AWAKENING AT HOME

Awakening is a process, through which the mind transforms self-awareness towards comprehending the stress that arises due to craving and clinging, that is, wanting pleasurable mind states, wanting to be rid of unpleasant mind states, and clinging to provisional, transient identifications in the mind that seem to define a permanent self, but are, in fact, just constructions of imagination. The underpinning of awakening is the development of ongoing self-awareness, typically best accomplished through intensive meditation retreat practice, accompanied by a commitment to daily meditation when not on retreat. Although startlingly impactful insights can occur at home, it is more likely that one’s life will become more peaceful, with gradually increasing clarity regarding how to live a more fulfilling life that can actually be beneficial to those beings, human and otherwise that are among what I call the “Sphere of Influence”. I call this process *self-state integration*, because there are fewer areas of internal conflict in one’s personality through diligent application of the principles and practices involving what can be termed “Secular Buddhism”, found mostly in the West and without the trappings of an organized religious institution.

A key principle in Buddhism is *anatta*, the *absence of an enduring and autonomous self*. As practice matures this will become more experientially understood through careful investigation of the ever-changing nature of self-state organization. To foster this, contemplate this: *If there is no enduring self, we are not compelled to re-enact dysfunctional beliefs and behaviors. Since the self is constantly re-created, commit to this prospect: Rather than believing there is a self who is kind, what if the principle of kindness organizes a self?* Rather than a self who is mindful, how about cultivating mindfulness to create a self? Easier said than done, of course; however, what is lost other than recurring distress and confusion? What I’m attempting to do here is to point out how the skills of introspection and impulse regulation developed during retreat experiences can be applied at home. The essence of Buddhist practices is how we live on a daily basis. It is hoped that the following will help in this way:

Mindfulness:

* Using body awareness (breath sensation & elsewhere)
* Vitakka & vicara (aiming & sustaining)
* Meditating daily at least 45 minutes to cultivate samadhi/passadhi.
* Four Clear Comprehensions—Sampajanna (sahm-pah-jahn-yah)
1. Spiritually worthy goal
2. Spiritually suitable means to reach goal
3. Spiritual domain (body, feelings, mind, mental objects)
4. Spiritual integrity (impermanent, suffering, impersonal)

Cultivate the Seven Awakening Factors: Mindfulness, Investigation of Mental Phenomena, Persistent Right Effort, Enthusiastic Engaged Interest, Tranquility, Concentration/Unification and Equanimity/Balance.

Investigate how self-states arise, not the content of the arising self-states

Right Effort (support arising of wholesome, non-arising of unwholesome)

Compassionate awareness: “I’m witnessing suffering”

Equanimity & patience

Renunciation & generosity

Studying & talking about the Dhamma

Active involvement in a spiritual community

Right Speech:

* Monitoring the selfing story
* Careful listening to others
* Considered, respectful, compassionate responses
* Situational appropriateness

Right Action:

* Purposeful, helpful action
* Harmonious to others’ need
* Efficient use of resources
* Avoiding impulsive, reactive behavior
* Routine acts of generosity
* Regular gratitude inventory
* Avoiding addictive substances & behaviors

Right Livelihood (or Right Lifestyle):

* Avoiding overstimulation
* Adequate rest & exercise
* Healthy food in moderation
* Not causing unnecessary environmental harm
* Not causing unnecessary cultural harm
* Time & effort dedicated to spiritual growth
* Proactive health maintenance
* Prudent financial management
* Voluntary simplicity

Right Relationship:

* Adequate social contact & support
* Interpersonal respect
* Active support for community
* Balance between enmeshment and autonomy
* Making amends when appropriate
* Offering compassion & generosity
* Willingness to be influenced by others

**These are application of Buddhist “skillful means” which support life experience:**

**These are aspects of life experience that are relevant to spiritual development:**