



Welcome, everyone.

My name is Loch Kelly, and this is a four-week retreat for Tricycle Magazine. I'm so glad you're able to join us here, and I'm looking forward to sharing some wonderful practices that you may not have been able to experience before.

So let me begin by just giving you a little context, a sense of the view of where I'm coming from and how we're going to proceed in this retreat. I'm really taking this retreat as an opportunity to have you practice while you are listening to me. So even though it's a short amount of time, I'm going to share practices that fit the format of this video. So in order to do that, rather than leading long sittings or having you stop and close your eyes, I'm going to share some practices from the *Sutra Mahamudra* tradition.

The Sutra Mahamudra is a tradition that actually connects many of the traditions from Buddhism. It starts with a sutra, which is from the Theravada tradition, and then it moves to being a Mahayana tradition, similar to Zen or other Mahayana traditions. And then the Sutra Mahamudra was also picked up by Tibetan Buddhism. When it was an Indian tradition, Sutra Mahamudra was renowned for having lay people awaken in the midst of their daily life. And this is what drew me to this.

My feeling is that people can awaken and that meditation is often the first step to what Buddhism is truly about, which is the possibility of awakening from a separate sense of self that causes suffering in our daily lives. So no matter how much we have grown in terms of our functioning in the world—I don't know if you've noticed—but there's a sense that there's still a perpetual dissatisfaction. Some kind of gnawing, some kind of continual sense that there's another problem to be solved. This is the kind of suffering at the root of this separate sense of self that we're going to address in a number of ways.



So let's begin just by taking a deep breath. As you breathe in, just allow yourself to settle in. Instead of looking this way at the screen and at me, begin to turn your awareness back. Begin to allow yourself to rest as your own awareness here and now. As you take a breath, be aware of the sensations within your body, but then also notice the awareness that's here as well. No matter how your body feels, whether it's comfortable or uncomfortable, in pain or in a sense of ease, if there are a lot of emotions going on or you're tired, notice even now that you can allow your body to be just as it is. Without changing it at all.

As you do, also notice that there's an awareness here as well. The awareness is not tired. The awareness is not in pain. The awareness is with your body, within your body, as your body, all around your body. Feel that awareness within. Accept just how you are. Things just as they are, here and now.

And the same with your mind. Notice monkey mind, chattering mind, thoughts, feelings, sensations, moving through your head. Instead of trying to change them, instead of calming your mind, instead of trying to have positive thoughts, see what it's like just to accept your mind just as it is. Distracted, uncomfortable, calm, at ease, worried, frightened, or whatever way it is. Just letting everything be as it is.

As you accept things as they are, notice there's also an awareness that's here to which these thoughts, sensations, feelings and fears appear. Let yourself rest back and abide as that awareness, which is pain-free, thought-free, worry-free, fearless and accepting naturally, without even trying to accept.

Feel this sense of inclusion that the awareness is not just outside and observing from above, but is inherent within your body and mind. Feel this sense of unity, of awareness, and the appearance of thoughts. Allowing your body and your mind to be as they are.



Take a deep breath. Allow a smile to come to your face, and just be with what is. No big deal.

This Sutra Mahamudra approach begins with a kind of deliberate mindfulness: an awareness of our breath, an awareness of our thoughts. But then what we're going to do is continue to discover an effortless mindfulness and a heart-mindfulness.

Let me begin by giving you a sense of how we might calm or find the calm, rather than trying to calm our mind. There's a book by B. Allan Wallace called *The Attention Revolution*, where he gives the ten stages of meditation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. But he says in the introduction, “At the eighth stage we discover awareness of awareness. And many people can begin here and continue onward.” And this is the kind of approach we hope to offer here today: to allow you to see whether we can begin with a kind of effortless mindfulness, which is a way of discovering an awareness that's already calm.

Let me begin with a quote by Mingyur Rinpoche, who is the teacher who asked me to teach *Sutra Mahamudra*. He says, “We access the mind of calm abiding through recognition. What do we recognize? Awareness. The ever-present knowing quality of mind from which we're never separate, even for an instant. Even though normally we do not recognize awareness, we can no more live without it than we can live without breathing. Discovering our own awareness allows us to access the natural steadiness and clarity of mind.”

Here we're going to begin with a few glimpse practices to discover the awareness that's already calm. Rather than beginning with deliberate mindfulness, where we use awareness to calm our mind, our chattering monkey mind, let's see what it's like if we can discover an awareness that's already here. Mingyur Rinpoche also said, “The



essence of meditation is awareness.” Awareness is our subject. What awareness are we talking about?

Let’s look at five types of awareness. We know a few of them, but the other is what we will be exploring together during these four weeks, and experiencing directly.

The first type of awareness we all know is called attention. From this awareness of attention, we’re looking up to thought, we’re looking from thought, we’re aware of what we’re looking at right now. You’re aware of the screen. You’re aware of hearing my voice. You’re aware of what you’re thinking. So attention is a normal way of functioning in the world, that type of awareness. In fact, the first type of meditation we often do, one-pointed meditation, uses attention. We bring our attention to our breath, we bring our attention to a candle. We bring our attention to a chant; we bring our attention to one point. By doing so, interestingly, we are stealing the moving monkey mind by using a tool of this mind attention.

The second type of awareness is meditative awareness or mindful awareness. This type of awareness is a way of separating our awareness from identifying with our thinking thus creating a meditator who is observing thoughts, feelings, and sensations that are moving. This type of awareness, this mindful awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations, is often called the four foundations of mindfulness. It is a way to see who we are not. When we’re identified with thinking, we take ourselves to be thinking. “I think, therefore I am.” But you are not your thoughts only. Your thoughts come and go. As your thoughts come and go, this mindful awareness has separated out until it’s able to observe in a detached manner nonjudgmentally arising and passing of thoughts. To see that the thought, “I am my thoughts,” is just a thought. So this is an important stage of deliberate mindfulness.



The third type of awareness we're going to explore now gets us into effortless mindfulness. The third kind of awareness that we're going to experience directly is spacious awareness or pure awareness. This awareness is not located in a meditative point-of-view, but actually is infinite, contentless, boundless, timeless, and aware like a big sky mind, or initially like a choiceless awareness. Like an awareness without an object, aware of itself because it is awareness itself. This spacious, boundless, infinite awareness is a way that can be discovered through turning awareness around and looking through the meditator, opening up this field that's both all around and within us, or simply by unhooking and dropping to the subtlest level of awareness that's free of thought, sensation, or opening to the boundless quality of awareness, and then looking back from this awareness to notice the contents of mind and the experiences coming to us from the world. From this spacious awareness, we'll notice that we're able to focus effortlessly without distraction. We will do a couple of practices to experience this.

The fourth type of awareness is when the spacious awareness realizes that it is none other than form. Form is emptiness; emptiness is none other than form. When this awareness, which is transcendent, realizes it's imminent, when this subtlest, formless, empty awareness realizes that appearance is its ornament, is none other than the dance of emptiness, then there is an inclusion of the ultimate reality, unconditioned and conditioned, inherent within. This feeling of embodied awareness could be the fourth, or a kind of presence, or a just this. In Zen, they call it ordinary mind. In Tibetan Buddhism, we move from recognition to realization that this is who we are, to abiding. The abiding is the inclusion, the co-emergent wisdom, of having us realize that nothing is excluded, that everything's included.

The fifth type of awareness that we'll explore is openhearted awareness. Openhearted awareness is sometimes called *bodhicitta*, or awake consciousness. Interestingly, the word “bodhi” means “awake” and “citta” means “consciousness,” but the translation is



“compassionate expression.” That’s interesting, yeah? This is a movement from thought-based knowing to awareness-based knowing to heart-mind. This dropping, unhooking, or opening, and reconnecting from nonconceptual awareness is what frees us from the addition to thinking, from the sense of a separate sense of self. So we’re both free in waking up from our separate sense of self and then waking into our body and awakening out from this openhearted awareness into creativity and relationship, and this is where compassionate expression comes from. This is the true freedom of living this fortunate human life.

Let’s explore a little bit about what’s in the way, what’s keeping us in this suffering, and experience, in the Sutra Mahamudra way, some glimpses and tastes of freedom that are here. The view of this approach is almost like a scientific approach. What I’ll do is I give you the hypothesis or the premise, then a set of experiments, and then you report the results. You taste and see. You see what’s true, rather than starting with belief. This is kind of a democratic approach, so that we can all awaken in the midst of our daily life.

Having taught deliberate mindfulness at New York Insight Meditation and many other places for 25 years, working with many beginners, and then for the last ten years, teaching this direct approach with gradual unfolding, I’ve found that beginners find it just as easy to start with this approach because it’s new. There’s new ways of adjusting or discovering or uncovering or letting go or learning a new way of observing.

Let’s try this approach of direct recognition and gradual unfolding. The practice is often described as small glimpses many times. We’ll have a glimpse of this true nature, this sense of Buddha nature, this sense of awake awareness, this sense of openhearted awareness, source of mind, and then let it abide by itself. The premise or hypothesis is each one of us is already this true nature: that you are already the awakensness you are seeking, that who you are is the love and the natural qualities of compassion are already

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available to you as you. The way to experience it is just to uncover or discover, let go, surrender, and then not just remain in the gap of not knowing, but discover the new knowing that already knows, the not-knowing that knows: nonconceptual awareness.

So enjoy. I'll see you next week.