



return to our senses

WORKSHOPS IN SENSORY AWARENESS

with Lee Klinger Lesser

Waking Up in the Morning

1. Explore how breathing finds you as you are first waking up. Transitioning from sleeping to waking, pause to experience the first breaths of the new day.
2. Let breathing come to you and rest in not having to do anything.
3. Before getting out of bed and jumping into awaiting tasks, allow a few minutes of intimate and simple meeting with breathing as it finds you.
4. When you are ready, follow your way out of your bed and into your day. Does this stillness with breathing invite any new moments of standing still throughout the day? What happens?

Notice how you meet what you see as your eyes open

1. In the morning when you are first waking up, notice what you see as your eyes open. Allow the time to experience seeing, discovering what greets you and how you meet it.
 - What are the sensations in your eyes as you see whatever you see?
 - Can you see without looking for anything?
 - Is it possible to give up any effort to control what you see?
 - How is it to be curious and notice what happens in this first experience of seeing?
 - If you wear glasses, please do not put them on. Simply see, and be with what is seen, as it is.

Explore what happens in your eyes while reading

1. Choose **one page** to read from a book, magazine, newspaper, or on the computer.
2. Before reading, allow time to come into contact with what is under you. Notice how you are sitting or lying, and follow any changes that are needed that allow more contact.
3. Allow time to be attentive to what happens in your eyes as you read. Be aware of any extra effort.
4. Is it possible to read without grabbing for words with your eyes?
5. Anytime you notice tightening or extra effort, pause to feel out what is needed.

Touching your eyelids

1. Choose a time during the day to allow a few minutes to rest. You can explore while lying, sitting or standing. Let your eyes close. Notice how closing your eyes influences you.
2. Does the simple act of your eyes closing affect you anywhere else?
3. With your eyes closed, is there any effort to see? Can you let go of any extra effort? Or be interested to fully feel it?
4. When you are ready, come with a few fingers from each hand to gently rest on your eyelids. Explore what impact this contact has on you. Allow your fingers to go where they are invited. When it is enough, let your fingers and arms come to a resting place. Notice if there is any change in how your eyes feel.
5. What happens when you allow them to open?

Drinking something hot

1. Sometime during the day, pause to drink a hot liquid – What happens in your belly in preparation to receive the hot drink? Do you experience the connection with the cup holding the hot liquid? How do you reach for it? How do you offer it to yourself? How do you receive the offering?
2. Do any smells invite your attention?
3. Can you notice how the liquid moves in the cup, and how it settles? Is there any settling that wants to happen in you as you see the settling of the liquid? Any settling that wants to happen in receiving the heat and the drink?

Experiencing fully the first 3 bites of a meal

1. Please give your attention to the first 3 bites of each meal.
2. Explore what happens as you begin the first bite: what is involved in receiving the food into your mouth? How is it to feel the weight of the food on the way to your mouth? Any smells that you notice?
3. What is the texture of the food like in your mouth? How does it change? Is there freedom in your tongue, in your jaw, in your teeth for chewing the food? For swallowing the food?
4. What is happening in your throat as you are chewing and swallowing? What is happening in your belly? How do you receive this offering of food in this one bite?
5. When is the first bite complete? Can you pause for a moment when the bite is complete and notice what responds before taking the next bite?
6. Give yourself the chance to fully experience the first three bites of each meal. The beginning and ending of each bite

What do you eat first?

1. Before eating pause to see the food in front of you.
2. Notice what food chooses you. What invites you to taste it first?
3. When you are drawn to something, taste it and pay attention to the taste, the texture, the smell.
4. Stay present for the experience of eating this bite of food. When it is complete, pause and notice what draws your attention for your next bite of food.

Energy for eating

1. Before beginning a meal, pause for three breaths. Notice what you are experiencing in your jaw, in the sides of your face, in the base of your skull. What prepares in you for receiving food?
2. As you are chewing and swallowing can you feel how much energy is needed for chewing and swallowing? Explore the simple sensations of eating. Is there any extra effort in your jaw or anywhere else? Any spaciousness in your throat for swallowing?
3. Can you be curious about the living mechanics of what is happening as you eat? Can it be fresh and new and experienced? If you notice extra effort anywhere can you pause and feel it and discover what happens next?
4. What happens in tasting, smelling, feeling and seeing your food?
5. How does your tongue participate in eating?

Let your own constriction be an ally for waking up

1. Spend some time recognizing what sensations often occur when you are tightening or constricting yourself.
2. Cultivate the intention, attention, and awareness to pause in the midst of tight or uncomfortable moments during your day. What happens if you simply pause when you notice the familiar sensations of tightness?
3. Turn your attention to breathing. Follow three breaths. Feel what is needed, and how to respond.
4. Has the constriction changed?

Explore movement in the arms

1. At the computer, allow lifting your elbows while your fingers are touching the keyboard, let them stay in the air, and then let them find their way down. Where do you land that allows the most freedom in your shoulders, chest and back? Please explore several times, and allow any other movements that might want to happen.
2. When preparing something to eat, pause and notice how you are using your arms. What kind of movement is possible in your armpits? Do they have the space they need even as you are preparing your food? Explore what happens in moving your arms, as you are cutting, or stirring, or even while bringing food to your mouth while eating.
3. Notice when you are using your arms during the day, and pause to feel whether you are moving in freedom or in constriction. Follow any shifts or changes that want to happen.

Explore completing a “disagreeable” task

1. Is there a task that you find disagreeable, that you have to force yourself to do? If so, what a great opportunity you have for exploration!!!
2. Identify one of your least favorite tasks, or one of your most disagreeable tasks. Pause before beginning it.
3. Notice what feels disagreeable. What is present as you approach this task?
4. Slow down and notice what is happening in breathing.
5. Stay present with any resistance, or discomfort. Does anything shift as you are present?
6. Can you stay curious about your own experience and the task itself?
7. Keep noticing changes in breathing and in the simple moments, one at a time, of completing your task.
8. Is there anything “agreeable” or interesting that is happening?

Using the telephone as an opportunity to pause

1. Each time the telephone rings, allow pausing for three breaths before answering it. Notice what greets you in this pause. How does stopping to connect with breath, with sounds, smells, sights, feelings influence you? Does anything shift in this time of fresh connection?
2. Before making a phone call, pause for three breaths and again notice how it influences you.

Washing the dishes

1. Before beginning to wash a dish, pause and notice your inner attitude to the task at hand.
2. Is it possible to approach with interest and curiosity?
3. Is spaciousness possible within whatever amount of time you have?
4. How does the connection with the water, the dish, the soap, the textures, the sounds influence you?
5. How is standing and your contact with the ground under you? Are you standing with ease, or are you tense or tightening in different places? Do any changes want to happen as you pay attention?
6. How does breathing participate?
7. Are you just getting a task over with or are you present for what you are doing? How does your inner attitude influence your experience?

Exploring breathing as an ally to be present

Breathing happens all the time. What can we learn when we offer our attention and avid curiosity? Often when we try to concentrate on breathing, we control it or interfere with it. And yet breathing functions so perfectly well without our extra effort. Cultivating the quiet and stillness to “be breathed” is a lifetime journey and always new.

“What can I feel of my breathing?”

1. Four or five times each day, pause and simply ask yourself: “What can I feel of breathing?” Notice what happens.
2. This is an invitation from Charlotte. She gave it to students in one of her classes and it is described on p. 61 of *Waking Up*:

“I would like to give you homework that you may say to yourself four or five times a day – no matter if you feel anything or not – just asking, “What can I feel of my breathing?” And then not rushing, but saying, “I’m not in a hurry at all, so I don’t perform.” You will find very often you perform, you right away begin to ‘breathe.’ That’s not it. You might also feel you hold your breath. All right, you hold your breath, and at some time it will start again. You simply allow something which is vague to become a little more conscious. And not to influence it, but be grateful for anything you notice. And to give what is happening a few minutes time for strengthening the connection between you and your breathing....simply in staying it out, staying with something you want to find out about. You will feel when you do something to breathing, and you will give it up. You will feel when your breathing wants changes and you will allow them. You will feel that here or there you need more breathing, and what happens then. So you can gradually become aware of the happenings. It strengthens your character very much. Makes you clearer in sensing. Makes you more honest.”

Notice breathing at the beginning and ending of each meal

1. Use your mealtimes as an opportunity to pause and notice breathing. Before eating each meal and at the end of each meal follow the journey of 5 breaths.
2. What happens when you pause and let breath come to you? Where do you feel it?
3. Can you feel when the inhalation ends and the exhalation begins?
4. Can you feel when the exhalation ends and the inhalation begins? Is there any space between them?
5. Does anything change in you as you notice breathing?

Breathing in action

1. In movement, notice how breathing changes. When walking or climbing stairs or exercising, allow your attention to include breathing. Does awareness of breathing influence your activity? Does your activity influence breathing?
2. Can you be interested in what is happening without judging yourself? Simply exploring? If you hold your breath and notice it, what happens next?

The space between inhalation and exhalation

1. Choose three times during your day, when you will pause and be present for FIVE breaths. It may be as you begin your day, as you end your day and sometime during the middle of the day, or whenever you like. In being present for breath, can you focus on the space between each inhalation and exhalation, and each exhalation and inhalation.
2. This is tricky territory. So often when we focus on breath, we think we have to direct or adjust or influence breathing, and then we actually interfere with this natural process.
3. Please notice when you are “doing” breathing, and when you are “following” breathing.
4. How is it to not have to do anything and follow what changes? Can you be present in quiet and stillness to live the space between breaths and feel how it influences you?
5. How is it to live the intimacy between beginnings and endings?

Exploring support in sitting

1. Wherever we are, there is always support under us. Take time to notice your relationship to the support under you each time you sit down.
2. When you sit down, pause to arrive in real contact with what is under you. How do you offer yourself to this support? Can you notice any places where you are tightening or holding yourself up? Stay with it without having to turn away or try to create a change. Allow the curiosity to discover what happens as you are more and more present.
3. Are there places in you ready to be supported? Can you be curious to feel this out as you are sitting? Any places you let yourself arrive a little more?
4. Even if you simply pause for 1 minute, 3 minutes or 5 minutes, can you explore how it is to come to sitting and to relate to the support that is right there? Feel if there is any tension or holding that might want to let go, and how that changes your experience of sitting and being supported.

Coming into contact with ourselves – the surprise of each moment

1. We are touching ourselves in different ways all the time, yet so often we are not really in contact. Often we are doing what is necessary, i.e. washing our hands, bathing, brushing our teeth, getting dressed etc. in a habitual or automatic way. We don't take time to really experience what we are doing.
2. How is it to be attentive and present for these real connections? Discover the freshness and surprise that is possible with each new contact. Can you approach yourself with deep friendliness and curiosity?
3. Each time you wash your hands, how is the contact with this live human being?
4. As you brush your teeth, can you feel the textures, the pressure, the touch of the toothbrush on your teeth and gums? How is it to receive the water in your mouth when you rinse?
5. As you are getting dressed, can you be more present for contact?
6. In the midst of these simple daily activities can you approach yourself with kindness and gentleness?

How much energy is needed for typing?

1. Before beginning to type on the computer (or to write if you are not using a computer), notice how you land in sitting.
2. When you are typing, how much energy is needed to push down the keys on the computer? Offering your attention, can you feel what is happening in your fingers, your hands, your wrists, your shoulders? Is there freedom in your head and the base of your skull? Is there any extra effort?
3. Are you in contact with what you are communicating or are you rushing through to get it done and get on to what is next? Does either attitude or practice have an influence on the quality of what you are doing? On how you are meeting the computer keys? On how breathing is moving in you? On the quality of your communication?

Give your head a rest

1. So this is “Give your head a rest week” ☺
2. During the day when at the computer, or washing dishes or brushing your teeth, explore little movements with your head, turning slightly from one side to another or forward or backwards. Notice where there is tightness, any longing for space. Follow any tiny shifts or changes and see where they take you.
3. At least once a day, take time to literally let your head rest on a surface that can receive your weight. Feel how that influences you anywhere through you. You can lean against a wall, or let your head come to land on a table or a desk or a counter.
4. What happens when you give your head a rest?