

Five Forces:

1. Be intense, be committed.
2. Familiarization – get used to doing and being what you want to do and to be.
3. Cultivate the white seeds, not the black ones.
4. Turn totally away from all your ego trips.
5. Dedicate all the merits of what you do for the benefit of others.

I struggled a bit with the first of these -- sounds good to be intense and focused, but about what? While sitting, it was sometimes possible to be intense and focused about relaxing (related to accepting), to be firmly committed to that exploration, rather than mindlessly indulge in the pursuit of stillness (an idea) or good posture (a memory). Very tiny ways of grasping can be noticed and soothed this way.

Hmm, and then I struggled with the second and third :). Familiarity breeds contempt as they say and I find this to be very true of me. If something becomes too familiar, too comfortable, it can turn into a dull pattern. The questions marks are more exciting. And yet, I find it easier to sit now than I did a few years ago. If sitting is regular, then previous sits come to help; if sitting becomes inconsistent for a few days, then next time I find myself struggling more. Likewise, being truthful today helps me be more truthful tomorrow. Maybe I'm just noticing the virtuous and vicious cycles -- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virtuou...vicious_circle -- perhaps familiarization/cycles are just a fact of life, and therefore we can help ourselves (and each other) a little by nourishing the virtuous rather than the vicious seeds :).

OK, 4 and 5 seem like good advice (she finally gives the dharma a break!). What seems strange (aside from how tricky it can be to fully implement) is how long it took for me to accept these. I sometimes wonder if isolation / blindness to interconnectedness is our biggest cultural obstacle.

Breathing practice

Thanks for the link to Pema's introduction. Must admit, I quickly ran into fears about ack -- I don't want to breathe in someone else's diseases. But breathing in my own discomfort and irritations was a way to let go of these struggles, to take responsibility for them and also to more fully accept and appreciate them. Breathing out, radiating joy did not seem like trading it away but rather a way to increase it, a way to more fully appreciate the gifts we are given and to complete the circle by returning them.