

Loch Kelly Week Four,
Open-Hearted Awareness: A Cure for Our Addictive Thinking
September 28, 2015
“Seeing and Receiving”



Welcome back to this retreat. I hope you've had a good week and I look forward to sharing some more with you and to being able to settle in to the now.

So the first thing I'd like to say is that you can't be in the present moment. I know you've heard otherwise, and that it's actually a goal. But the present moment comes and goes. The present moment is like this. Tick-tock, tick-tock. And you can slice it even thinner. Tick-tock-tick-tock-tick-tock-tick-tock.

In fact, one of the first things to learn from deliberate mindfulness from mindful awareness is that thoughts come and go, sensations come and go, feelings come and go, consciousness itself is impermanent, arising, and passing. Each moment relative time comes and goes. Relative time is happening in the *now*. The now is not the present moment. The now is an all-at-onceness, a sense of the spacious awareness, which is here and timeless and inclusive of relative time, past, present, future moments coming and going. The now is space-time, is the spaciousness, timelessness that is here. The way that we're going to proceed is through small glimpses many times and a kind of meditative inquiry, particularly for this retreat. Because it's a short series and we are looking at a video of this retreat, so we have our eyes open.

That might be a good place to begin today, by doing a kind of practice, a variation on a practice called sky gazing. This is often done on a mountaintop or in a very open place. However, I've had to adapt this a bit, living in New York City, and it works really well. One of the reasons to do this kind of practice, this open-eyed practice, is that by doing small glimpses as a main practice, rather than long closed-eyed sitting meditation, which I still do and love to do and encourage you to do, especially if you like it. But the small glimpses during the day can be done from one or two, to—some of my students say they do 30 times a day, on the subway, while they're taking a break, walking down the street. The thing about it is that the practice is done

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with your eyes open. So we have to get used to what it's like to shift our awareness to drop, open, and include and be here now in the midst of our day, with our eyes open. So let's do a practice that I sometimes call returning your eyes to their natural state, or panoramic awareness.

The first thing is to realize what seeing is or how it works. We all know that hearing works in a way that sound comes from outside. Travels through the air as vibration and comes to our ears and vibrates our eardrums; right? So hearing is receiving, on the physical level. Well, most of us think that seeing is more like grasping. "I want to see that. I want to get that. I've got to get that. And what's over there? What's over there?" Right? Is that your experience? That seeing is almost as if you're going out to find something, to look at something, to pinpoint something, to focus on something from here to there. "I am aware of that object. 1, 2, 3."

What we're going to do is reverse that and realize that seeing is receiving. Light reflects off of objects and comes to your eyes, just as sound comes to your ears. Seeing is receiving. Rest back, allow light to come to you, and you don't have to worry that you're less safe by not going out. Because light is traveling at the speed of light, which is about as fast as it can go. Light reflects. It's coming from the screen. Or if you look at any other object in the world-- in the world or in the room you're in, you'll see that you can rest and receive to thought, which we'll label it quickly, and then rest back. Let the seeing come to your awareness.

The next thing to do is just soften your eyes so you're not pinpointed. As you soften your eyes, don't see just one thing, but look at the whole screen in front of you or look to the side at a whole table and see kind of a little bit of a vista. Yeah? Just a little widening of the view so you're not pinpointing. The next thing is to feel like you can see on the periphery, rather than just one point. So feel like there's a view that's like a soft lens of a camera. Yeah? And you can feel open this way. Then, just breathe in and smile, soft eyes. Seeing is receiving. Round view, rather than pinpoint. Flat, open, continuous view this way. The last thing we're going to do is we're just

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going to open a peripheral vision. Opening the peripheral vision is not actually moving your eyes, at all. Your eyes will remain forward.

Probably, the best thing to do would be to look above the TV screen, or whatever you're looking at, whatever screen, computer screen, or whatever you're looking at, phone. Look at space between you and a wall. Yeah? And just let your eyes rest there so they're looking up a little bit. And let your eyes remain almost like they're being held, floating in water. But what you'll be doing is you'll be moving your awareness. Just gently, without strain, at your own speed, begin to open your peripheral vision. Breathe in and smile. Feel the cool air. Just gently open your peripheral vision to the side, which is like looking at the sky in front of you.

As your awareness moves to the side, just feel that awareness is letting go of seeing and becoming aware of space in which sound is coming and going to your ears. And just as you're now allowing awareness to continue around 360 degrees to a panoramic awareness, allow awareness to open behind you to the space and the sky behind your head, from which sound is coming and going, as well. So notice this open panoramic awareness, this big sky. So that sky is in front of you, space is within you and space and awareness are behind you. So rather than going out to see, rest back. You can have a scene and then seeing and then rest as the awareness behind you, as well as within you, as well as in front of you.

Notice space in front, space between your eyes, space between your ears, space behind your back. So the key is awareness has your back. Rest is that awareness. Behind your back. Discover the awareness that's already aware. Discover the awareness that is aware and feeling into your body and looking and connecting out of your heart. So feel the panoramic view and then feel as if you're looking from panoramic awareness back to be aware of your breath, from the openness, from the sky gazing in front, sky to the side, sky behind, and then viewing from this big sky awareness.

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Notice the breath at your nostril or your chest rising and falling or your belly, as a point of contact, within this field of aliveness. Openness, awareness, aliveness, and one point, and then also, notice one point that you're looking at. So there's awareness of both inside and out. And just allow yourself to feel like you're supportive, that awareness has your back, awareness is within, awareness is aware of everything from an accepting sense of wellbeing and okayness. Just allowing everything to be simple and ordinary. And then, just letting yourself familiarize yourself with this. In Tibetan, the word for meditation is *gom*, and the translation is “familiarize.”

Once we've shifted to this sense of awareness that's within and all around, and we're in a more awareness-based way of knowing, seeing, and being, just familiarize yourself with an awareness that doesn't have to locate a sense of a doer or a seeker or a controlling problem-solver in your head. Feel what it's like to be fully embodied and pervasively aware, as you enjoy this retreat. The sense of the process that we're discovering is what we talked about last time, is there's a sense of a mini me in our heads, looking out of our eyes. It looks up to thought. Thought looks to thought and then, that thinking that we take ourselves to be, as if I am the thinker, looks out of our eyes and it grasps and it looks for something to satisfy itself.

Not just on the personality level. Because the sense of self that the *anatta*, the no self, the one that goes is often called the ego. But it's actually not our ego body. It's not our particular body that goes. Nor is it our personality. Nor is it our ego functioning. Nor is it our story even about ourselves. Those are not the problems. The problem is, actually, this literal sense of a separate me that's happening by itself in our brain that we're not actually creating. But we can relax it. We can step out of it. We can shift into freedom of awareness, and then, it doesn't form. The latest neuroscience agrees.

As I've worked with many of the neuroscientists today and been a subject in these studies, being in an fMRI is like being put in a pizza oven, except without the heat, and I'm the pizza. When

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you go in, you feel like you have to stay very still and then, this big magnet is looking at your brain. But what they discovered very clearly is there is no separate self or place or location of an organized sense of self in the brain. That it is a continual pattern, a symphony, but no conductor can be found. It is a process of aliveness and where is the I? There is no local I. It is awareness that comes into consciousness that comes into a form of a particular human being. So the feeling is almost as if there's an ocean of empty awareness that arises as a wave of particularness, as me, as you, as the screen you're looking at, as flower, is made of a patterning of aliveness that is a particular consciousness of patterns. And that there's a connection between us all of emptiness that's interdependent, interconnected.

That in some ways is one of the best definitions of emptiness is that there's no separate entity, that everything is interconnected, interdependent. We feel from our little mini-me as if safety is required to have a very separate sense of self in this location. Whereas, when we relax that, when we open and feel more boundless and embodied and interconnected sense, we still feel like we can protect our physical body. But the secondary fear and suffering is gone, so we feel more relaxed. We feel like we're like a Tai Chi master that doesn't have to be hyper-vigilant all the time. And that we feel a natural connection to others in this way that we are not other. That there's a same-same quality, and this is what leads to compassionate expression. That there's a normal sense of wellbeing, but there's a love and interconnectedness, as if we're all, in one sense, the same family, and even in another sense, not really separate, in terms of who we are. There's something even more connected and familiar that the awakens can see the awakens in each of us, and ignorance and suffering is seen in ourselves and in others. So there's a kind of sense of being in it all together, which leads to this social engagement and into a natural expression in the world.

In some ways, we begin with ethics to create a sense of foundation for awakening. There's almost a natural expression of ethics that doesn't come from a prescribed sense of “should” that is actually the natural expression of being awake in the world. So as we awaken, we'll see and

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trust that there is a natural engagement with others. So this allows us to work on ourselves or not work so hard on ourselves. So that we discover and uncover this natural openhearted awareness, in order to be free of suffering individually and free ourselves up to compassionately and unconditionally lovingly act and respond. Instead of react and make ourselves drive ourselves to feel guilty or not enough or as if we should save the world or what's the use? So we're not caught in those binds of shame and blame, that this is what releases. This is what relaxes when the sense of awakening moves from a mini me to a sense of awareness based knowing.

Let's try another pointer or small glimpse. In this one, what we'll do is we'll notice that awareness can move from being identified or caught in the loop of thinking, to one of our senses, and this one we'll use hearing. We've used our eyes. We've dropped from head to heart. So let's try this one. Simply unhook awareness from thought, even though there's no way to know how to do that. It's more of a felt sense, almost like riding a bicycle. You get on and you understand, "Okay. I'm going to unhook awareness. Okay. I'm going to ride a bicycle." And then, once you're on or you do it, you just feel it. Right? Once awareness moves, it's like a felt sense and it's the location of where the knowing is happening. Just try it and play with it and see what happens, unhooking awareness from thought and coming to hearing. Now, just as awareness was aware of thought, just hearing. Neither focused on a hearer, nor to what you're hearing. Just awareness interested in movement, sensation, vibration, in one ear. Just feel that calm and relaxed, just hearing that's coming to awareness within and focused in one area. Just as awareness can focus in one area, in a small area, awareness can also open to become aware of the space in which sound is coming and going.

Let awareness open and move out into the space in the room and become interested first in sound moving through space. Then, let awareness become aware of objectless, contentless space. As soon as thought has no object, notice the relief. Notice that spacious awareness is aware of open space and that that open space is aware. The spacious awareness is now pervasive and aware from the open sky. As you connect or surrender to that awareness, which is already aware, let

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that awareness include and return to be pervasive within. Feel as if there's a continuous field of awareness outside and within. As you do, feel like an ocean of awareness is arising as a wave of aliveness and awareness within you.

As you come back, feel that your connection is either through your whole body equally, but not just your head, or more of your openhearted awareness here. So as you come back, just remain without going up to thought and without looking down from thought. Feel that you're both open and inclusive, spacious, and pervasive, and that there's a sense of a heart mind or open hearted awareness that's non-conceptually aware and just be curious. What does this openheartedness know to be true? Don't refer to thought and don't look down. Don't go down to sleep. Just let it reveal itself through a kind of felt sense knowing. Just getting used to this awareness based sense of being and seeing, and feel that you're also including everyone and everything in front of you, and the awareness behind you, as you abide, stay home.

Just allow yourself to remain at home in the heart and you can use Wi-Fi to the files in your head and let them come down. So that information is available as you live at home and don't have to live in your office of your head anymore. But feel boundless, ground of being and interconnected field of love and potential to express, create, and relate. But this is the feeling of an awareness based knowing that's embodied, open hearted, and undistracted. This undistracted seamlessness, after a while, will self-sustain. When it self-sustains, you don't have to help it. You may lose it later, but there'll be longer and longer periods of this ability to feel that you're everywhere, nowhere, and here. That you're interconnected to everyone and you don't have to go off to the mini me and daydream, and you don't have to go up to create a manager, a judger, or controller in your head. That there's a feeling of pervasive awareness-based wellbeing, feeling connected and protected, feeling free of dissatisfaction, and feeling the rising of qualities of joy, love, freedom, and a curiosity and interest in expression, creativity, and relatedness because of a lack of fear and a sense of playfulness and love.

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Just see what that's like, if you can play with this balanced or continuous field, and just notice just not going to daydream. Everything else is included and see what that's like. Afterwards, get up, look around the room. Continue to remain and abide, so that what we're doing is we're unhooking and returning. That we're training to remain and abide. So when we lose it, no big surprise. We re-attach and re-identify, and we simply unhook. We learn to return. We train to remain. We express from this creative loving openhearted awareness. This is the possibility of doing small glimpses many times in the midst of your life, and shifting your base from this separate sense of self to empty awake awareness that's appearing as the creative expression in this wonderful human body and human life that's free of this secondary suffering, so that we can live life as life in human community with our particular personality and quirky self. Self, meaning human expression. And learn to love.

I hope to see you all soon. Many blessings.