

Inquiry & Reflection

Learning to listen to ourselves in an open, positive (or neutral) way is a skill – many of us suffer from a pretty dominant ‘inner critic’ or mask our experience with assumptions or by comparison with others. Oftentimes our felt experience is crowded out by automatic thinking, or we just don’t know how to pause and notice our feelings and thoughts in a conscious and kind way.

In mindfulness teaching we draw on the skills of inquiry and reflection, where we encourage a gentle observation of the personal experience of mindfulness practice. This is not a complicated or analytic process; it is not outcome driven. It is designed to promote awareness of experience, to simply know how something felt, to acknowledge it in words as best as we can. Inquiry and reflection can help us to notice in a conscious way that helps us understand it better or learn from it. As such, there is no right or wrong. We do not have to ask very much of ourselves, but it can help to be open and to try to see and feel the experience with a beginner’s mind – as if for the first time, anew and afresh.

Inquiry points are gentle, open questions we can ask ourselves, such as:

- How did that practice feel – in the mind, body, emotions?
- If there was resistance, or letting go, how did that feel – frustration, calm?
- Did my experience shift and change, or stay as it was?

Reflection points are not necessarily ‘answers’ or conclusions, but self-directed considerations, bringing the experience we’ve had in practice towards the things we have learnt about mindfulness, or ourselves and our responses. You might wish to name the responses you had, identify any familiar patterns, make connections with what is going on in your life right now. If you’re not sure if something is an inquiry point or a reflection, then letting go of labels and noticing the felt and lived experience of a practice and any observations or points of interest. As with everything we do in mindfulness, we can hold this lightly.

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Inquiry Point	Reflection Notes

General Observations & Thoughts