

Karunakarma Series Volume II

Coming To Your Senses
by
Tarchin Hearn

Karunakarma Series: Volume II
Coming to Your Senses
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Karunakarma means compassionate activity, the work of compassion or compassion at work. The Karunakarma Series is a collection of coil bound notes and articles that can be used for study or as teaching aids. May these writings water the seeds of wisdom and compassion for the benefit of all beings.

Published by
Wangapeka Books
P.O. Box 80-141
Green Bay, Auckland 7,
New Zealand

Available from
Wangapeka Educational Trust
R.D. 2 Wakefield, Nelson
New Zealand
tel. 03 522 4221
e-mail <wangapeka@ts.co.nz>

Namo Guru Vijaya

You look with greatly merciful eyes on all that live.

You listen to all the stories with ears of deep understanding

You touch the world with unending compassion.

Your nose sifts the subtle and reveals the hidden.

Your taste is in utter accord with what is.

Embodying yourself in myriad forms and appearances.

Teaching all beings the path of engaged, compassionate freedom.

*To you Avalokitesvara I bow in devotion and gratitude
again and again and again.*

Guru Buddha Dharmakaya Namó

Background

This booklet was compiled after a cleansing of the senses retreat given in Tasmania in early 2002. I hope that it will serve as a practical manual for people wishing to explore this work on their own and that it will be a useful reminder for those wishing to share the work with others. It is not intended as something to just read. Rather it's a guide to hands-on-direct experience. The heart of the booklet will be revealed in the experiences you have through actually doing the exercises and meditations.

The quotes at the beginning of each chapter are taken from "The Spell of the Sensuous", a marvellous book by David Abram, published by Vintage Books.
The cover illustration was done by Mary Jenkins.

A Note of Caution

The explorations and exercises described in this booklet are potentially deep and sensitive. It is impossible to write down all the facets that contribute to a successful retreat of this type. Though I have done the best I can to make everything clear and do-able, the notes can never replace the intelligent awareness and personal responsibility of you the practitioner.

T.H.

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Prologue

Waking up

Bright and responsive

Cultivating the ability to be totally present for another,

Living each moment spacious and open with immense clarity and compassion,

Resting in a place of being, where love, patience and wondrous creativity

can arise with the problems and challenges in life.

Of course, there's always....

Going to sleep

Walking through life with eyes dimmed,

ears blocked,

senses of touch registering mostly pain and discomfort or even nothing at all,

taste dulled and

smell muted.

There's always

Withdrawing from the world in order to be more 'spiritual,'

Losing oneself in concepts and fantasy,

Sinking into the pool of Narcissus

Our private self-built fiction of hopes and fears and desperate expectation,

Meeting each difficulty with knee jerk reactions and inflexible agendas.

Which will it be?

Writing these words, I recall a few experiences that shaped me. One was a short conversation I had with my father many years ago. I was just beginning to study with Namgyal Rinpoche and was filled with all the common spiritual fantasies that were so exciting for us 1960s seekers. I remember my dad saying something along the lines that I probably thought that 'Eastern Culture' had profound understanding about things to do with the inner, meditation, yoga and so forth, but had lots to learn from the 'West' about the outer. The West on the other hand had great mastery of the outer world through science and technology but needed to learn more about the inner from the East. I completely agreed with him but it seemed so obvious, I wondered what he was getting at. Well, he said, I think you've got the whole thing absolutely backwards. The great Zen masters were able to see a tree as a tree and a mountain as a mountain. They would eat when they were hungry and drink when they were thirsty. People in the West, on the other hand, have become so lost in

a labyrinth of internal fantasy, unconsciously projecting their hopes and fears onto the environment, that it is almost impossible for them to see what is actually there. Westerners don't need meditation, more hours of staring into navels and contacting feelings, he said trying to stir me up. They don't need to look within. They need to look deeply into what is actually going on 'out there', all around, in this magnificent living world! It was a bright moment. I saw that he was right.

Another experience. Wandering around the city of Toronto trying to understand Emptiness (*sunyata*). I found that by squinting my eyes, everything became a bit fuzzy and not so solid. I walked around in this floaty, fuzzy space until one day I walked right into a telephone post and practically knocked myself out! Surviving with minor bruising, I decided that if this was emptiness then I wasn't interested in it. Either I find emptiness with my eyes open or I'd look for something else.

I first did this work of cleansing the senses on a course given by Namgyal Rinpoche in the mid 1970s. The exercises were adapted from the Western Mystery Traditions where it was considered that before one could explore the Mysteries of Mind and Nature, it was necessary to have a healthy and well functioning body and this included well functioning senses. Since that first course, I have taught this work a number of times and in the process, found the emphasis and even the methods evolving in slightly different directions. Some things have been left out and other things have been added. Although it was originally called cleansing the senses, the main focus has gradually shifted towards exploring the nature of what is, through the senses.

It is best to do this work in a place of natural beauty and in full retreat. Seven days is about the minimum time to go through the five senses, though to take it at a more leisurely pace would allow for more contemplation. Some people have done this work in cities but I don't generally recommend it since to open our senses and then to immediately expose them to traffic smells and noise can be challenging to say the least!

In an actual retreat we usually begin with pre breakfast meditation or Puja. After breakfast we would meet for a class in which I would introduce the work for the day. After a short break we would reassemble as a group to do the sense cleansing work . After lunch there is some time for individual exploration. In the late afternoon we would do walking meditation together in the forest. The evenings were open for individual work. Most of the retreats I have given with this theme have been in silence except for the talking necessary in the morning group work.

*May your explorations blossom
Guiding you and all that you meet
On the path of spacious wonderment, heart filled compassion,
And feet-on-the-ground sensible intelligence.*

*with best wishes
Tarchin*

Day One - Introduction

*I take refuge in Wisdom
I take refuge in Compassion.
I take refuge in Non-clinging Awareness.
May I develop the six perfections¹
And awaken speedily for the sake of all living beings.*

*However innumerable beings are
I vow to meet them with kindness and interest.
However inexhaustible the states of suffering are
I vow to touch them with patience and love.
However immeasurable the dharmas are
I vow to explore them deeply.
However incomparable the mystery of interbeing,
I vow to surrender to it freely.
From this day forth
With Wisdom and Compassion as my lamp and staff,
I dedicate all my life energies to the welfare of all beings.*

Welcome everyone. What a wonderful place to explore the senses, (Dorjeling Retreat Centre - Tasmania.) We are far away from traffic noise. The forests are alive with birds and other wild creatures. The sky is vast and open with beautiful cloudscapes; a constant shifting of subtle colour and forms. Over the next few days, I hope you will come to appreciate something that is simple, rare and possibly a bit old fashioned. I think of it as the treasure of solitude.

For most people, life seems to be a torrent of busyness. Rushing here and there with schedules and appointments. Phones ringing. Computers humming. Surrounded by brick and cement and human made noises and smells. Hardly a moment to pause and breathe and feel our intermingling with the living earth; our inseparable interdependency with all other creatures. The treasure of solitude is something that most people today know nothing about. Even the idea of solitude to many is a bit scary. It sounds too much like loneliness. Some of you will have rushed to get here and are still probably hurrying to begin the retreat. I really do wish we had a month together. Then I would suggest that you spend these first few days

¹ The six perfections are: generosity, wholesome relationship, patience, enthusiastic perseverance,

simply resting, eating, going for walks, and gradually winding down. Solitude invites opening. As the all too human compulsion to talk gradually softens and fades, we inevitably begin to feel the communication that's happening with the non-human creatures that surround us at every level of being. Solitude is not loneliness. In resting, without all those habitual obligatory human interactions, you might discover that you are never alone; that you are in deep and continuous communion with myriad forms and expressions of life. Actually, you *are* the communion of myriad expressions of life. Allow yourself to accept the invitation. Enter the treasury and discover yet again, the richness that is always present.. Solitude is from solo which means oneness; union.

Today I'm going to give you a number of meditative exercises to get started with. However, as you settle into the retreat and allow the swirl of busyness to fall away, your meditation in the sense of trying to focus attention on a particular theme, may also begin to fall away. You may find yourself pulled into the work through sheer interest and insatiable curiosity. The exercises may become natural and effortless and you might even get a glimpse of true contemplation.

I like to think the word contemplation comes from *con* which means 'with', plus *template*. A template is something you find in a factory. You could think of them as stencils used for cutting out or moulding objects into particular shapes. For this process to work, the material being moulded has to be softer than the template. You enter contemplation by becoming so soft and malleable that nature can template you! In other words you become shaped by the reality of unfolding life rather than by your ego conditioned hopes and fears.

Contemplation is sensing in action. The sense doors are our gateways to NOW, and to the mystery of other. In a way, the experience of sensing is one of communion and mutual transformation. Us responding to the world and the world responding to us. Each morning we will give a lot of care and attention to one particular sense and then spend the rest of the day being in nature and allowing nature to contemplate us!

This course can be done in one week, but if you had the time and interest, you could easily spread it over a month or so and devote a week to each sense.

A Recipe for Misery

I'd like to begin by teaching you a recipe for making yourself miserable? Are you surprised? A long time ago I decided that it was important to give out exercises that people were able to have some success in doing. This helps build confidence. Buddhism is supposedly for the purpose of bringing suffering to an end and when I taught this, many people felt that bringing suffering to an end was virtually impossible and so their frustration increased. It seemed to me, that since so many people were already good at making misery, both for themselves and others, that I should begin by teaching the fool proof method for cooking up a first rate batch of misery! This was something that nearly everyone found they could do very well and so they could grow in confidence. The process is quite simple. It comes in only three steps. If you follow them carefully, and in order, it's impossible that you can't make yourself utterly miserable!

Step one: Decide that there is something unsatisfactory in your life. Most people have no problem doing this. It could be something physical; something emotional. It could be a situation in the world. There are unending possibilities.

Step two: Focus on this unsatisfactory situation to the exclusion of virtually everything else. Many people think meditation is too hard. Their attention wanders all over the lot. Yet when it comes to the 'yoga of misery'.....nearly everyone is a master of samadhi!¹ Focus on this unsatisfactory thing to the exclusion of everything else and allow it to become an all consuming obsession.

Step three: Make a deep, (preferably unconscious) decision that you will never feel good until you have resolved this particular problem. This last step is the clincher. If you can develop an abiding confidence that you will never feel good till you've sorted this problem out, you will have stewed yourself into a magnificent mess of misery and in all probability, you'll find that you can share it with all those around you!

Let's review for a moment. (1) Decide there is something unsatisfactory. (2) Focus on it to the exclusion of everything else. (3) Believe that you will never be happy until this particular difficulty has been resolved. Does it sound familiar? We've all done it at one time or another. It is astonishing how people can be so obsessed with problems that they fail to see what is actually going on around them, even when they are surrounded by beauty and all sorts of creative possibilities.

You'll be glad to know there is a way of dissolving misery and it too comes in three steps.

Step one: Make a decision that you are willing to let go of this obsession. This first step doesn't mean that we do actually let go. If it was so easy to resolve, it probably wasn't much of a problem in the first place. Step one simply means that we would be willing to let go, if only we were able; if only we knew how.

This step may sound simple but the sad truth is that many people seem to need to hang on to their problem. It's become part of their identity, part of who they are; the persona they present to the world.

Step two: Open all your senses, perhaps one by one, and become aware of what is going on around you. Open your eyes and see what is around you. Open your ears and listen intently to the play of sounds. Open your various senses of touch and feel the shifting textures and temperatures; clothes on your skin, feet on the floor, breezes on your face. Open your tongue to taste and your nose to the various fragrances; invisible silent intimate messages from other beings. Yes, there is a world out there, and it knows you are here.

Step three: Reflect on how the experiences arising through your sense doors right at this very moment are supporting and nurturing your sense of who and what and where you are.

¹ Samadhi has a number of meanings such as absorption or one-pointedness. A degree of samadhi is

If you recall a time when you've been miserable you will recognise that your sensing of the outer world was probably quite subdued and withdrawn. Everything retreats into a cocoon of inner feeling/emotion. Sometimes we withdraw to the point of hardly noticing anything that is going on around us. How do we emerge from the cocoon?

From time to time, this week, I want you to think about this recipe for misery as you open up the senses. It may come as a shock to find that sometimes we are afraid to open up. It's safer to stay in the world of our private fantasies. So hard done by, unloved, neglected, abused, long-suffering. To actually open our senses and see the living world around us might wreck the scenario. The sunlight streaming through the window. The scent of roses blending with the humming of bees gathering early morning pollen. I'm alive. The world is wondrously transforming. Everything is fluid and changing. Living reveals itself to be an immense experimental adventure.

Today, we are still arriving. I suggest you spend as much time as you can outside. Go for a walk. Sit under a tree. Go down to the lake. Give yourself the space to relax. Breathing in, the earth supports me. Breathing out, sharing deeply. Open your senses and allow this beautiful natural world to touch you. Breathing in, bathing in beauty. Breathing out, sharing deeply. Some of you have been in a great rush to get here. Allow yourself to have a snooze. Say hello to the trees, the birds, the earth, the sky. Smell the leaves. Feel the breezes on your face. Do a little meditation. Allow yourself to arrive.

One small practicality, as we will be doing a lot of massage work this week, you might want to trim your finger nails today.

General daily program

In addition to our group work of cleansing the senses which we will do after the morning class, I'd like you to explore the following meditations and exercises throughout the retreat. Think of these as the basic exercises for the week. If you have any doubt as to what to do, you can work with these.

1) Puja

Before breakfast, we will do the Daily Puja together. (See the appendix for more on Daily Puja) This will bring to mind, many of the profound themes and contemplations, that support awakening, both for yourself and for others.

2) Massage

Each day give yourself an overall massage. You can take as much time as you like with this or you can do it in as little as 15 minutes. Begin with your feet and work your way up to your head. When you have finished, sit outdoors and settle into awareness of your breathing. Once you come to a point of stillness and clear awake presence, then open all your senses to what is happening within and around you and continue resting in this natural, bright, awakesness for as long as you wish.

3) Basic Meditation

Awareness of breathing with all the senses open and operating will be our basic meditation exercise for this retreat. In case you are unfamiliar with this practice, here are some general instructions.

Take up a posture that supports a sense of easefulness and alertness. You could be sitting or kneeling or lying down or even walking or standing, the important thing is to feel relaxed and alert. Next, spend a few moments reviewing your aspiration. This can be at two levels. One is the general overall intention. For example, you might inspire yourself with the Bodhisattva Vow; to meet whatever arises with kindness and interest; to touch any difficulties with patience and lovingkindness; to explore the dharmas, in this case the dharmas of sensing, and to recognise and settle into the mystery of interbeing, the interdependence of everything. This is the general approach. Then remind yourself of the specific technique you are about to practice which in this case are the following instructions.

After refreshing your aspiration allow a smile to brighten your face. Let the pleasure/release, the twinkle in your eyes, seep into your bones and at the same time, begin to feel the physical movements of your body breathing. Practice in a light and easeful way. In this type of work we don't try to control the breathing. We simply relax and allow the breathing to find its own natural rhythm. With a caring attentiveness explore this breathing body, making friends with whatever sensations arise be they pleasant or unpleasant. Note how thoughts and emotions affect the body and how the state of the body affects your thinking and feeling. Everything is interconnected. If your attention wanders to other things, patiently bring it back to this study of your living, breathing body. Eventually you will come to a state of deep calm where the body feels soft and pleasurable, the breathing is fluid and effortless and the attention is bright and awake.

Now, without losing this intimate awareness of the physical sensations of breathing (which is essentially awareness of touch), open up your other senses. Open your eyes. Don't try to draw anything in but at the same time don't try to keep anything out. Simply gaze ahead in a natural fashion and notice whatever visual forms arise without having to latch on to them. Open your ears and appreciate whatever sounds are happening. Again don't try to hold onto any particular sounds or to keep any sounds out. Rather allow your ears to function freely, noting the arising and passing of the whole wonderful symphony of ongoing life. Open your nostrils and become aware of any smells. Finally, even if you are not eating anything, open your awareness of taste.

At this point you are resting in a deep appreciation of breathing with the five sense doors open and engaged. Stay with this for the remainder of the session. If you get distracted by the sensing, if you get high jacked into story making, memories and associations, then withdraw your attention from eyes, ears, tongue and nose give all your attention to touch, the sensations of your body resting and breathing.

Smiling, breathing and sensing are the first three steps of the five step "Cycle of Samatha". A few years ago, we brought out a small booklet with this title. If you are already familiar with the Cycle, you may find it a useful tool this week.

4) Walking Meditation

Every afternoon at four p.m. we will do a meditative forest walk together. At other times in the day you may enjoy doing walking practice on your own. There are many different types of walking meditation. The kind we will practice here has four basic points that will help support a sense of bright, alert, presence. 1) Smiling. 2) Carrying a continuous awareness of breathing. 3) Being aware of the physical sensations of your body moving through space. 4) Being aware that with each step, you are treading on and being supported by innumerable living beings. These four points form our basic exercise for forest walking. Often I add something each day to enhance the walking exploration. I've listed some of them in the appendix.

5) Creating Mandalas

The last exercise (which actually merits a full retreat in itself) is to paint or create mandalas of the inner sensations and experiences that arise during your explorations. Of course you can use whatever medium you wish. Creating mandalas often helps us contact and understand experience in new, non-verbal ways. (See the appendix for a bit more detail)

Day Two - Taste

To touch the coarse skin of a tree is, at the same time, to experience one's own tactility, to feel oneself touched by the tree. - David Abram

Today we will begin to explore taste. In a way it is the grossest level of sensing in that physical substances, chunks of food and pourings of drink, collide with taste buds located on the surface of the tongue. Think of taste as a chemical analysis sense, identifying the incoming molecules so that your stomach and digestive system are ready to receive them. Taste and digestion are so intimately tied together that some of the initial stages of digestion, of sugars for example, actually begins in the mouth before the food even reaches the stomach. Much of the pleasure associated with taste actually arises with smell. Strange as it may sound, for many people, taste is the least conscious of all the senses.

In your meditation today, I'd like you to explore the possibility that your entire body is involved in tasting. Imagine chemical substances arriving at the cell membranes; the border zones between countries of flesh. The 'customs officer' asks; "Who are you? Yes you can come in but you'll have to transform a bit. We'll send out some enzymes to help you. No this isn't your place, try further down the hall." Can you sense the multidimensional symphony of chemical conversations playing in the membranes of cells, in the corridors of the blood, in the intercellular fluids? Imagine your entire body is composed of trillions of tongues, each tasting the substance of present moment; savouring the infinite transformations of now.

If our sense of taste is malfunctioning, our digestion will inevitably be disturbed. Many years ago I heard of a case involving a young boy who accidentally drank some scalding water and so damaged his throat that he had to spend time in intensive care being fed through a tube. In spite of giving him what was considered a balanced diet, he steadily lost weight. After trying every thing they could, someone finally had the wisdom to ask the lad what he would like to eat. He wanted a Big Mac and a milkshake. Feeling that they had nothing to lose, they blended up the hamburger and milkshake and poured it down the tube and in addition they put some of the burger into his mouth so that he could chew it and taste it even though because he couldn't swallow, he had to spit it out. To everyone's amazement, after a few days of this kind of feeding, he began to gain weight. It became obvious to the dietician that without tasting the food, his stomach wasn't able to receive it properly. Undoubtedly, the pleasure of tasting something he liked was an important factor. Even though he had been fed a so called balanced diet, his stomach wasn't able to secrete the right combinations of enzymes and so wasn't able to digest it.

Our taste sense is also a protective mechanism. When we are in touch with our physical organism in a deep and sensitive way, we can actually taste which substances will be good or bad for us. When this sense has been neglected, through choosing our foods according to fads or what is trendy or according to our addictions and compulsive hankerings, we often lose the fine discriminating taste/wisdom of a beautifully functioning organism. This can lead to a vast range of health problems. A person with no taste doesn't just refer to someone who likes different music from you. A person with no taste has lost a profound level of discrimination and is in grave danger.

If we wanted to do a full cleansing of taste we would begin with a purification fast. A simple approach to this is to totally fast from solid foods for 2 or 3 days. During this time you should drink lots of water or weak herb teas. Then begin to eat brown rice with a little sesame oil and sea salt. The rice should be slightly undercooked, *al danté*. With this diet you can eat as much as you like but you must chew the rice until it is mush before swallowing. Continue with the rice and herb tea/water diet for about 5 more days. Then begin to add other foods to your rice; one new food per meal. When you introduce a food, first hold it in your mouth and meditatively feel how your over all organism reacts to it. If it doesn't feel good then spit it out and don't eat it. If you have a positive response then begin to chew the food with great mindfulness. Explore what it is doing to you and feel how you as a physical and emotional organism are responding to it. Swallow with mindfulness. Enjoy with mindfulness. Digest with mindfulness and learn what each food does to your overall being. This kind of aware eating should be seen as a basic fundamental in all healthy diets.

Let's have a break. Then we will come back together and begin to explore.

Session on Taste

If possible it is good to do this work outside. Everyone should bring cushions so they can sit comfortably. Check to make sure you have all the equipment that you will need¹. Some things the instructor provides; other things, each participant needs to bring. For the first part of this morning's work you will need a partner.

1) Magnifying Glass Meditation

Using a magnifying glass, examine your partner's lips, tongue and teeth. Examine the different textures of flesh, the papillae on the tongue and the secretions of saliva. The human body has been called a 'City of Revelations'. We live in it and use it every day, in a way we are it, and yet we hardly know anything about it. Explore with the magnifying glass for about 5 to 10 minutes, then switch around so the other person can look.

2) Massage

Before we begin the massage of the mouth, I'd like to say a few words about the cleansing work in general. In terms of written instructions, I can only outline the process. In an actual situation the teacher or instructor needs to pace the work, offer encouragement and remind people of the exercise if they get lost. If you have done this work before, you may already

have a sense of the timing. If you are doing it fresh from the book you will have to find your own way. I usually do the massage work along with the people while at the same time giving the instructions. Talking and dribbling! Doing the massage reminds me of what the people are feeling and gives a better sense of how to regulate the timing.

Please Note:

These explorations of the senses, can be very powerful. They can bring up all sorts of stuff from childhood. Even though most of the time we will be working on ourselves, it can still be extraordinarily intimate; taking people into new levels of meeting themselves. Because of this, it is vital that the teachers or instructors have done the whole process on themselves preferably a number of times. It is also important that they have the experience and confidence to be able to help beings stay with strong emotions in a meditative and mindful way.

If you have any doubts at all as to what the massage may be evoking, DO IT TO YOURSELF AND FIND OUT!

Even though I have lead this type of exploration many times, I still do a short session on my own before doing it with the group to remind me of the details. In this work the intellect doesn't necessarily remember as much as the tongue does!

Okay, let's begin with taste. In this exploration, each person will work on themselves.

2 - i Cleaning the Mouth

Clean your mouth and teeth with water and baking soda. Wet your toothbrush and then dab a bit of baking soda on to it and give your teeth, gums and tongue a thorough scrub. Then use your fingers to massage your gums.

2 - ii Rinse

Rinse your mouth with salt water. Gargle a bit and then spit it out.

2 - iii Massage with Tongue

Massage the inside of your mouth with your tongue for about 2 to 3 minutes.

2 - iv Main massage

For massage oil, use your own saliva (spit on your fingers). We first begin massaging the outside of the mouth gradually working towards the inside. At the very end we will reverse the process, coming out using a wedge of lemon to stimulate and refresh the mouth.

Throughout the entire massage process remember to soften your stomach and abdomen. I often remind people of this during the session. There is an intimate connection between what is happening in your mouth and what is happening in your stomach. Follow the order

outlined here, taking lots of time with each section. Explore the textures of muscle and flesh. Be very sensitive to the many subtle and varied responses of your body to these new sensations. One practical point; you may want to wrap a towel around your neck and shoulders, like a giant baby bib, as you will probably salivate a lot. Then you can feel free to just dribble away!

a - Explore the muscle and bone structure particularly in the jaw and cheekbones. Pull the flesh of the cheeks. Feel the shape of your gums and teeth under your lips.

b - Begin to explore the lips. You'll need to keep them wet. Feel the different textures between the inside and outside.

c - Explore the inside of the lower lip and cheeks. Remember what they looked like through the magnifying glass. You'll probably have fingers inside your mouth and a thumb outside, gently kneading, stretching and stimulating. You may find it helpful to use both hands.

d - Continue with the inside of the upper lip and cheeks.

e - Massage the gums both inside and outside and gradually include the upper and lower palate. Feel the different textures of flesh inside your mouth.

f - Explore your teeth

g - Very sensitively massage the area under your tongue.

h - Massage your tongue.

3) Exit with Lemon

Retrace the preceding steps (h) back to (a) but use a wedge of lemon to rub and massage your mouth as you slowly come out.

4) Vicco Powder

Place some Vicco Tooth Powder on your finger and thoroughly massage your gums. This is very good for the gums and will also stimulate and refresh your mouth. If you can't obtain Vicco Powder then move on the next step.

5) Lemon

Briefly massage your gums and lips using the inside of a piece of lemon peel (the white pulpy part). Since people will probably finish at different times, I usually ask them to sit in meditation and wait for the others to complete before giving the following instructions.

Afterwards

At this point your mouth should feel quite clean and fresh. Between now and lunch take the opportunity to sit or lie down and explore the following meditations.

1 - Relax your mouth and as your inhale, really taste the air. You might try breathing in and out through both mouth and nose simultaneously. Explore this for a while. Become a reptile with a tasting tongue. Taste the messages coming in through the air.

2 - Do a body scan. Using the mouth/nose breathing, become very still and go deeply into the sensations you find in your mouth. After about 5 minutes move to your throat and explore the sensations arising there, then the stomach, then the intestines and finally the anus. Give about 5 minutes for each position. Then feel the whole digestive tract, one completely integrated, intelligent, living system. Open up to any feelings, associations, emotions or memories that arise in a particular area. This exploration may give rise to some mandala painting.

3 - Imagine your entire body is a manifestation of taste/wisdom. Sitting in the midst of this, see if you can taste the earth and trees and sky. Become very still and allow the wisdom of the organism to function.

4 - Eat and drink with the whole body tasting, a deep communing of inner and outer. Relax after the meal and observe the digestion, the continuing tasting. Where does the taste actually take place? Are there parts of your body *not* involved in the tasting?

5 - Try to do a short mouth cleansing each day that you are here.

This afternoon at 4 pm we will do some forest walking together. Enjoy your explorations.

Day Three - Hearing

To see the world is also, at the same time, to experience oneself as visible, to feel oneself seen. - D.A.

Today we begin to explore hearing. Let's sit together for a few minutes. Feel the sensations and movements of your body breathing. Imagine that every cell of your body is an ear. Every part of you is listening. I will ring the bell. Where do you hear the sound? In your ears? Bang! ... the door slams and everyone jumps. How did you hear that sound? With your mind? With your body? Sit with the breathing again. Become very still as if you were listening to a very faint whisper. It's almost as if you were holding your breath. Can you hear/feel the singing of your body? Explore the how sounds shape the texture of consciousness. Explore how your state of mind affects what, how and the way you hear.

Hearing is not just about sound, it's also about information. Listen with sensitivity and notice how different sounds cause changes in your body; changes in your form. Listening is a constant process of in-forming. This is real in-formation. If you don't change, if your form doesn't shift, perhaps you didn't hear.

Years ago when first studying with Namgyal Rinpoche in Toronto he gave us a very interesting exercise. He suggested we walk around the block with a portable tape recorder turned on. When we returned home we had to recall all the sounds we had heard. After that we listened to the tape. We all found it amazing how many sounds there were on the tape recorder that we either hadn't heard or simply didn't remember.

People who are new to meditation are usually shocked when they begin to realise just how much chatter is going on in their minds. Story telling, fanaticising, planning, reviewing, some people are so focused on their inner dialogues that they hardly notice all the potential information that is thrumming around them. In the midst of thousands of beings singing to us, humming to us, buzzing to us, chattering to us and perhaps even speaking human languages to us, we can still feel alone, isolated and cut off!

A few years ago I went to a hearing specialist hoping to buy a very good set of ear plugs. I thought that he must sell heaps of them to travellers like myself who find the city sounds too loud for decent sleep at night. To my surprise he said that he rarely was asked for ear plugs but people were getting hearing aids at younger and younger ages. He explained that

teenagers were seriously damaging their ears listening to high decibel rock music. It is ironic that we are so assaulted by sound that in order to protect ourselves we are becoming deafer and deafer.

Today is a day for really appreciating the treasure of solitude. After we finish cleansing the ears, see if you can be in this beautiful natural environment and really listen. Allow your trillions of ears, each and every cell, to respond to this constant dance of becoming. Listen to the swishing of the gum trees, the outrageous kookaburra, the chirping of crickets, the squawking of the cockatoos. Listen to the sound of your heart and whoosh of your blood flowing round your body. Surrender into the vast symphony that is your life.

Session on Hearing

1) General Massage

Begin by massaging all around the ears. Use your finger tips and with a fair bit of strength and firmness, work the sides of your head, the temples, the hinge of the jaw and in behind the ears.

2) Corn Oil Massage

Using corn oil, massage the ears. Use your thumbs and fingers; pulling and kneading. This will draw more blood to the area. Very gradually move towards the inner surfaces of the ears.

3) Vitamin E and Eucalyptus Oil

Using Vitamin E plus Eucalyptus oil, continue massaging every part of the ears. The vitamin E is good for the skin and the Eucalyptus will bring heat to the area.

4) Humming

Cover your ears with the palms of your hands and make a humming sound. Feel the warmth between your hands and your ears and explore the vibration of the HUM. Where can you feel it in your body? Surrender into the warmth, the sound and vibration. This humming will help soften any wax in the inner ear. Explore this for 5 to 10 minutes.

5) Hydrogen Peroxide

Lie on one side, with your head supported comfortably on a pillow. Have someone use an eye dropper to put a 3% solution of hydrogen peroxide into your ear. I usually do this for everyone in the group though I do it for myself when I'm cleansing my own ears.

It is important to have done the peroxide to yourself before giving it to another. This way you will have some sense of how it feels. The solution can be very cold on initial contact and for some, it can be a bit of a shock.

Ear volume varies from person to person so I usually put enough in that I can just see it. After a few moments the peroxide will begin to fizz and will often carry dissolved wax out of

the ear. Lay there until the fizzing stops or you feel you have had enough. Then place a swab of toilet paper over you ear, roll onto the other side and let it all drain into the paper.

A note on the hydrogen peroxide. Sometimes you can only get peroxide in a 6% solution. If this is all you can find, then dilute it with an equal volume of pure water. The 3% solution is quite safe. It can even be used on open cuts as a bactericide. I have used it many times on myself and others and have never heard of problems. However, I wouldn't use it if the ear drum has a puncture.

Occasionally after dumping into the toilet paper, the ear remains blocked. Don't worry about this as it will clear by itself after a while.

6) Cotton Bud Swab

If you wish, you can carefully use cotton buds or Q-tips to do a final swab out.

7) Final Massage

Do another short massage going from inside to outside. This is done without any oil.

8) Lemon Water Rinse

Finally, rinse the ears with lemon water. This is quite refreshing and will remove any left over oils.

Afterwards

After the massage work you will probably feel very open. Now go and explore listening. Listen with every cell of your body. Walk with every cell an ear. What is it like to be so open? Is this normal for you? Notice any tendencies to shut sound out. See if you can become so soft and open that the sounds flow right through.

Explore how hearing is a dialogue between a sound and a listener. Where does sound end off and feeling/sensation begin? Is there a boundary? Investigate how your being is shaped by sound and by the meanings of the sounds. Explore the mystery of in-formation. What is the sound and what is the meaning? Do you hear the meaning or is the meaning added from somewhere else?

Enjoy your day!

Day Four - Touch

Clearly, a wholly immaterial mind could neither see things nor touch things – indeed, could not experience anything at all. - D.A.

Most people think of the senses as doorways or windows through which they can see the world 'out there'. Even people who call themselves Buddhist tend to think in this way and they aspire to see the world or the object 'as it actually is'. Considering all the confusion we have about the world, and all the projections we make on it, this isn't such a bad aspiration. However, although it's an understandable aspiration, it is basically impossible! Sensing could more accurately be thought of as a creative act. How can this be so?

First of all there is a continuous co-operative endeavour going on between the incoming sensory data and out going commands to the muscles controlling the sense organs. Through this dialectic we can direct our attention toward an object and then keep it in focus, even when it is moving. We can also shift our attention from one thing to another. For many people this is mostly happening unconsciously. Why do you look toward someone and then quickly glance away before they can see you looking? A huge amount of what we sense is unconsciously selected. The world 'out there' is being selected by conscious or unconscious hopes and fears and so we only see a fraction of what is there.

Second of all you have never seen a tree or touched the ground. Photons emitted from the sun, reflecting off the surface of an object you call tree, enter your eye and cause electro-chemical transformations in the cells of the retina. If a tree actually came through your eyes, you would be in big trouble. The retinal patterns are transmitted to more than 30 different centres in the brain and through some mystery that no one as yet understands, a tree is 'seen' in front. When you touch the ground, you are registering temperature and pressure. How does touch turn into ground?

We are so used to sensing the world around and within us that we hardly give it a thought. Our experience is a co-operative working of all the senses, plus memory and associations, and what it is 'out there'. With each moment of sensing we are, as biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela eloquently put it, "bringing forth a world" Sensing is a creative act. In fact it is the most intimate expression of our uniqueness. The world I bring forth is different from the world you bring forth.

These thoughts might stimulate some new questioning. As you investigate touch today and continue with your explorations of taste and hearing, bear these ideas in mind and see if they lead to something new.

We have a big day today as we begin to explore touch. Actually you are going to have a facial and beauty treatment! You will be working in pairs and because the process is so involved, one person will be done today and then the other will be done tomorrow.

Anatomically speaking, to talk about 'the' sense of touch is a bit misleading. There are many different organs for touch which weave together the textures and sensations of a body. There are sensors for pressure, temperature, pain, and fine texture. Most of these are involved in registering change and movement. There are also sensors in the joints that register the position and angles of the limbs when they are not moving. There are sensors at the base of each hair so that the slightest breeze can be noticed. A huge number of sensors for touch are in our skin but there are also internal sensors which register the state of our organs.

The face is a locus for all our senses. Eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin; all clustered together on this boney ball and many of them facing in roughly the same direction. Our face is the most exposed part of our body. We rarely clothe it. Although today we are going to work mainly on the face, I think you will find that by relaxing this area, your whole body will also relax.

Let's have a half hour break to get the things together that we will need. Bring your cushions and mats and chose a partner so that you have someone to work with.

Session on Touch

A note for teachers or instructors.

This is the most complex day and you will probably need someone to help make sure that the hot water and ice water is ready when you need it. It is a good idea to describe the whole process before beginning in addition to giving ongoing guidance throughout the session.

With the exception of looking at our tongues through the magnifying glass, this is the first time we have worked in pairs. Inevitably this will invite some talking but I urge you, and I will remind you as we go, to try to keep the talking to a minimum. This is a unique opportunity for practising awareness both for the person receiving the treatment and the person giving it. See if you can communicate through your hands; through touch, rather than having to rely so much on voice.

If you are doing this work outside, which is most ideal as it is messy, lie so that your face is in the shade. It does take some time and you don't want to get sunburnt. Also you will want to have a towel under the person's head to keep the water and clay off the pillow.

It's a good idea for the person receiving the treatment to wear a shirt with a low neck so that when we apply the clay you don't get it all over your shirt.

Finally, if the person receiving the treatment suffers from lumbar problems, it helps to place a large pillow or bolster under the knees. This will relieve pressure on their back.

1 - Removing dead skin

First, the person who is going to be worked on should be given a piece of loofa. These are dried sea cucumbers that are used in the bath. They can usually be bought from a pharmacy. You can cut them into smaller bits for this exercise. Wet the loofa and your face and then gently scrub your own face. The loofa will be quite scratchy and will help remove the surface layer of loose dead skin. Your face will likely get a bit red.

2 - Hot and cold compresses

To facilitate this, we usually have two pairs of people working closely enough together that the ones who are giving the treatment can share the same buckets of hot and cold water. Have the hot as hot as you possibly can. The ice should have just enough water to cover it. Have two face cloths in each bucket and when you have finished using the cloth, return it to the bucket it just came from. This will help to preserve the temperatures.

Begin with the hot. You might want a fork to get the cloth out of the bucket. Wring it fairly dry and then quickly lay it over your partners face keeping a little channel open for the nose for breathing. Ideally you'll want this towel to be as hot as the person can stand. They can tell you if it is too hot or not hot enough. If you gently press the towel over the forehead and eyes, this will increase the heat and help open the pores and relax the muscles.

When the towel is no longer hot, quickly take it off and replace it with a quite wet, ice cold one. Leave this on until it no longer feels cold. Then quickly change to the hot. The alternation of hot and cold will bring a deep relaxing into the face. If the hot bucket cools the helper should have boiling water on hand to top up the bucket. Keep this up until the water in the bucket is no longer hot.

3 - Massage with Camomile oil

Place a saucer of camomile oil between each pair of masseurs. They can share this. Now using the oil we will begin to massage the face. When doing this in a group, there is inevitably a wide range of experience in giving massage. In order to help the people who are a bit uncertain, and also to help with the pacing, I verbally guide them through the process. We usually take between half an hour to forty-five minutes for this part. It is impossible to give a written description here of what to do because it varies dependent on the people. I'll simply give an outline and you will have to experiment.

general over all face and head - 5 min.

throat, neck and jaw - 5 min.

jaw and cheekbones - 5 min.

nose, upper lip and lower eye socket - 5 min.

forehead - 5 min.

forehead and temples - 5 min

ask if there is any place that needs more work - 5 min.

general overall - 5 min.

Finish by cradling your partner's head in your two hands. Look at this person you have been massaging, not only with your eyes but with your hands and your understanding. Consider the vast stream of teachers that have inspired this being in so many marvellous ways. An ocean of support, an unfolding stream of wisdom. See too how they themselves have inspired others. Look deeply into this person; this being you are cradling. Contained within them are their parents and their parent's parents, ancestors going back, time out of mind. Contained within them are their children and their children's children; an inconceivable array of talents and capabilities. Open yourself to all the loving, the caring, the compassion and tears that have shaped this being. Open your heart of compassion for the unimaginable suffering of countless beings walking this journey of life, this being, this miracle cradled in your hands. Breathe and contemplate for a few moments.

Feel this head and know that its very substance is made of star dust. The liquids in this body have once fallen as rain and flowed as rivers. This being is an interbeing of an entire living, awakening, planet. Breathe and feel the miracle before you. Then, gently, with care and wonderment, allow your hands to express all your support and good wishes for them; that they may grow and flower in love and compassion and wondrous clear seeing for the benefit of all the beings that they are.

Finally, very slowly, very gently, remove your hands and let go.

4 - Hot and cold compresses

As the above guided meditation is being given, the helper is preparing more hot and ice water for a second round of compresses. Repeat part 2 with the hot and cold compresses. This time it will be a little shorter. Don't refresh the hot water. Once it is luke warm, you are finished.

At this point you may want to have a silent break for a stretch and a toilet stop.

5 - Mud pack

Between each pair provide a bowl of clay. It should have been pre-mixed so that it is the consistency of Devon cream or thick shaving cream. Usually I ask for someone to allow me to demonstrate on them so that the others can see what to do. We use our hands to apply the clay with long even strokes beginning at the throat and working toward the forehead. Ideally the clay should go on with an even thickness. Thick enough to cover and thin enough to be able to dry. Cover the entire face, except for the eyes, the nostrils and the lips. (Be careful not to get clay on the eye lashes.) Bring the clay right into the hairline.

(Instructor. Make sure you have applied the clay enough times that you can understand what is required and the difficulties that can emerge.)

Now the person lies there until the mud pack has dried hard. Try not to move your face, at least in the early stages. At this point the person who was giving the treatment can leave and get on with their own meditations. I stay around and tell people when the mask is dry. If it is sunny and there is a bit of wind and the clay is not too thick, it can dry in 45 minutes to an hour.

I usually suggest that the person with the clay mask not look into a mirror. This segment is about touch, not sight. Your inner touch is for knowledge. The mirror is just for the ego.

Once the clay has dried hard, sit up and try moving your face. See how much of the mask you can crack without using your hands. This is usually quite interesting as it shows something about which parts of your face are mobile and which parts are not. If you don't have very much face hair, the clay will come off quite easily. Surprisingly, women often have the most difficulty as they can have very fine down like hairs on their cheeks which the clay will tend to stick to. After you have peeled and flaked off as much as you can, if you need further help, use lots of cold water to wash the rest off.

6 - Cold water rinse

Once the clay has been removed, rinse your face in cool water.

7 - Self oil (optional)

To finish off, if your skin feels too dry, you can put on a little of the camomile oil, just enough to moisten the skin. There you're a new born being!

Afterwards

As you continue through the day try enhancing your practice with the following explorations.

Use your magnifying glass to examine your hands and your feet. Have a closer look at these two major touching organs.

With closed eyes, explore various objects with your hands. Do this with great sensitivity. Be aware of your breathing and your whole body resting easeful, soft and alert. Where does the touch take place? In your hands? In your mind? Throughout your body? How is the touching affected by your expectations? Your hopes? Your fears?

Try walking at night in the dark without using a torch. Let the sensitivity in your feet and the overall awareness of your body be your eyes.

Try walking meditation in the day but do it walking backwards.

In your forest walking, in addition to the 4 basics, try bringing together taste, hearing and touch so that there is awareness of all three simultaneously.

Consider that every moment of sensing is bringing forth a world. Think about this for a bit and then let go of the thinking and simply experience.

When you are walking, what is happening for you? Are you moving through an environment that you sense? Or, is there simply the arising and passing of a continuum of sensing, from which is constructed a 'world out there'?

Finally, explore the experience that everything you touch is simultaneously touching you.
Taking this further explore the possibility that everything you sense is also sensing you.

Day Five - Touch cont.

We can experience things – can touch, hear, and taste things – only because, as bodies, we are ourselves included in the sensible field, and have our own textures, sounds, and tastes. - D.A.

We are now 5 days into the retreat. Although the mornings are very full with the physical cleansing work, hopefully you are finding time in the rest of the day to sit quietly outside and settle more and more into your meditation. Use awareness of your breathing as a support for staying present. Smiling, breathing, present; all the senses opening into a space of vivid awakeness. Allow any sense of boundary or separation between yourself and other to soften and transparentise. Gradually you will come to a deepening absorption or samadhi; the entire miracle of being, functioning without effort or obstruction. In this state begin to observe more closely the interconnectedness of everything. Physiology and anatomy are shaping feelings, emotions and thought patterns. The mental phenomena are simultaneously shaping physical phenomena. Outer supports inner and inner supports outer. The micro realms depend on the macro realms and the macro depends on the micro. Everything you observe reveals itself to be dependent on other things. The entire universe is a dynamic interbecoming.

To help deepen this process I've included here two contemplations. The first is taken from Daily Puja and the second is from a sadhana practice of Avalokitesvara.¹ Read through them slowly, pausing frequently to allow individual words or phrases to resonate in your experience. The words are hints carrying us into an enlarged space of being/understanding.

The Interbeing of the Body

This body of mine is composed of atoms born in stars,
molecules, cells, tissues and organs.

It is a union of uncountable viruses, bacteria, fungi, plants and animals.

It is conditioned by families, and societies, by thoughts and dreams.

It is moulded by sun and gravity and the whole of the eco-sphere.

It is an interbeing of all these processes from micro to macro,

Wondrous, transient,

May it teach me wisdom.

¹ Avalokitesvara or Chenrezi (in Tibetan) is the bodhisattva of compassion. It is the path of awakening

The Interbeing of Everything

Contemplate the essential interbeing of everything. Recognise how each aspect of your existence; body, speech and mind, inner and outer, micro and macro is interweaving with everything else in the universe. Nothing stands independently on its own. Everything is created, sustained and supported by everything else. All arisings are mutually shaping.

With this understanding, where is this 'me' that so often seems apart from the rest of the universe? The sense of a separate self is seen as empty and illusory, as awareness opens to the fullness of the present moment. One feels clear, relaxed and vitally awake. Breathe with this for a while. All expressions of body, communication and mind are like the wind blowing in space; emptiness moving in emptiness.

If opening all the senses, or engaging in these contemplations of interbeing cause your attentiveness to run off into verbal speculation, thinking, reminiscing, planning, story making and so forth, even if it seems like 'profound' speculation, then recognise this is happening and simplify your meditation. Come back to smiling and awareness of your breathing and allowing your body to relax deeply, without trying to get anywhere or to understand anything. Just breathe; feel your body resting on the earth and make friends with whatever arises.

A huge dollop of down-to-earthness is needed for retreat work and particularly for this very direct working with the senses. Here I am, happily suggesting all sorts of interesting explorations into the nature of sensing and the nature of what is, while at the same time I do recognise that you have come to this retreat with a flow of interests and involvements that are already happening. We're talking about your life. It's not reasonable or even desirable to expect that you will completely drop all your ongoing interests and involvements for the duration of this week. These meditations and the physical work on the senses can be extraordinarily evocative. All sorts of stuff could come up for you and if it does ... wonderful! This is a perfect opportunity to explore them and find ways of integrating these energies into your overall life. Healing has its own timing so if now is the time when emotions or memories or unresolved stuff from the past is going to come up, then see if you can explore these arisings with lovingkindness and interest.

Sometimes nothing particular seems to be arising but you find your attention wandering or a dullness setting in, or an inexplicable agitation taking over. You might get lost in story telling, fantasy, planning or reminiscing. Whatever arises, if it is taking you away from the meditation, first of all, without criticising yourself, simply note that this is occurring. Then, on the inhalation, mentally name the feeling or emotion or quality of mind that is present and on the exhalation, think "I'm here for you". Breathe this way, again and again, giving yourself permission and encouragement to be with this difficult energy with a quality of kindness/acceptance coupled with curiosity/interest/investigation. Bringing kindness and interest to whatever is arising *is* lovingkindness in action. Here we are not trying to get rid of something or to fix it but to be with it just as it is, with compassion, forgiveness and deepening understanding. This is a most radical and direct form of healing.

It is beyond the scope of any booklet to identify and go into all the things that could arise. Let's just acknowledge that stuff comes up! Great! Paint it in a mandala. Walk with it. Breathe with it. Make friends with it. Forgive it. Look deeply into it. Allow a new, non-conceptual understanding of it.

Today we are still working with touch. Getting in touch. Keeping in touch. Touching deeply. Deeply touching. Open your heart. Feel the love and wisdom that is ripening. Today we will be doing basically the same program as yesterday only with the partners reversed. The person who received the treatment yesterday will give it today. Let's have a half hour break and then we will meet at the same place we did yesterday and play with the mud!

Day Six - Sight

We can perceive things at all only because we ourselves are entirely a part of the sensible world that we perceive! - D.A.

For many people, sight is their strongest sense, so much so that to say, "I see", is to mean I understand. More than any other sense, objects of sight seem to be out there, separate from ourselves. We can see stars that are light years away. The things we see we can't necessarily touch, smell, taste or hear. This sense of separation is very convincing and highly misleading. According to current research, there are more than 30 different centres in the brain associated with seeing.¹ Some register horizontal lines, others vertical, some are tied up with human face recognition and some with colour, some are involved with tracking the visual object and keeping it in focus. Nowhere in the brain has there been found a centre that links all these areas into a single co-ordinated picture; a centre that we might be tempted to call 'self'.

To see something, even something that is far away, requires a simultaneous dance of happenings right here, inside our heads. It's awesome to contemplate the vast number of factors that weave together this miracle of seeing. Each moment of our experience is an interbeing, or more dynamically an interbecoming, of myriad factors, myriad moments. To have direct understanding/experience of this is to approach the meaning of the Buddhist concept of *sunyata*. Though most often translated as emptiness, in the context of our work this week, *sunyata* could be more usefully thought of as the sense of spacious openness which is inseparable from a deepening appreciation of interbeing. Contemplating what are called the 18 *dhatu* or sense elements is a profound way of directly entering into this experience.

Fortunately it is not as complicated as it sounds. The 18 *dhatu* can be divided into six groups of three. The five sense doors plus the mind door make up the six senses. Each sense is contemplated in three aspects. Taking sight as an example, the first aspect is the physical sensing apparatus or equipment. This would include the eyeball and the muscles supporting it's movements along with the neurons and various brain centres associated with seeing. The second aspect is the object of sight, for example a tree, a person or whatever it is we are looking at. The third aspect is the mystery connecting the subject and the object; the conscious knowing of the object.

¹ This is according to Professor Susan Greenfield in a BBC documentary video "Brain Story" and also

To do this meditation, first of all take a little time to sit comfortably and settle into an awareness of breathing. Then become aware of a visual object in front of you, any object will do. With a small amount of thinking, consider how the three dhatu, sense organ, object and the knowing, all need to be present in order to have an experience of seeing. If any one of them is missing or not functioning properly then, for you, there is no seeing. Without an object, there is no seeing. Without the apparatus, there is no seeing. Without the awareness or knowing, there is no seeing. Examine your experience until you are certain that all three need to be present.

Next, with the intellectual confidence that all three need to be present for seeing, gently raise the question, where is the seeing taking place and then sit in the direct experiential response. If the tree is out there, how does it get into your brain? If the tree is simply arising in your neurons, then how does it appear to be 'out there'. Look down at your body, the one carrying the eyes that are doing the looking. Here is the body. There is the tree. Where is the knowing? You might come to the conviction that it is all unknowable, that there isn't really anything there, and yet, there is this current experience. You might come to feel that the object, and you the subject, cannot be so clearly defined in terms of where one ends off and the other begins. In this un-pin-down-able-ness, the experience can feel very open. This type of exploration can continue for many months or years until the very texture of your life flows with a greater sense of spacious possibility. Every moment of sensing becomes an open dimension of experience rather than a simple duality of knower and known; a wondrous interbecoming that has been evolving to this moment from the very no beginning.

These are profound contemplations so don't worry if you occasionally get lost. If they are intriguing and filling you with interest then give them a go. If they seem to be confusing, then continue cleansing the senses and engaging in simple and direct mindfulness. Each person's unfolding has its own pace.

Session on Sight

This exploration begins with a number of exercises.

1 - Opening and Closing

Stand outside and look into the forest. Open your eyes as wide as you can as if you have just had a great shock. If you really get into this, you will find that your mouth will probably open as well. Hold the expression of shock and surprise for as long as you can and then, squeeze your eyelids together as if you were trying to shut out some horrible or threatening experience. Here you'll probably find your mouth closing and your chin tucking in like a turtle withdrawing its head. Hold this expression for as long as you can and then go back to the first expression with the eyes wide open. Alternate back and forth between these two for a while until you've had enough. (Try to keep it going for at least 5 minutes.)

Your eyes may begin to tear and you may contact various old feelings or memories. It comes as a surprise to many people, just how much they control their feelings by controlling the mobility of their eyes. Whatever arises, just stay with it in a gentle, non-forcing manner and explore.

2 - Eye Dance

Sit in an upright posture and gently rest your gaze on an object directly in front of you. With a great deal of awareness, slowly and sensitively turn your head to the right, all the time keeping your gaze on the object. When you have gone as far as you can without straining, or losing sight of the object, pause there a moment and then slowly move the head back towards the left as far as it will go, still keeping the eyes focused on the object in front. Go back and forth, right to left and left to right, exploring the texture of the movement. It is not unusual to find jerky bits or sticky places.

Try moving even slower and at the same time become aware of your breathing. With a bit of practice you might discover a wonderful fluidity, not just in your neck and head but flowing down into the rest of your body. After experimenting with this for a few times, pause for a rest. Then, with the same quality of sensitive awareness, try raising your head and lowering it, again keeping your eyes on the same object. Finally try rolling your head in a circle while keeping your gaze on the object. Then rest.

Now try moving your eyes while keeping your head still. Look to the right and then to the left and go back and forth a few times. Raise your eyes and lower them. Explore these movements a few times. Now experiment with rolling your eyes in large circles. Do all these movements in a slow and gentle manner.

Finally, allow yourself to appear a bit impish. Move your eyes more quickly. Look up to the right. Up to the left. Down to the right. Off to the side and so forth. Continue in a spontaneous and random fashion. You are the mischievous monkey figure in the Balinese dance. Play with these movements for a while and then rest. You might find a lightness of seeing, a softness and pleasure, glowing through your being

3 - General Massage

A good way to do this is by sitting with your elbows resting on a table. Now, supporting your head comfortably on your finger tips, begin to massage your forehead and temples. Do this quite firmly but not too quickly. Take your time. After a while move down to the area just under the cheekbones and work your way out towards the place where your jaw hinges near your ears. Pull the flesh of your cheeks and massage along the jaw. Push firmly through the flesh and massage the gums. Give your lips a work out. Move your ears. Now using your fingertips, massage your head upwards towards the crown. Finish this general massage by again working over your whole face.

4 - Eye Massage

Once you have explored your face and head in the general fashion described above, then you can begin to work more intensively around your eyes. Place your thumbs in the upper corner of your eyes near your nose. It helps to rest your forefingers against your eyebrows. In this position you can press up with your thumbs while squeezing down with your fingers. It may feel as if you were squeezing your eyebrows whilst pressing up against the bone of the eye socket with your thumbs. If you can relax, your eyeball will move a bit to allow your thumb or finger to go more deeply into the bony socket. Do this with a great deal of sensitivity. It should be firm but not painful.

Push the thumbs in for a moment and perhaps experiment with wiggling them a bit. Then gently release the pressure and move the thumbs a little along the boney ridge of the upper eye socket towards the outside of the eyes. Gently press again. Keep going like this until you get to the far outside of the eyes, then change your hand position so that your forefinger is now on the inside of the lower eye socket and your thumb is just under your cheekbone. Now you can continue to work back in along the lower part of the eye socket until you are at the point just below where you began. Finish off by once again massaging your eyebrows, forehead and your cheekbones.

4 - Hot and Cold Compresses

Arrange to have two large bowls, one filled with hot water and the other with ice water. Have two face clothes, one in each bowl. Lying comfortably on your back, take the hot face cloth and wring it nearly dry. Then lay it across your eyes, forehead and temple. Gently press it down with the palms of your hands. Be sure to leave room so that you can easily breathe through your nose. Leave it for a few moments until it begins to cool and then replace it with an ice cold cloth. This one can be a lot wetter. Leave it there until it no longer feels cold. Continue to alternate back and forth, hot to cold to hot and so forth, and allow your face to completely relax.

5 - Bathing in Blue Light

Sitting or lying down, cover your eyes with the palms of your hands. Try to do this so that even though your eyes are open they are seeing only darkness. Imagine a source of lapis lazuli blue light, far away in the distance. Feel this blue light streaming into your eyes and filling your head with soft, deep space blue radiance. With each inhalation imagine the light streaming in and bathing your entire being. On each exhalation allow your body to soften and relax. Breathe like this for ten or fifteen minutes.

6 - Sunning

Sit or lie in a position where you can see the sun. Close your eyes and feel the warmth bathing your eyes. Slowly turn your head back and forth right to left and left to right and feel the sun warming all the parts of your eyes. Do this a number of times. While doing these movements, MAKE SURE YOUR EYES ARE CLOSED. Then explore moving your head up and down. Finally try rolling your head in a circle all the time feeling the play of warmth on your eyelids.

7 - Saline bath

Using an eyedropper, flush your eyes with saline solution. This is made with sea salt and pure water. It should be roughly the saltiness of tears and should feel quite soothing.

NOTE: For some people this is as far as they will want to go. The rest of the process with the lemon and the chilli is entirely optional.

8 - Lemon flush

To help bring more blood and oxygen etc. to the eyes, place a few drops of lemon water into each eye. This will cleanse the surface of the eye. (See the appendix for further instruction) Since some people are a bit nervous about doing this, I usually demonstrate on myself after giving out the instructions.

9 - Chillies

It is important to explain very clearly to everyone how we do this. Place some fresh hot chillies or some fresh cayenne pepper on a plate. Rub the chillies between your fingers for a few moments, or if you are using cayenne, dab a bit on your finger. Then using a paper towel, wipe your finger completely clean. Make sure there are no particles of chilli on your finger. All you'll have is a residue of chilli oil. Then, sit down, and wipe your finger along the inside of the lower eye lid and then quickly do the other eyelid. This will usually cause a strong reaction as any of you who have inadvertently done this in the kitchen will know.

The length of time for the reaction depends on how much you get in your eyes. It often goes for between 5 and 10 minutes. If it is really intolerable, you can get someone else to flush dropper after dropper of saline into your eyes. In the many times I have done the chillis with beings though, I have very rarely had to resort to flushing with saline.

10 - Saline solution

Once the chilli reaction is completely finished, flush your eyes again with saline.

11 - More blue light

Finish off with more palming and bathing in the imagined blue light as in section 5.

Afterwards

During the day, along with all your other explorations, you can try alternating between 'sunning' and 'bathing in blue light'. This alternation will encourage deep relaxation and a surprising degree of healing.

Day Seven - Smell

We might as well say that we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and that the world is perceiving itself through us. - D.A.

Today is going to be a bit on the nose for some of you. Smell is a greatly neglected sense. I knew a person who claimed that he didn't have any sense of smell and yet he could cook! Talking with him made me realise how difficult it is to describe to another what we are sensing.

Smell is perhaps our oldest and from a certain point of view, our most straight forward sense. The olfactory bulb is composed of neurons coming directly out of the brain. Molecules of substance wafting up the nose stick on the brain and voilà..... memories, associations, emotions, sex, defence! There is no specialised nerve ending, no eyeball, ear, tongue, or touch sensors, just direct molecule to brain knowing!

A very interesting book by Lyall Watson is called "Jacobson's Organ" It is all about smell and especially the smells that we are completely unaware of. Unbelievable as it may seem, there is today a considerable amount of research going into what could be thought of as a sixth sense. It's called Jacobson's Organ and it is located high up in our nasal passages. It is an entirely different structure from the olfactory bulbs and the evidence points towards the likelihood that these organs are for detecting pheromones. Pheromones have long been recognised as powerful communication substances, for example, moths use them to detect sexual mates even at great distances. The idea that humans are moving through a fine chemical smell-scape of intimate emotional perception is something that few are aware of.

Non-human animals are obviously tuned to each other's inner cycles, especially sexual cycles. Why is it so surprising that humans are just as tuned? I suspect it's because we don't want to admit our animalness.

For most people, the idea of losing their sense of sight is horrific, but think how blind you would be with no sense of smell. No danger alerting sense; gas leaks, pot burning on the stove, something wrong with the car. Living in cities in air filled with petrochemicals has probably damaged most people's sense of smell to the point where they are happy not to smell anything. Then there is the perfume industry; an industry dedicated to hiding our natural messages, often coming from armpits and crotch, covering them over with sex hormones taken from other animals. I don't know how people can stand it. Walking down the street I

can smell a person coming along the sidewalk 20 metres before they get to me. They walk in a cloud of manufactured perfume that is so strong I doubt that they can smell any of the world they are moving through.

Smell is a mysterious and evocative sense. Nerves for smelling connect with many different areas of the brain hence triggering an immense cascade of associations and memories. After we have finished our work this morning, I'd like you all to go for a smell walk. Be like a dog for the rest of the day. Explore the smellscape. Abandon the use of perfumes for the week and find out who you really are and what the others around you are on about. Beautiful friendly words and smile coming through a cloud of fear-smell. Withdrawn looking introverted type surrounded by an inviting aura. What are you going to believe?

In Zen, there is much talk about the essence of mind. It seems strangely appropriate that essence which is a word associated with smell, "essential oils" etc. is used by meditators when trying to describe that most elusive of elusives; mind. It's possible that our sense of smell is much more informative than we think. It may be that much of our intuition is triggered by unconscious smells giving rise to buried associations. Human smelling abilities are often compared with dogs with humans coming out so poorly that we might think we could do without the sense all together, however, I think that we have much greater abilities than most would ever imagine. Consider the possibility of knowing another's mental/emotional state through smell. The idea that we could know the essence of another's mind isn't so far fetched. Who (k)nose?

Session on Smell

For many of you, this will be the most intimate work of the week. It will also help break a few taboos like picking your nose in public! Each person will need to have a large amount of toilet paper. I usually do the process on myself as I give instruction to the people. This way I remind myself of where special sensitivity is needed and I have a better idea as to how long to spend at each stage. More than any of the other sense clearings, this one is impossible to describe in written form beyond a general outline. If you are working on your own, do it with a tremendous amount of care and sensitivity. The whole exercise should be approached as a continuous experiment, a very gentle exploration. If you are guiding others make sure you have done it yourself a number of times.

1 - General Massage

Begin with a general massage around the cheeks and forehead, gradually working in towards the outer part of the nose. Take five to ten minutes for this and use some camomile oil if you wish.

2 - Nose Massage

Use a very small amount of oil and gently begin to explore the entrances of the nostrils. Get them used to being worked. Part of what you are doing at this stage is stretching the tissues. Go very slowly and sensitively. Take about 5 minutes or more with the soft tissue on the insides and the outsides of the nose.

3 - Now, using your little finger, (make sure the nail is trimmed and filed right down), begin to slide it up your nose. It will help to look at an anatomy text to remind yourself of the shape of the nasal passages. I often use my right hand to go up my left nostril. This is so the flat of the nail lies along the cartilage dividing the nasal passages. Go in a bit and then, supporting your head with your other hand, pause there breathing through your mouth. On the exhalations, you might be able to slide in a micro amount further. I usually suggest working one side for a bit and then going to the other side and then back to the first. Alternating sides gives the tissues a chance to rest.

The nasal tissues are not used to being physically touched so be very gentle. After you have explored both sides sufficiently and have gone in as far as you are going to go, then very gradually retrace your steps and massage your way out to the exterior.

(You may find your nose begins to run with lots of mucus, hence the need for toilet paper beside you.)

4 - Saline bath

Fill a drinking glass with warm saline solution. About the same saltiness as you used for your eyes. I find this easier to do standing. Tilt your head to one side and close off the upper nostril while holding the glass to your lower nostril. Inhale and suck up the saline solution and let it come out in your mouth. Spit out the water. Alternate nostrils until the solution is finished.

5 - Sit in meditation for a while.

Afterwards

While you are very focused, go for a smell walk. Smell the earth, the leaves, the flowers, your clothes. Smell your food, your room, all the objects that you meet. Notice the subtle shifts in smell as the temperature changes throughout the day. Explore how the reaction to smells involves your whole body as well as your mental processes; memories, associations, evaluations and so forth. Open yourself to the possibility of knowing much more of what is going on around you than you usually credit.

Have a good day!

Any Remaining Days - Mind

The last sense is the mind and from a certain point of view, cleansing the mind so that it can function well, is what most Buddhist practice is about. From another point of view, mind is "that which knows" and that which knows is much more than just your brain. It encompasses everything that is involved in the process of knowing. As we discovered working with the 18 dhatu, the subject, the object and the interaction are all parts of the knowing. In a way, that which knows is the entire of being and the fact of being doesn't actually need cleansing. It's our limited attitudes and negative thought patterns that could do with a washing but they are aspects of mind, not mind itself. The most direct approach to cleansing the mind door is to live in a way that will encourage open, responsive, compassionate, awake, investigative, presence in everything that we do.

In many spiritual traditions the five senses are often neglected or tacitly thought of as unimportant as we study the mind or spirit. This is surely a huge mistake. Our senses are our interaction points with the world. The way they function, in a way, defines who and what we are.

This is a marvellous study and the exercises we've explored this week are just a small starting point for a vast and engaging journey. Through our senses we meet with others, hence others are fabulously important. We have evolved to meet them! Through our senses, we mutually understand and shape each other. The fundamental equipment, we already have our bodies. The only extra stuff that would help on the way is a great compassion for the world, for all beings, for "others", and a huge interest/curiosity to lend energy to our search.

Children have this natural curiosity. They poke their fingers into all their openings, wondering what's in there and marvelling at the feelings and sensations that arise. They are often made to feel ashamed for doing so. Senses are inevitably sensual so if that has become threatening, as a defence you may have become intellectual or at least addicted to fantasy and story making. The path of awakening is actually very sensible. It is closer than hands and feet. To rest easefully in the functioning sensual reality of our bodies is a first step towards feeling at home everywhere. When a person has been unconscious for some time and they wake up we say they have come to their senses. May we all wake up and come to our senses for the sake of all beings.

Appendix

Daily Puja

You might use "Daily Puja" by Tarchin Hearn. Published by Wangapeka Books.

In the introduction it says: "This booklet is a collection of reflections or mini-contemplations inspired or taken directly from the Buddhist tradition. They are presented in a way that will speak to the universal nature of everyone, regardless of their religious beliefs. Puja means to honour or to venerate. With these contemplations we honour the mystery of life and refresh our intention to live in a sane, healthy and compassionate manner."

Further on in the commentary it says: "The contemplations in this booklet are to awaken question and to reconnect us with some of the more meaningful facets of life. They call us to examine our aspiration, the way we live, the nature of our body, our relationship with death, our potential for love and the quality of our ongoing daily awareness. They are not a collection of religious dogmas one must take on or believe, in order to awaken. Instead, think of them as a set of themes to be explored and contemplated again and again as one's insight and experience deepens through the years. There are many ways to work with them. Perhaps more important though, is to allow these themes to work on us.

To begin each day with contemplations that open you to the larger story of awakening adds something immensely valuable to this work of exploring the senses. You may come from a different religious tradition with your own forms of reflection and worship. Feel free to adapt and use whatever morning reflections seem to be most supportive to you at this stage in the journey.

Daily Self Massage

You can do this through your clothes. Try to involve every part of the body you can reach and give particular attention to your hands and feet, face and head. When you have finished, spend some time meditating outdoors.

Breathing Meditation - Anapanasati

There is much more detailed instruction on breathing meditation in my books "Breathing: The Natural Way to Meditate" and "The Cycle of Samatha"

Walking

For more extensive instruction, see my booklet "Walking in Wisdom" In the mean time, here are a few basic ideas. When you are walking, first of all become familiar and proficient with the four basic supports. These are 1) smiling, 2) breathing, 3) physical awareness and 4) awareness that you are walking on countless living beings or that with each step you are being supported by countless living beings.

If you lose all four supports, smiling breathing etc., then stop walking and feel your body standing on the earth and especially your feet upon the ground. Re-contact the four supports and then continue walking. You may not be able to attend to all four at the same time but as long as you have at least one of them clearly in focus, you are still deepening the mindfulness through walking.

Every once in a while, even if you have good focus, stop walking and open all your senses to what is going on immediately around you. Without conceptualising, bathe in the beauty of nature for a while. Then re-contacting the four supports, continue walking.

During the walk try emphasising awareness of the sense you have been working on that day.

Once you can walk with the four basics then try intensifying your awareness of all five senses, giving equal attention to each sense. You may have a sense of being a sphere of all-round sensing moving in the space of knowing.

Walk with the awareness that every step you take changes the world irrevocably.

Explore the possibility that everything you see is seeing you. Everything you hear is hearing you. In short that everything you sense can in some way sense you.

Creating mandalas of the inner sensations and experiences.

Allow yourself to be very creative with this. If a strong image, or emotion, or overall feeling or sensation invites you to further exploration then try painting or creating something while you are in this state. Don't get too intellectual but allow your intuition to guide your choice of colour and form. Let the mandala unfold itself.

If you find yourself working with particularly difficult states such as pain or fear and so forth, I suggest you begin your mandala work by drawing a light circle on your page about the size of a dinner plate. Then keep whatever you draw within the circle. This keeps the exploration within a boundary which often feels a bit more safe. It also speaks of completeness. When you have finished a mandala, have a break and then come back and sit with it for a while. Take it in and see how it affects you now. Is the feeling generated in your being different than when you painted it? What is this overall sensation? Can you name it? This is a huge exploration in its own right so I hope this is sufficient to get you started.

Equipment

Each sense exploration requires some equipment. The instructor will provide what is being used by the group in general and the individuals will bring things they use personally. Some things need to be prepared a few weeks in advance.

Taste

Instructor should provide:

- Baking soda,
- Sea salt, Lemons,
- Lots of non-chlorinated drinking water,
- Knife to cut the lemons
- Vicco - Vajradanti tooth powder (strong) This is usually available at a pharmacy or health food store that carries Ayurvedic Medicines.

Each participant should bring:

- Magnifying glass
- toothbrush
- a glass or cup
- towel to mop up the dribbling

Hearing

Instructor should provide:

- corn oil - If you can't find corn oil, use the camomile oil prepared for the sense of touch.
- Vitamin E oil plus Eucalypt oil. Mix a few drops of Eucalypt oil with the Vitamin E oil to give it some heat
- Hydrogen Peroxide 3% solution,
- eye droppers
- toilet paper
- cotton buds
- Lemon water for final rinsing

Each participant should bring:

- towel
- cushions and mat to lie on

Touch

Instructor should provide:

- Loofas for removing dead skin
- One medium size face cloth for each person. Sometimes we cut up old towels for this.

- Camomile oil. This oil needs to be prepared at least two weeks before the course. To make it, fill a jar, (size depends on how much you need) with dried camomile flowers. Any good quality loose camomile tea will do. Then pour some best quality, cold pressed, extra virgin olive oil over the camomile until the flowers are completely covered. I usually warm the oil a bit before pouring it onto the flowers. Cover the jar with cloth to allow breathing and to keep the dust out. Then store it in a dark place for two weeks. Strain the oil through a sieve to remove most of the flowers and then strain it again through clean loose cotton to remove any fine particles. At this point you should have a very fine oil which smells richly of camomile and amazingly, has become of finer texture than the original olive oil.

- One bucket for two people
- Fine pottery clay mixed to a consistency of Devon cream
- Lots of crushed ice
- Lots of hot water

Each participant should bring:

- towels
- mats and cushions
- blanket or sleeping bag in case you get cold

Sight

Instructor should provide:

- hot water
- ice water
- saline solution - use sea salt and pure water. Add the salt until it tastes something close to sweat or tears, then try it out on your own eyes. It should feel cool and on the soothing side.
- lemon water - place a small number of drops of fresh lemon in a glass of pure water. It takes surprisingly few drops. Try it out on your own eyes first before giving it to others. It should feel slightly astringent. It will probably cause you to close your eyes but it shouldn't be very uncomfortable.
- cayenne pepper or fresh hot chillies
- a number of clean eyedroppers

Keep one eyedropper in the salt water and one eyedropper in the lemon water. Don't mix them up. When you want soothing saline, you don't want residues of lemon.

- lots of toilet paper

Smell

Instructor should provide:

- salt water
- toilet paper
- camomile oil

Each participant should bring

- one drinking glass

Suggested Reading

"Jacobson's Organ" by Lyall Watson Penguin Books/2000

"The Spell of the Sensuous" by David Abram, Vintage Books/1997

"The Feeling of What Happens" by Antonio Damasio, Vintage Books/2000

Books & Booklets by Tarchin,

published by Wangapeka Books

Natural Awakening - The Way of the Heart

Growth and Unfolding - Our Human Birthright

Breathing - The Natural Way to Meditate

Meditative First Aid

Daily Puja

The Cycle of Samatha

Walking in Wisdom

Foundations of Mindfulness

About Tarchin

Tarchin Hearn has more than 30 years of experience in Theravadin and Mahayana schools of Buddhism and was ordained as a monk for 12 years in the Tibetan tradition. Since 1977 he has taught in many countries and helped establish a number of centres for study and practice. He is based in New Zealand. For more information see the web site for The Wangapeka Educational Trust. <http://wangapeka.nelson.org.nz>

*Through the power of these wholesome explorations
May our lives be rich with awakening.
Living thus, may we abandon all unwholesomeness.
Through the endless journey of birth, illness old-age and death,
May we help all beings to cross the ocean of the suffering of the worlds.*

SARVA MANGALAM
All is blessing!