

Mindfulness in Plain English
Bhante Gunaratana
Chapter 4 “Attitude”
Selected Quotes

“Within the last century, Western science and physics have made a startling discovery. We are part of the world we view. The very process of our observation changes the things we observe.....Eastern science has recognized this basic principle for a very long time. The mind is a set of events, and the observer participates in those events every time he or she looks inward. Meditation is participatory observation. What you are looking at responds to the process of looking. What you are looking at is you, and what you see depends on how you look. Thus, the process of meditation is extremely delicate, and the result depends absolutely on the state of mind of the meditator.

The following attitudes are essential to success in practice.

1) *Don't expect anything*: Treat the whole thing as an experiment.....don't be anxious for any result whatsoever. Meditative awareness seeks to see reality exactly as it is. Whether that corresponds to our expectations or not, it requires a temporary suspension of all our preconceptions and ideas. We must store away our images, opinions, and interpretations out of the way for the duration of the session.

2) *Don't strain*: Meditation is not aggressive. There is no violent striving. Just let your effort be relaxed and steady.

3) *Don't rush*:sit as though you have the whole day. Anything really valuable takes time to develop. Patience, patience....

4) *Don't cling to anything and don't reject anything*: Make yourself comfortable with whatever happens. Don't fight with what you experience, just observe it all mindfully.

5) *Let go*: Learn to flow with all the changes that come up. Loosen up and relax.

6) *Accept everything that arises*: Accept your feelings, even the ones you wish you did not have. Accept your experiences, even the ones you hate. Learn to see all the phenomena in the mind as being perfectly natural and understandable. Try to exercise a disinterested acceptance at all times and with respect to everything you experience.

7) *Be gentle with yourself*: Be kind to yourself. You may not be perfect, but you are all you've got to work with. The process of becoming who you will be begins first with the total acceptance of who you are.

8) *Investigate yourself*: See for yourself. That does not mean that you should be cynical, impudent, or irreverent. It means you should be empirical. Insight meditation evolves out of an inner longing to wake up to what is real and to gain liberating insight into the true structure of existence.

9) *View all problems as challenges:* Look upon negatives that arise as opportunities to learn and to grow. Don't run from them, condemn yourself, or bury your burden in saintly silence. You have a problem? Great. More grist for the mill. Rejoice, dive in, and investigate.

10) *Don't ponder:* Discursive thinking won't free you from the trap. In meditation, the mind is purified naturally by mindfulness, by wordless bare attention. Habitual deliberation is not necessary to eliminate those things that are keeping you in bondage. All that is necessary is a clear, non-conceptual perception of what they are and how they work. That alone is sufficient to dissolve them. Concepts and reasoning just get in the way. Don't think. See.

11) *Don't dwell upon contrasts:* Differences do exist between people, but dwelling upon them is a dangerous process.comparison is a mental habit, and it leads directly to ill feeling of one sort or another: greed, envy, pride, jealousy, hatred. The meditator's job is to cancel this unskillful habit by examining it thoroughly, and then replacing it with another. Rather than noticing the differences between self and others, the meditator trains himself to notice similarities. He centers his attention on those factors that are universal to all life, things that will move him closer to others. Thus his comparison, if any, leads to feelings of kinship rather than feelings of estrangement.

The meditator is advised to explore the process of his own breathing as a vehicle for realizing his own inherent connectedness with the rest of life. We de-emphasize contrasts and emphasize the universal factors that we have in common. This initial perception of the universality of what we are seeing..... will spark pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings. That is a universal phenomenon. By following these feelings various reactions may arise. We may feel greed, lust, or jealousy. We may feel fear, worry, restlessness, or boredom. These reactions are universal. We simply note them and then generalize.