Settling Back
Into The Moment

A Selection of Verses from the Book
"The Experience of Insight" by Joseph Goldstein

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A WORD OF THANKS TO JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN FOR HIS KIND PERMISSION TO REPRINT EXCERPTS FROM HIS BOOK ENTITLED 'EXPERIENCE OF INSIGHT' SKETCHES SHOWN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES DO NOT NECESSARILY EXEMPLIFY THE WORDS.

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Settling Back into the Moment

A SELECTION OF VERSES
FROM THE BOOK 'THE EXPERIENCE OF INSIGHT' BY JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN
PREFACE

This book belongs to a different genre; not a book in the sense of having a beginning and an end; where a reader reads from left to right for continuity.

It is a compilation of excerpts that alone stand alone in meaning whichever way your finger may flip open the pages; for these are words of timeless truths devoid of space and time; words that are meant for your reflection now and here; words that talk straight to your heart and mind; words that are very close to you, as close as your breath.

For the moment, let the quaint words and myriad number of lines (that suggest painstaking digital effort) wrest your quivering mind and somehow point out to you that you have also to put in an effort and rouse your own energy; effort and energy that is needed for something worthwhile ~ striving in a retreat.

To the uninitiated, the words may conjure a seemingly new vista of neither looking backwards nor ahead. Keep on reading and be inspired. At least you are aware that sitting and looking at the moment can be such a big subject worth many words. Not a dull subject, huh?

To the initiated, let the words refresh and advise. By thus knowing what the road signs will be and what is expected from oneself in the journey, a yogi is better equipped to disentangle from a maze of wrong turnings and avoid going in circles.

As a saying goes, a journey begins with a single step. We might as well start right now by going through short sessions of meditation daily. After all, mountain climbers started off
climbing walls. Mental - culture or insight meditation is not to be deemed practicable only at a retreat.
If at a place where solitude and quietude is of greater magnitude, how could one adjust from home where latitude breeds latitude.

It is often remarked that opportunity knocks but once. This is utterly not true in the context of insight meditation; opportunity does not start at the doorstep of a retreat. As Joseph Goldstein puts it "......situation of retreats did not happen by chance, it happened because there were strong forces of purity within each of us...." If you have the opportunity to attend retreats why waste it away.....

Meditation teachers have always encouraged yogis to familiarize their minds with meditation prior to each actual retreat. For instance, one could practice a short session of meditation daily for a week or two (but of course, practicing every day is always called for). If a yogi enter a retreat without getting acquainted with the practice, he or she has to 'struggle' mentally for a few days before the mind settles down. By then, two or three days could have elapsed; a sheer loss for those (earning a living) who have to 'fight' for a week or less of holidays to embark on a retreat.

This does not mean to say that those with lots of time in their hands could say "What is two or three days?" never heard of death giving priorities, have you?

Reading this book now and perhaps ten years later will definitely yield a different perspective; a different depth of meaning. Sketches in the book are not meant to exemplify the words; but are graphics to break the monotony of words. Feeling bored with words?

Awareness.

It is hoped that this compilation will guide many to realize the fruit of the practice. If this compendium speaks to a thousand in order to propel one to urgently allow the experience of insight to engulf him or her,
the book would have achieved its noble purpose.

Readers are strongly encouraged to read Joseph Goldstein’s "Experience of Insight - a simple and direct guide to Buddhist Meditation" (Published by Shambhala Publication, Inc.) from whose book this compilation is attributed.

Maha eadhu to all the kind people who have helped to defray the cost of printing.

SHAMBALA PUBLICATION, INC. Address:
314 Dartmouth Street
Boston,
Massachusetts 02116
aspiration...

may this book successfully arouse continuous effort and confidence in all who strive for the path.
A JOURNEY
We have all begun
a journey.
A journey into our minds.
A journey of discovery
and exploration of
who and what we are.

Taking the first step is
difficult, and in the
first days of practice
there is often
restlessness,
or sleepiness
some boredom
laziness
doubt
and perhaps regret about
going involved at all.
It's not an easy thing that we have set about to do, this training and purification of the mind.
There's no one else who can do it for us.

We each have to do it for ourselves.

Be aware, moment to moment, paying attention to what's happening in a total way.

There's nothing mystical about it, it's so simple, direct & straightforward;

but it takes doing.

That's what meditation is all about.
The first step is difficult for everyone.

the spiritual quest we are embarking upon is a rare and precious undertaking, so be gentle yet persevering through any beginning difficulties.
DAILY TIME SCHEDULE

4:00 am. - WALKING
5:00 am. - SITTING
6:00 am. - BREAKFAST
7:00 am. -

---

use the opportunity of RETREATS to the fullest:
don't waste time or think you've done enough.
THE HIGHEST KIND OF HAPPINESS
is vipassana happiness, the happiness of insight, seeing how things are working.

It is a very happy state when one begins to appreciate with a beginner’s mind every moment as new, as fresh.

So there is a great delight in existence which comes from a beginner’s mind, from a deconditioned mind, a mind that is experiencing directly rather than thinking about everything.
The first days of a retreat may seem difficult because concentration is not well developed.

To climb a mountain, you need certain physical strength.

If you are not yet strong, in the beginning you will feel tired and uncomfortable. But as the body gets stronger, climbing becomes easier.

It is the same in meditation. As concentration is developed, it becomes less difficult to stay in the moment.
To
practise and understand the Dhamma
is a rare and precious thing.

Few people in the world are
presented with this
opportunity.

Most people are circling around,
driven by ignorance and desire,
unaware of the possibility
of getting off this wheel of samsara,
the wheel of greed and hatred.
The endless cycle of desire for sense pleasures keeps the mind in turbulence and confusion.

When we learn to let go, the lighter the mind becomes.

Then there is no disturbance, no tension, and we begin to free ourselves from our storehouse of conditioning, from our bondage to sense desires.
THE DEVELOPING OF INSIGHT MEANS EXPERIENCING THE FLOW OF IMPERMANENCE WITHIN OURSELVES SO THAT WE BEGIN TO LET GO, NOT GRASPING SO DESPERATELY AT MIND-BODY PHENOMENA.
NO ONE CAN BE SURE WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PRACTICE WILL COME AGAIN.

THERE ARE VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR US IN THIS ENVIRONMENT.

IT IS THE PERFECT PLACE TO EXPLORE OURSELVES, TO FIND OUT WHO WE ARE.

DON'T WASTE THE OPPORTUNITY.
What we're doing in coming to an understanding of ourselves is the **NOBLEST THING** that can be done.

It is the eradication from the mind of greed of hatred and of delusion.

It is ......
... DIFFICULT & RARE
and requires
great
impeccability.

Impeccability means cultivating qualities of mind which bring about totality and wakefulness in every moment.
Do not control or force our breath in any way merely staying attentively to the rising and falling movement of the abdomen.
JUST ..... 

Keep your attention on the movement of the abdomen not imagining not visualizing anything but just experiencing the sensation of the MOVEMENT
If the heart wanders or is distracted,
bring it back to the point gently ..........

And even if you did nothing during the whole of your hour
but bring your heart back, though it went away every time you brought it back, your hour would be very well-employed.

~ St. Francis de Sales
Our rising & falling may be......

sometimes l-o-n-g
sometimes short
sometimes clear
sometimes not
sometimes deep
sometimes shallow

no matter what, remember, it is not a breathing exercise; it is the beginning exercise in mindfulness.
It is important to develop a steady penetrating awareness with regard to everything we do, from the time of waking up in the morning to the time of going to sleep.

Just upon awakening be aware of "rising-falling", and from that first moment be mindful of the actions involved in getting up and washing, beginning to walk, going to sit and then in standing again and going for food.
In lying down to sleep, be with the "rising-falling", until the last moment before sleep.

This kind of attention will be of great benefit in the meditation practice.

If there is the idea that the practice is only sitting and walking, and the rest of the time is not important, then in all those breaks we lose the momentum that has been building.

Cultivating a strong awareness in every action throughout the day helps the mind to remain concentrated and still.

It is this kind of determination and balance of mind out of which enlightenment happens.
seeing, seeing
intending, intending
moving, moving
touching, touching
lifting, lifting
opening, opening
putting, putting
closing, closing
feeling, feeling
chewing, chewing
tasting, tasting
swallowing, swallowing

Be aware of the whole sequence involved.
There is no one behind it, no one who is eating—merely a sequence of intentions, movements, taste, touch sensations. THAT’S WHAT WE ARE.

And being very mindful of the flow we free ourselves from the concept of self.
THERE

is no circumstance
at all which we should
consider unworthy
of awareness.

THE

sudden deep intuition
of TRUTH can happen
in a moment, when all
the factors of
enlightenment ripen
and come together
in the right balance.
"When I was in India, I lived on the second floor of an ashram.

I used to go up and down the steps many times a day, each time exploring the mechanism of climbing a step, how the knee has to work, how the weight shifts.

It’s an interesting process.

In all of the activities, there should be that kind of interest.

Seeing, exploring how things are happening."

Joseph Goldstein
Usually we eat very unmindfully. Taste comes and goes very quickly. While food is still in the mouth, because of desire and greed for continuing taste sensations, the arm reaches for more, and generally we are unaware of the whole process involved.

Finish each mouthful before reaching for another.

In this way we become sensitive to our bodies and how much food we need. It’s very hard to overeat when you eat mindfully.

Incorporate the eating meditation into your daily practice so there is no gap in the continuity of awareness.
There is no knowing when the clouds of ignorance will be dispelled.

It can happen even in the process of lying down to sleep.

BE MINDFUL!

In every single moment, be watchful, awake to what’s happening.
MEDITATION 

DEEPENS 

through 
the continuity of 

AWARENESS
BARE ATTENTION

This is one quality of mind which is the basis and foundation of spiritual discovery.

Bare attention means observing things as they are, without choosing, without comparing, without evaluating, without laying our projections and expectations on to what is happening;

cultivating instead a choiceless and non-interfering awareness
An untrained mind is often reactive, clinging to what is pleasant, condemning what is unpleasant, grasping what is liked, pushing away what is disliked, reacting with greed and hatred.

'A TIRING IMBALANCED MIND'

As bare attention is cultivated more and more we learn to experience our thoughts and feelings, situations and other people, without the tension of attachment or aversion.

We begin to have a full and total experience of what it is that's happening with a RESTFUL & BALANCED MIND.
The awareness of bare attention is not limited to a certain time of sitting in the morning and evening.

To think that sitting meditation is the time for awareness and the rest of the day is not, fragments our lives and undermines a real growth of understanding.

Mindfulness is applicable and appropriate in each moment, whether we are sitting, standing, lying down, talking or eating.
WE SHOULD CULTIVATE 
THE STATE 
OF BARE ATTENTION 
ON ALL OBJECTS, 
ON ALL STATES OF MIND, 
IN ALL SITUATIONS.

Every moment should be 
lived completely and 
wholeheartedly.
In this period of training, everything is slowed down so we have the chance to carefully examine what’s happening.

When mindfulness is well-developed, you can do things quickly as well. But this is a time for training. There is no hurry.

Do everything slowly, with silence and awareness.

From the moment you get up, through everything done in the day, be very mindful, make it all meditation.
There is great value in slowing down all our activities. no hurry no place to go nothing else to do but just a settling back into the moment
HASTEN SLOWLY

Hasten in the sense of being continuous and unrelenting in our effort, but do so with poise and equanimity.

Persistent and full of effort yet very relaxed and balanced.
EMERGING FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE CAVE INTO THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM & PEACE.
People progress in different ways.

But no matter how, if we’re facing in the right direction, all we have to do is keep on walking.

If it takes a year, or sixty years or five lifetimes, as long as we’re heading towards LIGHT, that’s all that matters.
The whole development of awareness comes from experiencing things with a silent mind, not with our thoughts & concepts about them.
Be deeply watchful of how thoughts arise out of nothing and pass away into nothing.

Or probe into pain, get on the inside of it.

Exercise the mind in a fearless way, not thinking about things but with silent awareness.
At times during the practice it may seem as if nothing much is happening except a lot of pain 
restlessness agitation & doubt.

But, in fact, every moment of AWARENESS, every moment of MINDFULNESS helps to weaken the chain of our attachments.
All we need is to be facing in the DIRECTION OF FREEDOM not going backwards, not going towards more darkness.
be gentle with yourself.
be persevering.

though it may not be apparent to you,
there is a great transformation taking place.
like fruit ripening on a tree.

as the sun shines on it, the fruit ripens, although from one day to the next, the process may be imperceptible.

in the same way, the changes and ripening in our mind are also going on.
REMEMBER......

THE BUDDHA
only points the way.
We each have to walk
upon the way ourselves.
There is no one who can
enlighten another being.
The defilements of greed
hatred
& delusion
exist within our own minds.
No one puts them there.
No one can take them out.
We have to purify ourselves.
One of the biggest obstacles on the path is the doubting mind.

Until we see through it, doubt incapacitates the mind,

blocking our effort for CLARITY
DOUBT usually arises about WHAT ONE IS DOING and about ONE'S ABILITY TO DO IT.
Perhaps since you've been here
the thought has come,

What am I doing here?

Why did I come?

I can't do it, it's too hard.
THIS IS
THE DOUBTING MIND,
A
VERY BIG
OBSTACLE
ON
THE PATH.
Recognition

is the most powerful, most effective way of

overcoming any
One of the ways to deal with HINDRANCES as they confront us on the Path is to recognise them, to see them clearly in each moment.

If sense desire arises, know immediately that there is desire in the mind.

Try recognizing immediately the particular obstacle that has arisen—be it anger, sloth, restlessness or doubt.
RECOGNITION LEADS TO MINDFULNESS
Be patient with everyone but above all, with ourselves.

Let us not be disheartened by our own imperfections but always rise up with fresh courage.

There is no better means of attainment to the spiritual life than by continually beginning again and never thinking that we have done enough.
PATIENCE

means
staying in a state of balance
regardless
of what is happening,
staying easy,
relaxed
and alert.
PATIENCE

Do not be driven to action by our desires.

If we don't have the ability to be patient, every desire which comes into our minds compels us to action and we stay bound on the wheel of craving.
No one is going to do it for us.

No one can enlighten another being.

The Buddha's enlightenment solved his problem, it didn't solve ours..... except to point out the way.

Each of us have to walk the path for OURSELVES.
DO NOT be discouraged by wandering thoughts or daydreams.

each time there is awareness of the mind wandering, gently bring it back.

No matter how many times this happens, if each time the wandering mind is brought back, the

HOUR WILL BE WELL SPENT.
Thoughts should not be treated as obstacles or hindrances. They are just another object of mindfulness, another object of meditation.

Don’t let the mind become lazy and drift along.

**MAKE THE EFFORT** for a great deal of clarity with respect to what’s happening in the moment.
To meditate upon thoughts is simply to be aware as the thoughts arise that the mind is thinking, without getting involved in the content:

not analyzing the thought and why it came, but merely to be aware that at the particular moment "thinking" is happening.

It is helpful to make a mental note of "thinking, thinking" everytime a thought arises.

Observe without judgement, without reaction to content, without taking it to be mine or I, without identifying with it.
Try to be aware of the thought as soon as it arises, rather than some minutes afterward.

When they are noticed with precision and balance they have no power to disturb the mind.
In the sitting practice, stillness of body is a great help in achieving stillness of mind.

As a way of making the concentration strong, at the beginning of some sittings make a resolution not to change position for that hour.
The first few times might be difficult, but if the resolution is IMPECCABLE (flawless) you can sit and observe whatever comes.
Even if you find the mind getting restless or reactive or tense or filled with aversion towards pain, there's value in making the resolution and FULFILLING it.
Both the CONCENTRATION and EFFORT FACTORS are greatly strengthened, and after the first few hour sittings you will find that it becomes easier to stay still.
UNLESS
WE MAKE
THE EFFORT TO PERSEVERE
NOTHING HAPPENS.

EFFORT
IS THE ROOT
OF ALL
ACHIEVEMENTS,
THE
FOUNATION
OF ALL
ATTAINMENTS.
Make a resolution to spend an hour with complete non-movement. This kind of resolution strengthens the mind in several ways - the effort and energy factors become very strong, and the stillness of body also strengthens the concentration and mindfulness.
BY
making the resolution
not to move for
an hour,
we cannot avoid
becoming aware of all
the
moments
of unpleasantness
and
our conditioned
reactions to them.
Restlessness and agitation?

Be mindful of it.
Look at it, examine what that mind is all about, pay close attention to the quality of restlessness.

If ever you are sitting make it the object of awareness.

Sit and watch, "restless, restless".

Observe without identifying with it.
To be aware.

Aware of how things are happening.

To be wakeful and balanced.

To be mindful.

Not clinging.
Not condemning.
Not identifying with things as being I or self.

Moment to moment freeing the mind from defilements.
MEDITATION

Often the late night hours are the best for

A
If late in the evening you do not feel sleepy CONTINUE THE PRACTICE
Sleep when you feel **REALLY TIRED**. not just out of habit at a certain hour.
We should NEVER fall into the trap of our conditioning, thinking that

if we don’t get seven or eight hours of sleep, we’re going to be exhausted.

That is simply an old habit pattern.
make the effort to overcome sloth and torpor.

if everytime drowsiness comes into the mind, we think, "oh well, i'll take a nap", it makes the factor stronger.

be resolute and energetic in dealing with it.
STAY SENSITIVE
to your changing needs
and
if you're not
feeling tired or sleepy
CONTINUE
the practice through the
night.
There is a strong correlation between the degree of

desire and over-indulgence in food and sleep.
MEDIUMATION
IN
EATING & SLEEPING
WEAKENS
THE FACTOR OF DESIRE
AND
BRINGS
GREATER CLARITY
When we can settle back into the moment realizing that past and future are simply thoughts in the present then we are freeing ourselves from the bondage of "TIME".
There is NOTHING to hold onto, NOTHING to grasp at, because it is all changing in the MOMENT.
generally
our body reacts to every little discomfort or unpleasant feeling with a slight change in position.
we are usually unmindful of that whole process:
feeling a little discomfort, then a slight shift of posture.
When there are strong painful feelings in the body
the tendency is such that the mind and body
tense in reaction to pain.

This is an expression of aversion, dislike, avoidance
and it creates an unbalanced state of mind.
When we find ourselves tensing because of pain, examine the quality of unpleasantness carefully, the quality of painfulness.

Become MINDFUL of that feeling and the mind will naturally come to a state of balance.
When the mind is silent, relaxed and attentive, pain is experienced not as a solid mass but as a flow, arising and vanishing moment to moment.

Sit with a relaxed and calm mind, observing the flow of sensations, without aversion, without expectation.
COURAGE

It takes courage to sit with pain, without avoiding or masking it; just to sit and face it totally and overcome one's fear.

It takes courage to probe and by that probing discover the deepest elements of the mind and body.

It can be quite unsettling at first because many of our comfortable habits get overturned.
It takes a lot of courage to let go of everything that we've been holding onto for security.

To let go, to experience the flow of impermanence.

It takes courage to face and confront the basic and inherent security of this mind-body process.

To confront the fact that in every instant what we are is continually dissolving, vanishing; that there is no place to take a stand at all.

It takes courage to die. To experience the death of the concept of self; to experience that death while we are living takes the courage and fearlessness of an impeccable warrior.
PAIN
is a good object
of meditation.

concentration
becomes strong whenever
there’s a strong pain
in the body.

the mind stays on it easily,
without wandering very much.
INSIGHT COMES FROM THE REALIZATION THAT OBSERVATION IS GOING ON WITHOUT AN OBSERVER, WITNESSING WITHOUT A WITNESS.
TALKING

distracts our attention and dissipates our energy.

It is of no wonder we don't often get a good look at what's happening in our minds.
It's beautiful and peaceful to stay in a place of silence of mind.

But that takes a lot of mindfulness because we're conditioned to a lot of talk.
A lot of talking creates a spiralling downward. We become restless; we start talking then it becomes even more difficult to concentrate and the mind becomes yet more restless.
ALWAYS renew the effort to maintain SILENCE.

silence is an energy giver. it creates a clarity in which all the aspects of the mind are clearly seen.
BY KEEPING SILENCE

THE WHOLE RANGE OF MENTAL & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WILL BECOME EXTREMELY CLEAR
SILENCE ENABLES US TO BE ATTENTIVE TO WHAT IS GOING ON, TO ALL THE UPS & DOWNS.
It is in silence and work that transformation is brought to completion.
that is conserved by not talking can be used for the development of AWARENESS & MINDFULNESS
KEEPING SILENCE AND SLOWING DOWN HELPS NOT ONLY OURSELVES BUT EVERYONE AROUND US......
in seeing someone else being mindful, we ourselves become more awake.
when we see someone else speeding along, it awakens that in us.
BE AWARE
OF THE VALUE AND HELP
YOU ARE TO OTHERS.

A RETREAT IS A
BEAUTIFUL BALANCE;
WORKING
ON OURSELVES IN
SILENCE AND SOLITUDE,
YET BEING IN THE
SUPPORTIVE
ATMOSPHERE OF A GROUP.
Making effort, rousing energy and creating solitude around ourselves will intensify the PRACTICE.
THERE SHOULD ALWAYS BE THE GREATEST EFFORT POSSIBLE ~ WITHOUT FORCING, WITHOUT CREATING TENSION.

JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN
ENERGY has to be aroused by each one of us to walk upon the path of purification.

ENERGY is a power factor; when it is cultivated and developed it overcomes sloth, torpor & laziness of mind.
ENERGY

has to be balanced with tranquility.

it is as if you are trying to tune the strings on a guitar.

if they are too tight or too loose, the sound is not right.
Even so
in our practice too,
we have to be
persistent & persevering
but with a
relaxed and balanced
mind,
making the effort

WITHOUT FORCING.

BEING
VERY TENSE AND ANXIOUS
IS A
GREAT HINDRANCE.
If we put a kettle on the stove and every few minutes take the lid off, it will take a longer time for the water to boil.

The water will heat up quickly if we just leave it as it is.

EVEN SO.....
By being continuous in our practice, each moment builds on the one before, and in a short time the mind will develop an acute strength and penetrating power.
be gentle with yourself.
be persevering.

though it may not be apparent to you,
there is a great transformation taking place.
The mind can become very malleable.

If you work a piece of clay in making pottery, it becomes soft and easily shaped.

When the awareness and concentration are developed, the mind also has that kind of workability and flexibility.
QUESTION:
what should i do when i am getting uptight from trying too hard?

ANSWER:
when you feel too much tension or forcing in the practice, go outside and look at the trees, look at the sky. it's so beautiful, so expansive.
go outside and walk around a bit in a more relaxed way, but still with awareness of what you are doing. in short time, the place itself will cool the mind.
The Buddha often recommended being in nature because of it's tranquility to the mind.
OFTEN

in forgetfulness of our destiny, we become over-involved in collecting things, in attachments and possessions, in wanting to become someone special.

we get involved in many of the activities of LITTLE MIND, taking our ambitions, our desires, ourselves, very seriously.

we lose the perspective of BIG MIND, we lose the

PERSPECTIVE OF DEATH.
WE
ARE GOING TO DIE ALONE.
IT'S NECESSARY TO COME TO
TERMS WITH OUR BASIC
ALONENESS,
TO BECOME COMFORTABLE
WITH IT.
THE MIND CAN BECOME
STRONG AND PEACEFUL
IN THAT UNDERSTANDING
MAKING POSSIBLE A
BEAUTIFUL
COMMUNION WITH OTHERS.
if we take death as our advisor we live each moment with the power and fullness we would give to our last endeavour on earth.
When we keep death at our fingertips we become less involved, less compulsive about the satisfaction or gratification of various desires in the moment.

When not so clouded by desires and fantasies, we're less inclined to hold onto things and more open to love & generosity.
No man, though he sees others dying all around him, believes he himself will die.

Bhagavad-gita
The awareness of death provides the space of clarity in which we can understand the process of who it is that we are, and who it is that dies.

"FROM THE WOMB TO THE TOMB,
FROM THE TOMB TO THE WOMB"

JOSPEH GOLDSTEIN
"IDEAL"

The biggest obstacles to settling back are attachments to self-images and concepts of who we are and how we want to be. They complicate unnecessarily the very simple experience of what it is that's happening.

Often people on the spiritual path get trapped by an image.

An image of what they think it means to be a yogi or a meditator or a spiritual person, creating for themselves that struggle of trying to live up to a certain preconceived way of action or behaviour.
Attachment to view is a GREAT BONDAGE.

It keeps us from seeing how things are; it filters reality through the coloured glasses of our own particular conditioning.

Views about oneself, about practice, about the teachings of the Buddha.
A FAMOUS PARABLE

In the cave is a row of people, chained in such a way that they can only face the back wall.

Behind the row of people is a fire and a procession of figures walking by engaged in all the activities of life.

The procession of figures casts shadows on the back wall of the cave. The people who are chained can see only the changing view of shadows, and because that is all they have ever seen, they take these shadows to be ultimate reality.

Sometimes a person who is bound in this way, through great effort, manages to loosen the chains and turn around. He or she sees the fire and the procession and begins to understand that the shadows are not the reality, but a mere reflection on the wall. Perhaps with further effort that person is able to cut the chains completely and emerge into the sunlight, into freedom.
Our predicament is similar to those people chained in the cave. The shadows are the world of concepts in which we live.

Chained through our attachments, we perceive the world through our ideas, our thoughts, our mental constructs, taking these concepts to be the reality itself.
Through the practice of mindfulness of not clinging, not condemning, not identifying with anything, the mind becomes lighter and freer.
IF A MAN IS CROSSING A RIVER 
AND AN EMPTY BOAT 
COLLIDES WITH HIS OWN SKIFF, 
EVEN THOUGH HE BE 
A BAD-TEMPERED MAN 
HE WILL NOT BECOME VERY ANGRY, 
BUT IF HE SEES A MAN IN A BOAT, 
HE WILL SHOUT AT HIM 
TO STEER CLEAR 
IF THE SHOUT IS NOT HEARD, 
HE WILL SHOUT AGAIN, 
AND YET AGAIN, AND BEGIN CURSING 
AND ALL BECAUSE 
THERE IS SOMEBODY IN THE BOAT. 
YET IF THE BOAT WERE EMPTY, 
HE WOULD NOT BE SHOUTING, 
AND NOT BE ANGRY.

IF YOU CAN EMPTY YOUR OWN BOAT 
CROSSING THE RIVER OF THE WORLD, 
NO ONE WILL OPPOSE YOU, 
NO ONE WILL SEEK TO HARM YOU.

~ CHUANG Tzu

125
LEARNING-TO-LET-GO

Sharing what we have is a beautiful way of relating to others.

Our friendships are much enhanced by the quality of generosity.

Even more significantly, the cultivation of non-greed becomes a strong force for liberation.

What keeps us bound is desire and grasping in our own minds.

As we practise giving we learn to let go.
LET GO
of our pre-conceived ideas of how things are,
of how we would like things to be.

LETTING GO
of the attachment
to our cherished opinions.
LET GO

of

views, opinions and ideas,

of all things

and the Dhamma will be revealed.
PURITY
DOES NOT EXIST
WITHIN
A TRADITION
OR
WITHIN A METHOD
OR
WITHIN
A RELIGION

129
There is only one basic purity that was taught by the Buddha, the purity which liberates, and that is purity of mind, freedom from greed, hatred & delusion.
QUESTION:
How do we purify ourselves?

ANSWER:
The whole beauty of the practice is that the awareness itself is what purifies.

It is not establishing a certain program for oneself, "I'm going to be pure," which is somewhat a contradiction.

The awareness of what's happening in the moment is what purifies so that there's nothing to get or be, nothing special to do or have; just a sitting back with awareness.
INSIGHT

AS BEING A SUDDEN, WORDLESS UNDERSTANDING. THIS KIND OF INTUITION HAS A CERTAINTY ABOUT IT BECAUSE IT'S NOT THE PRODUCT OF SOME THOUGHT OR IMAGE BUT RATHER A SUDDEN CLEAR PERCEPTION OF HOW THINGS ARE.
Volition / intention is a common factor of mind present in every moment of consciousness.

It is the mental urge or signal which precedes any action. When it is predominant, as they are between radical changes of posture, between sitting and standing, standing and walking, be mindful of them.

When we are mindful of volitions and intentions, we then have the freedom to choose whether or not we want to act on them. As long as we remain unaware of intentions, actions will follow automatically.
When there is no mindfulness words come out before we are even aware that there was an intention to do so. It's all very mechanical.

But as the mindfulness gets sharper, we begin to be aware before talking.

The intention to speak arises and we're mindful of it.
Intentions are not always thoughts in the mind, not always words.

Sometimes they are experienced just as an urge, a signal that something is about to happen. You need not be looking for words or a sentence in the mind.

**JUST BE AWARE OF THAT IMPULSE TO DO SOMETHING.**

And as you begin to notice how this cause and effect relationship is working in the mind and body, the concept of self dissolves into a simple and natural unfolding of the elements.
For example,
In walking, there is an intention
to stop before stopping.
There is an intention to turn
before turning.

The foot by itself does not
make the turning movement.
It turns because of a preceding
volition.

There is no one
there, no one "doing"
the turning.

It is an impersonal
cause and effect
relationship.

But, if in starting to turn we are unmindful
of how it is that the process is happening,
it becomes easy to identify with the idea
that there's some "one" who is doing it.
In sitting, intentions will be noticeable before each movement.

If you change position, there will be an intention to do so.

If you swallow, there will be a preceding intention.

If you open your eyes there will be an intention to open.

ALL OF THESE SHOULD BE NOTICED.
THERE IS
acting
without an actor,
doing
without a doer,
suffering
without anyone who suffers,
enlightenment
without anyone who gets
enlightened.
CLARITY

"not being muddled or confused about what is happening."
It's like a room in dim light; if we turn on a strong light, everything becomes sharp and clear.

When there's just a little light in the mind, you can't see things so clearly, you get the general outlines, but without that sharp perception.

With a lot of light in the mind, everything becomes distinct then the process becomes so clear, so easy to understand.

That light is the LIGHT OF AWARENESS, OF MINDFULNESS.
It is like water in a cup. If the cup is filled with dirty, stale water, it is useless.

Only after the old water is thrown out can the cup become useful.
WE MUST EMPTY OUR MINDS OF OPINIONS. THEN WE WILL SEE.
THE SKY

The sky is clear and unaffected by what is happening.
the clouds come and go,
the winds come and go,
so does the rain and sunlight,
BUT the sky remains clear.
Reckon the mind as a big clear sky and let everything arise and vanish on its own.

Then the mind will stay balanced, relaxed, observing the flow.
Clarity with respect to the MIND ~

emotions,
thoughts and
different mental states.

Not getting caught up in the whirlings of the mind, staying clear and balanced in their flow.
Clarity
with respect to the
BODY

being aware of postures,
the interplay of the physical
elements,
becoming sensitive to
just how much food
and sleep is actually needed.

Bringing all the different
kinds of bodily energies
into balance.
When the mind is clear it experiences the ceaseless change on a microscopic level:

INSTANT TO INSTANT we are being born and dying.
NEVERTHELESS
we have to become aware of the clarity itself so as not to cling to it, not to identify with it.

Clarity is only part of the process.
Often there is a tendency to condemn the hindrances when they arise. The condemning mind is itself the factor of aversion.

Every act of condemning the hindrances strengthens the enemy. This is not the way.

No judging, no evaluating.

Hindrances come, simply observe them. Mindfulness makes them all inoperative.

They may continue to arise, but they do not disturb the mind because we do not react to them.
All
the hindrances
are impermanent mental factors.
They arise and they pass away,
like clouds in the sky.

If we are mindful
of them when they arise
and don’t
react or identify
with them,
they pass through the mind
without creating any
disturbance.
THE BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT SOLVED HIS PROBLEM, IT DID NOT SOLVE OURS, EXCEPT TO POINT OUT THE WAY.

there is no magic formula which will release us from suffering.

Each of us has to purify our own mind, for it is the ATTACHMENT IN OUR MIND that keeps us bound.
Try sustaining the effort and continuity of awareness;

the mind which has overcome the power of the hindrances is unshakable in its balance and pliability.
Hindrances ..... 
... regarding restlessness

There is no "one" who is restless; rather it is the working of a particular mental factor, it comes and goes.

If there is a balanced awareness, it does not disturb the mind.
..... regarding anger

Freedom from
ILLWILL
means freedom from anger.

Anger is a burning in the mind, and when expressed causes great suffering to others as well.

It is helpful to be able to recognize anger and to LET GO.

Then the mind becomes light and easy, expressing its natural lovingkindness.
One of the factors of enlightenment is

INVESTIGATION OF THE DHAMMA ~

an investigative quality of the mind which examines, which explores just how the elements of mind and body work.
INVESTIGATION
OF THE DHAMMA

is the quality of mind
that is investigating,
probing,
analyzing
the mind-body process,
not with thoughts,
not on the conceptual level
but
with a silent and peaceful MIND.
Distinguishing

Intuition &
Insight from Imagination

Intuition come out of the silent mind; imagination is conceptual. There is a vast difference.

That's why the development of insight does not come from thinking about things, it comes from the development of a silence of mind in which a clear vision, a clear seeing, can happen.

The whole progress of insight, the whole development of understanding comes at times when the mind is quiet, then a sudden, "aha, that's how things are!"
INVESTIGATE

not with words,
not with thoughts,
not with concepts
but rather
try getting a feel,
a sense
of the process of
consciousness
happening together with the
object.

This experience brings freedom
from identification
with the observer.
"There seems to be a distinction between awareness and absorption in something. I can be engrossed in music, without being mindful; very much in the moment, but not being aware of being in the moment."

That's the difference between concentration and mindfulness.

You can be very one-pointed on the music yet not very mindful, although there will be some mindfulness there. What is predominant is the one-pointedness factor, the mind not wavering.

Add to that a sharp mindfulness and there you have the entire practice.
Keep your eyes fixed on the Path to the Top, but don't forget to look right in front of you.

The last step depends upon the first.

Watch your footing.

Be sure of the next step, but don't let that distract you from the Highest Goal.
There is a kind of monkey trap used in Asia. A coconut is hollowed out and attached by a rope to a tree or stake in the ground. At the bottom of the coconut a small slit is made and some sweet food is placed inside. The hole on the bottom of the coconut is just big enough for the monkey to slide in his open hand, but does not allow for a closed fist to pass out. The monkey smells the sweets, reaches in with his hand to grasp the food and is then unable to withdraw it.

The clenched fist won’t pass through the opening. When the hunters come, the monkey becomes frantic but cannot get away. There is no one keeping that monkey captive, except the force of its own attachment. All that it has to do is to open the hand. But so strong is the force of greed in the mind that it is a rare monkey which can let go.

It is the desires and clinging in our minds which keep us trapped. All we need to do is to open our hands, let go of our selves, our attachment, and be free.

~ JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN