

## **EARLY MORNING DAY TWO**

### **STANDING INSTRUCTION**

Throughout our day, we find ourselves in four main postures; sitting, standing, walking and lying down. Steve has already instructed you in the basic sitting meditation. We are also going to teach you formal standing and walking meditation. During the exercise periods there will also be instruction on forms of lying down meditation. Most of the day, however, we will be practicing sitting, standing and walking meditation. The lying down posture is generally only recommended if you are ill or injured, or just before going to sleep, because it is just simply too easy to fall asleep in that posture, and then it becomes sleeping and dreaming instead of meditating.

Why do we learn standing meditation?

What we are trying to build is Mindfulness, Awareness. By learning how to practice mindfulness in the various postures, we can make mindfulness stronger and stronger, becoming more and more aware. If we are to find out who and what we are, we have to be able to look closely, to try to make our mindfulness as continuous as possible. Learning standing meditation enables one to continue the mindfulness from the sitting into the standing posture.

During our everyday life we stand a lot of the time. For example; as travelers you may find yourself standing in a bus; standing in line for tickets at the train or bus station; standing in line to get your passport checked at the border or the airport; standing waiting to change money at the bank; standing at the food store; standing while talking to fellow travelers.

While you are here, you will be standing in line for the food and for washing your dishes. Many times during these instances, if we are not mindful, we can be developing boredom, impatience, frustration, aversion or desire, which only increase our difficulties and our lack of mental peace.

By practicing standing meditation we can often prevent these difficulties from arising. If we do find ourselves lost in unwise reactions, the "mind spin," we can remember to bring ourselves back to the moment by "grounding" our awareness in the body, often simply by feeling the touch of the feet on the ground.

In this way the formal practice of standing acts as a sharpening stone for the mind, developing a sharpened awareness. This sharpened awareness can be applied to our everyday life. It helps to prevent difficulties from arising or helps to let go of them when they have already arisen. By learning how to meditate in the various postures, we can then use the various postures as opportunities to develop the mind, finding more Peace and Balance in our life.

With the formal standing meditation, we're just going to try to be aware, try to stand as a normal person would, without creating anything special. Standing normally, we are not creating any "special" posture. This allows us to do standing meditation anywhere, relaxed, without drawing attention to ourselves. If you have done any other types of standing meditation in any other traditions, especially in Martial Arts, please do not confuse that standing meditation with what we will be teaching here. If you do confuse another type of standing meditation with what we are teaching here, you could cause yourself a fair bit of extra difficulties. So please be open, and practice what we are explaining here.

With standing meditation we try to be aware not only of the main object of awareness, which will be the breath, but also of our posture: standing. This is because it is a little more dangerous than sitting. If we get sleepy and drowsy, it is possible that we might fall down and hurt ourselves.

Start out with the feet slightly apart to keep the balance. Try not to arch the back so that the hips go too far forward, as this will place strain on the back. Bring the stomach and hips in line with the shoulders so that the body is supported by the lower back. The body not tense; relaxed.

The hands can be together, elbows bent, palms toward the body, in the area from the abdomen up to the chest. The fingers can be loosely interlocked, or you can have one hand with palm resting against the body, and the second hand with palm resting on the back of the first hand. Or the arms can be hanging loosely beside you. Many people find that if they put their hands behind their back, this tends to push the shoulders forward, creating strain on the back and the neck, so we do not advise this.

The head is in line with the body or slightly tilted forward. The face area is the same as for sitting. The eyes are gently closed. If you feel sleepy, then open your eyes and look downward in front of you. Try to relax the jaw area.

With standing meditation we can begin by being generally aware of the posture. That is, we bring attention to the body standing there; the whole body. Then we can bring our attention to the head. Starting from the head we can go through the body slowly. Checking the eyes, the face, the head, the shoulders. Relaxing and going through the body. The hands either placed in front in the area from the stomach up to the chest or hanging loosely at the sides, relaxed. Continue down the body, checking to see that the hips are not tilted too far forward, but in line. Going through the legs, until we feel the feet firmly on the ground.

You may find that keeping your attention on the feet for a little while helps to ground and stabilize the body. So keep the attention on the feet, feel the sensation of the touch of the feet on the ground.

Now bring your attention again to the whole body standing there. Take a few deeper breaths and then become aware of the breathing, either at the nose area or the chest-stomach area. Allow the breath to become natural, breathing in, breathing out, rising, falling. Use the mental noting if you find that it helps you.

If you find that there is a gap, a pause, between the out-breath and the in-breath, the rising and the falling, try to be aware of the standing posture or the feeling of the feet touching the ground during the pause. Let the breath come again in its own time. Just as with the sitting meditation, if the mind wanders, gently note that it is wandering, thinking, and try to return to the breathing gently.