



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

Welcome to our 2<sup>nd</sup> podcast outlining how to practice our method of Self Inquiry. In our previous podcast we explained how to use the method by oneself effectively. We also shared our belief that nothing can take the place of the dynamic engagement between two or more using the method.

We also listed the most common obstacles which might arise while practicing the method as well as points to keep in your awareness of how to maximise the benefits of the exercise.

In this podcast we will explain how to practice and use the breath and sitting attention (from our previous podcasts) as guides during the exercise. If you have not yet listened to our podcasts on breathing and sitting please, listen to them before proceeding. Otherwise you may find it confusing to continue on with the exercise in this podcast.

As a brief review of the breathing podcast, we mentioned the importance of being aware and using the breath as a guide and tool to assist us in the process of self-inquiry. We also spoke of heart coherence and how to use the breath to create and enable a state of heart coherence. We discussed timed breathing of between 5-6 breaths per minute, plus/minus depending on each person as the optimal rate for moving into coherence.

And why would we want to try to be in heart coherence while practicing the exercise of self-inquiry?



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

As we discussed in the previous podcast, when one practices on one's own there are many deep-rooted beliefs, emotions, feelings and preconceptions which may be already active or activated by the practice of self-inquiry. For the practice to be effective and of benefit to the one practicing, it is essential that one becomes or is aware of all the possible influence that these mental processes might be exerting.

Similarly, our Sitting practice instructed us how to calm our mind and then bring our attention to various parts of our body, such as the top of the head, or our lower back or our hands and feet. Physical changes, sometimes subtle sometimes more obvious, are often indications that something deeper is occurring in our minds, be it feelings or thoughts. This can then assist us in recognising possible habit patterns of response to the subject we are working with in the inquiry.

Together with the breathing we have two very good tools for heightening our awareness and attention to our responses, on several levels to the process we are engaged in. This not only applies to the method of self-inquiry which we are sharing, - but in fact to any activity, mental or physical that one finds oneself engaged in.

If we have no tools to help us become aware, the whole practice could become like a dog chasing its tail, the dog's mind doesn't know that the faster it tries to catch the tail the faster it escapes its grasp.



Let us begin.

In our previous podcast on breathing we discussed the idea of heart coherence. The origins of heart coherence research can be traced back to the Institute of HeartMath Organisation(IHM), a research group located on the West Coast of the US in the early nineties. The research focus at that time was on investigating the physiological effect of both positive and negative emotional states on the body. At that time, there was very little research, if any, on the physiological effect of positive emotions on the body. (For further information see [www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org)\*)

Through the studies it was revealed that not just emotions and the heart but the whole body can attain a state of coherence through certain breathing techniques. They are not difficult and can be practiced quite easily and again I refer you to the Heartmath Institute website where they share and teach the methods freely.\* What became evident was that upon entering into a state of coherence all the physiological functions appeared to synchronise with each other and the one experiencing it would become calmer, happier, more at ease, more present and more 'in the flow'.

When pursuing knowledge of self and discovery of one's real nature and true heart, the state of coherence is very helpful, for two main reasons:

1. One is more relaxed and more receptive to a broad range of thoughts and ideas



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

2. One is more alert to changes in this relaxed state and therefore more able to notice when certain questions generate reactivity or discomfort while one is practicing the self-inquiry.

This is very good for the practice on both points, the first for progress and the second to avoid falling into feeling/mind traps which are present in all of us from unhealthy habitual patterns of perceiving the world.

In our podcast on breathing we suggested a rhythm of 5 breaths per minute which means 12 seconds per breath or a 6 second inhale and a 6 second exhale. This is only a guideline to start from. Different people will have slight variations in the number of breaths and rhythm which allows them to move into coherence. For example, when I practice, I use an inhale to the count of 3 hold for 1 exhale for 3 and hold for 1. This is 5 breaths/minute.

Here is a 1 minute sample of that rhythm.

This is from an app called Universal Breathing: Pranayama by Saagara Apps. I have used them for many years and tried others but keep returning to this one. It can be adjusted for pace of breathing, time of practice, guide sounds, and several more functions. The website link is at the end of the transcripts. \*\*

Our suggestions for resources are solely based on our own experience and we have no connection, compensation or return in any form, from any of the sources we mention here.

With the breathing we can add our sitting awareness. Once we are settled into a comfortable breathing pattern, we can begin to put our attention to various parts of our body. First to the head then to the



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

lower back and then to the hands followed by the feet. Then to our abdomen and our shoulders. Pause for 20-30 seconds to become aware of the area. Once we have sensed the various areas, we return our awareness to our breathing pattern and perhaps the passage of air at the nose. And with this as preparation we can begin our session.

We will now begin a practice session using the breathing and body awareness as aids in our awareness. Please make sure you have listened to the previous podcasts on breathing and sitting and self-inquiry or you may find yourself a bit lost in the practice.

Please find a comfortable position where your spine is aligned and you are at ease. It can be cross-legged on the floor or a cushion, or in a comfortable but aligned chair, or even lying down for someone who has difficulty sitting for long periods. If you are lying down please do so on a firm surface so that your spine remains in alignment.

Close your eyes, place your tongue against the roof of your mouth and breathe through your nose. Take 2 or 3 deep breaths to relax and then begin paying attention to the passage of the air through your nose, at your nostrils, inside your nose or across the upper lip. Do this in a relaxed and easy manner, if you notice you are straining to feel something then release and relax and just pay attention to what you feel. Allow the sensation to come to you rather than you go to the sensation.

I will now play start the breathing rhythm in the back ground. It is set on the 3-1-3-1 count I mentioned above as this rhythm is exactly 5 breaths per minute. Inhale for 3, hold for 1, exhale for 3, hold for 1. However, if you find yourself breathing a little faster or a little slower that is ok. We will continue for 2 minutes while we also practice sitting awareness.



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

While in our breathing, we will visit several areas of our body for 15-20 seconds each noting any sensations, whatever they may be; there is not better or worse. Begin with the top of your head, then your lower back, then your hands, feet, lower abdomen, chest, shoulders and neck. Again, at each location note any sensations which arise, just note do not judge. Once you are finished return to awareness of the breath at the nostrils.

Great, continue breathing and paying attention as you have and I will read to you the selection we are going to use as our inquiry:

Our selection is a quote from the author Paulo Coelho and it is:

**How people treat other people is a direct reflection of how they feel about themselves.**

Firstly, pay attention to your breathing, did it change upon hearing the selection? Did it increase or decrease in speed, depth or comfort level? If so, how and when.

Then begin a quick scan of the body locations we visited before, while keeping the quote in mind. Have you noticed any change in sensation, temperature, comfort level, muscular tension? If so note them.

We will now continue with our Self-enquiry practice and as we go through the analysis, try while listening to note any changes in the breath or physical sensations which may arise while we do. Note when and where they occur. You may want to even keep a notebook as to which words or phrases or aspects of the inquiry stimulate these changes. It can be very informative about our self and how we process perceptions.



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

On to our first question.

What is the subject of the quote? Is it how people treat other people? Or is it how they feel about themselves? or might it be how people are reflections of each other? In fact, we can choose any of the three to be our main direction of inquiry.

Did you have any sensations or breath changes as I suggested the 3 options? Note them if you did.

Let's decide that the subject of the quote is actually how people feel about themselves.

Once again, did you experience any sensations or breath changes as I suggested the subject? Note them if you did.

Our second question How did we arrive at our decision.

Perhaps because in the structure of the sentence we see that oneself is treating 'other people' and the reflection is of how one 'feels about themselves'. So, in both the first and second part of the sentence Oneself is the subject of discussion. We are arriving at this through our linguistic rule book so we now need to keep an open mind that our thoughts will be influenced by all the factors that have contributed to how we use our language.

Once again as you were listening and considered what you heard did you note any changes in your breathing or physical sensations in your body anywhere? If so note them.



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

Our third question, why do we think that the quote is about how one feels about oneself. As discussed in our previous podcast the third question is where we begin to delve deeper into our reasoning and perspectives. It is often more difficult and can sometimes give rise to controversy when addressed. In our quote above, we determined first the **What**- the quote is about how people feel about themselves. Then the **How** we arrived at that - through the structure of the sentence. Now we arrive at the **Why** and this opens several doors to different possible paths of consideration. One such path could simply be answered by stating that everything one experiences hinges on one's perception so it has to be about 'how one feels about oneself'. Or another path could be the significance of feeling as a priority over thought or intellectual consideration, and since the quote refers to feeling about oneself then we arrived at the position that the quote is about 'how people feel about themselves.' And a third possible path could be the reasoning that since we are all part of a unified universe and interdependent then any action is automatically reflexive and thus treating another would be treating oneself and thus how we feel about our self would be how we treat others.

The discussion can now revolve around the three possibilities just mentioned and/or more which may be perceived. This can be done within oneself in an inner dialogue or can also be done with others, either free form or guided. And as was already mentioned no matter how skilled one is at the outset, practicing from any recorded material —, print, sound or visual, —can never replace a real live dialogue.

It is important to emphasise that this process is not expected to provide one with answers or truths, but rather through the questions it poses and the follow up dialogue, internal or external, - allows one to uncover the process of reasoning one goes through. The clearer, more





## Path to Wisdom Foundation

direct and stripped down the perceptions become the more direct the experience and the closer to one's inner core, or what we call one's 'True Heart' or 'Heart/Mind' (a common translation for the Chinese term of Xin<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, (pronounced shin) or Greek terms 'Nous' , which is a term from classical philosophy for the faculty of the human mind necessary for understanding what is true or real.<sup>\*\*\*\*</sup>

Eventually with improved skill and practice one will be able to go deeper, know oneself, and become more aware in the present. This will lead to increased contentment, fulfilment and happiness in life. Additionally, one's relationship not only within oneself but with those around one will also improve as greater wisdom is realised.

Sounds like a big promise? Yes, but you will only know if it works if you try it and stick with it.

I hope that this has been clear and provided coherent guidance for the practice. If you have any questions please let us know at [info@path-to-wisdom.org](mailto:info@path-to-wisdom.org). In future podcasts and also online forums we will prepare guided opportunities to put into practice what we have just explained. Until then try it at home on any subject or experience. Do it in a relaxed manner and don't expect too much at first, nor for it to be that easy.

Here is where it is important to add that All of the content presented on Path to Wisdom.org, including written text, photographs, videos, and graphics, as well as other resources we might include , is meant to educate and it should not be perceived as a substitution for professional medical advice, or diagnosis or treatment. You should not resort to the website information to arrive at a diagnosis or treatment solution for health problems or various medical conditions. It does not nor is it intended to replace medical care, provided by a medical specialist. You are responsible for your own health



## Path to Wisdom Foundation

and well-being. If you are in poor health, physically or mentally, suffering from any pre-existing conditions, it is always a good idea to discuss with your attending physician before following any recommendations. Willing participation is at your free will and in acknowledgment that nothing is meant to serve as diagnosis, treatment or prevention solutions for different medical conditions.

Thank you all and have a good day, good night and a good life.

\*[Www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org)

\*\*<https://www.saagara.com/apps/breathing/universal-breathing-pranayama>

\*\*\*[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xin %28concept%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xin_%28concept%29)

\*\*\*\* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nous>