It is at this stage your practice of meditation becomes effortless and fruitful. This is the fruit of your labor, the blissfully fulfilling state of oneness and peace. The mind is well trained and highly alert and yet so relaxed and absorbed in an incredible state of stillness and bliss.

A good example of this state is the candle flame. When the naked flame of the candle is exposed to a draft it flickers. The size of the flame is reduced due to the perpetual movement of the flame in the wind. When you remove the draft by putting the candle in a lantern, the flame begins to stabilise and the movement stops. As the flame is protected within the lantern, no longer disturbed by distracting winds, it begins to grow in size. Slowly it gets longer, emitting more and more light. The flame finally comes to a point where it is perfectly tall and still. When the flame remains like this for an extended period of time an extra glow around the flame begins to appear like a second aura. This aura is the brilliance of stillness. The mind is the same. When the mind remains still

for quite some time it becomes illuminated and very aware. When the stillness is held in a state of equipoise, not moving for an extended period of time, that same extra glow like the candle flame arises within. Yogis deeply trained in meditation can hold this state of equipoise for as long as they choose. Hours, days, even weeks may pass and the yogi is still mindful and aware, comfortable, relaxed and still. It is through continued practice at this level that further states are experienced until finally, after years of diligent and steady practice, Samadhi may be attained.

It is well documented in various yogic traditions the innumerable benefits from remaining in a deep state of meditation like this. All that is required is steady, constant effort. Like the saying goes the dripping tap fills the glass. When someone is well practiced in Centering they experience balance and peace of mind not just in meditation but also in daily life. The mind at its depth is always still and peaceful. If we remain mindfully connected to this stillness and peace in our daily lives we will find things do not affect us so much anymore. The beautiful thing about such a practice is that being still is effortless, whereas doing requires energy and action. Once the mind is trained it is then more inclined just to be.

“There is nothing to do just be.”

