Gratitude

Home Practice

Formal Practice: Practice the 15 minute Gratitude meditation daily. You can do the practice unguided after you get a feel for it.

- Submit your daily moments of joy, warmth, delight, or appreciation to the Virtual Gratitude Jar!

Informal Practice

- Tune in to moments of joy or warmth or delight (this could be something you encounter through your senses, like a particular sound, or smell, or feel of something, or taste, or seeing something), or a person, or place
- In a way that feels genuine to you, express your appreciation for the moment ("Thank you for this experience", for example)
- Savor any pleasant body sensations that arise
- **Optional Additional Practices**
    - Take a moment to pause before a daily activity to appreciate what is before you (example: before eating, reflecting on where the food came from)
    - Daily gratitude walk where you notice what you delight in through your senses
    - Daily gratitude buddy - sharing a moment of joy or delight or appreciation with your buddy
    - Gratitude journal - write down daily moments of appreciation

Class Summary

Key Takeaways

- **Gratitude** can be thought of as "**appreciation**."
- We can't force ourselves to feel appreciative - **we can only set intentions, plant seeds**, and do practices that incline our mind toward this state.
- **Feeling appreciation builds a connection**, or bridge, between us and the object of our appreciation. This can help us remember that we are not a separate, striving self.
- **Expressing** our appreciation strengthens this bridge.

Definitions

Gratitude can be thought of as “appreciation.” It can be an appreciation of a particular experience or moment you’ve had, through your senses, with a person, or in a special place. As an attitude, it is an appreciation for whatever is presently in front of you in life.

Understanding Gratitude

- Sometimes when we talk about gratitude it can bring about a sense of shame, a sense of privilege, separateness, guilt, and “shoulds”. But this is not about how you “should” be grateful for what you have compared to another. **The true practice of gratitude is one of love and connectedness, not comparison and judgment.**
- **We can’t “will” ourselves to feel grateful** - we are setting intentions, or inclinations of the mind. We are planting seeds and then watering them with practice and seeing what happens, letting go of the outcome.
- **When we allow appreciation, we build a connection** to whatever we express it to, whether it be a plant, animal, or person. With repeated encounters, this builds an **interconnectedness between us and the world**, reminding us that we’re not a separate striving self.
- **The benefits of this connectedness increase when we express** the appreciation we feel (through words, a smile, a gesture, etc).

Obstacles

- Fear, guilt, a sense of unworthiness, or a sense of not-enoughness all can arise from our familial, cultural, and biological conditioning
- These conditions are completely understandable, reasonable, and **not our fault**
- *Reflection Question - What is it that keeps you from sensing, or from expressing, gratitude in your life?*

How to Practice

- **Our practice of mindfulness primes us for being able to appreciate things** because the first step in appreciation is recognition of what’s here. Gratitude is “the most exquisite mindfulness practice - to open our senses to everything and take a bow to it all” - Jack Kornfield
- Formal or Informal practice - inviting a memory of a moment of joy, and inviting a sense of appreciation for that moment

Tips

- Like other heart practices, **difficult emotions may arise**, and our practice is, as much as is possible, to **hold whatever comes up with compassion**
- **Our object of appreciation doesn’t have to be some extremely important aspect of life**, such as “i’m grateful for my shelter, food, family, etc” - it can be seemingly small.

"I'm grateful for the bird call I just heard", or "for the taste and warmth of that coffee I just sipped", or "that i got out of bed this morning"

- There is an invitation to **allow ourselves to be surprised, to be delighted**, by what shows up at our doorstep
- **We can practice appreciation even with life's difficulties**
    - *Reflection Question - When did you learn the most? When did you grow? Was it when things were easy? Or was it when you were challenged, when things were difficult?*
    - *Reflection Question - What opportunity is life presenting right now that I can be grateful for?*

Poems

Consider the Generosity of a One-Year-Old (excerpt) - Alison Luterman

Consider the generosity of a one-year-old,
who has no words to exchange with you yet,
and instead offers up her favorite drooled-on blanket,
her green rhinoceros as big as she is,
her cloth doll with the long blonde pigtails,
her battered cardboard books, swung open on their soggy pages,
her limitless heart.

If you were outdoors she would hand you a dead beetle,
a fistful of grass, a pebble,
by way of introduction or just because.
And if, a moment later, she wants it back,
it would be for the joy of passing
these simple symbols back and forth,
freely offered, freely relinquished,
This is me. Here is who I am. Oh.

In the same way, sun
drapes a buttered scarf across your face,
rose opens herself to your glance,
and rain shares its divine melancholy.
The whole world keeps whispering or shouting to you,
nibbling your ear like a neglected lover.

Jack Kornfield

Gratitude is the most exquisite mindfulness practice -
to open our senses to everything and take a bow to it all.