



“Turning Toward” Difficult Emotions

(Option 1 for the Week 5 informal practice)

Do the guided [Turning Toward Meditation](#) at least once before doing this practice on your own.

This is similar to “STOP” (One Minute Breathing Space), except that in the middle, there is an intentional exploration of an emotional difficulty.

Beginning with Awareness and Grounding

Bring yourself into the present moment, grounding yourself by physically sensing into the support provided by the ground or floor beneath your feet, or what you are sitting or lying on. Then gently direct full attention to breathing for a few breaths, feeling each inbreath and outbreath.

Turning toward the Difficult (softening, allowing)

What would you call this feeling you are having? Anger? Fear? Sadness? Impatience? Confusion? If, for example, it was anger, rather than saying “I am angry or I am frustrated or I am sad” about something, see how it feels to say “I’m noticing something *in me* that is this way, that is angry or afraid or sad.” “I’m noticing something *in me* that has this feeling”. This gives the feeling more room to move and you won’t identify with it as much. This way, you’re not labeling yourself as angry or fearful, you’re merely aware you have those feelings right now.

Now, see if you can notice where in the body there might be a physical reaction to this. It could be a tightening in the shoulders or chest, tightness or queasiness in the stomach, pressure or tension of some sort, achiness, constriction, tension in the throat, heat in face, tightness in the jaw, just seeing where it affects you physically. Or if you can’t find a specific place, there may be a general sense of unease you feel all over. Allow what you are noticing to just be there, simply acknowledging it, letting your awareness gently rest there, allowing it to be just the way it is.

See if you can *soften* your reaction to the difficulty, to this situation, with gentle breaths, seeing if you can be with it the same way you’d be with a child or a pet whom you love and who is in distress. You might even place your hand where in the body you’re physically feeling the difficulty the most, *or*, on your heart or belly, meeting this experience with kindness, recognizing that this would be difficult or painful or challenging for anybody, holding it and yourself gently and with compassion.

This is *softening and allowing*. Softening of your reaction to the feeling that you’re having, allowing that reaction to be there, all the while knowing that allowing it to be there doesn’t mean that you like it, it’s simply an acknowledgment that this *is* what you are feeling right now.

Seeking the Pleasant

Without trying to push the difficult issue away, see if you can find somewhere in your life where things are generally okay, or maybe even good, something or someone you are grateful for. It could have to do with a loved one, a favorite pet, past or present, a good friend, maybe an achievement in the past or present, or a hobby or sport that gives you pleasure and satisfaction... or a quality or strength that you have and are rightfully proud of... it could even be something as simple as recalling a smile or a kind word someone had for you recently or in the past...

Broadening Awareness & Opening to the Outside World

In this step, you broaden your awareness, like panning out with a wide-angle lens, including both what you’re grateful for and the difficulty you began with. You are creating enough space and room for both, without pushing away the difficult or clinging to the pleasant, shifting to an even wider, more inclusive perspective, including the entire body and all of its sensations.

Bring into your awareness the room or area you are in, letting your attention now move to the outside world, taking in the sights, sounds, and sensations around you, and when you’re ready, re-engage with the activities of your day.