



# The Stillness Element in the Methodology of WOA Community

## About the author

My name is Boyce Teoh, and I am from Malaysia. I translate Tibetan texts and discourses to English and have been learning Buddhism and practicing Buddhist meditation for about 18 years. I also studied advanced Buddhist philosophy for two years as a monk in a Tibetan monastic university in India. I started practicing the methodology of WOA community in October 2021 and have been thoroughly impressed with it. Here, I would like to present my understanding of the elements from my experience with meditation and a brief comparison with Buddhist practices to further illustrate the elements.

# Stillness



Apparently, the experience of the element of stillness is different for everyone. I have encountered experiences such as inner clarity, deep peace and vast space while practicing this element. I also notice various reactions, feelings, and resistances that arise when I try to accept undesirable experiences, such as having many thoughts. The space of stillness helps me to deal with the inner processes of my mind. In most cases, having sincerity and interest in the practice were really helpful. I can also feel that there is a lot of untapped depth in this element.

# Brief analysis



This is both the basic and fundamental element of the methodology. Stillness is supposed to be our natural state of being. In this element, we simply 1) place our attention on the sensations within the body and 2) accept whatever experience may arise.

Placing attention on the body grounds us in the present moment because it connects to the subconscious mind that regulates all the body functions, and this mind only operates in the present. This is a process of making the subconscious conscious.

The second part of the element is a process of acceptance, i.e., allowing what is happening to happen without any interference. This reverses the unhealthy processes of the ego, which continuously reacts to the various experiences that arise within us—by interfering, judging, resisting, and so forth. This distorts our experience of life and numbs our awareness. For me, the most profound experience with the whole methodology is—I can clearly feel that the grip of the ego has loosened within a short time. There is a profound depth of peace, and this is something that I did not experience after many years of Buddhist practices

# Brief analysis



The closest Buddhist practice to this element is probably the practice of the mindfulness of the body and the mindfulness of feelings, which are the first two of the four close applications of mindfulness. The term “mindfulness” (Sanskrit: *smṛti*) primarily means “remembering” or “bearing in mind.” It also has two other connotations i.e., awareness and carefulness. In Tibetan Buddhism, they often use a term that is a hybrid of mindfulness and awareness, with a connotation of carefulness. Thus, when Tibetan lamas use this term, what they have in mind is “being carefully and mindfully aware.” Here, mindfulness itself means to bear in mind the instruction and the aim of practice.

Therefore, the Buddhist practice of mindfulness of the body means to develop the habit of remembering to keep one’s attention on the body—along with a good dose of awareness. Here, the function of awareness is to check the quality of the practice and to be aware of the body and the subconscious mind. Carefulness is the attitude we train to adopt so as to prevent ourselves from engaging in non-virtuous actions that are detrimental to the practice. Mindfulness of the body also acts as the basis for the second practice, the mindfulness of the feelings that are experienced within the field of the body.

# Brief analysis



The same principle (of mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness) applies for the practice of mindfulness of feelings. Feeling consists of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings. Mindfulness keeps our attention on the body or feelings, so that awareness can illuminate them and the nature of our being. The aim of the mindfulness of body and feelings is to increase and fully develop one's conscious awareness of the true nature of the body and feelings. The mindfulness of feelings provides insight, that is, it sheds light on the repetitive mental pattern of compulsive cravings, which cause us to pursue pleasant feelings and avoid unpleasant ones. This mental pattern is a symptom of the ego. But once we learn to accept the experiences within us—as they are—the strength of the ego will eventually weaken.

*A significant experience I had with this practice was the continuous experience of tremendous peace, joy and equanimity, which lasted for most of the day, and I also needed very little sleep during that night*

# Brief analysis



To summarize, I think the two practices of mindfulness of the body and feelings are essentially part of the practices in WOA Methodology. In particular, the mindfulness of feelings means that we train to pay close attention to our inner processes (i.e., the three types of feelings) and to not simply react to feelings, but instead to be more aware of what is happening inwardly. This is something we can train in during both meditation sessions and our daily activities.

When combined in the above-mentioned manner, mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness are mental events that create a “mental atmosphere” that is conducive to awakening. Thus, it is important to identify the roles they play within the mind during our practices so that we can consistently develop them. In the case of practicing stillness, we can habituate ourselves to sustain a healthy level of mindfulness that supports the instruction of stillness, and within this boundary of mindfulness we can consciously develop more awareness of what is happening in the present. At the same time, we also sustain the attitude of carefulness both during the meditation sessions and daily activities. This approach can be a great support for the progressive development of awareness, which is the main ingredient of stillness

# Brief analysis



According to Buddhist principles, the ego is a product of the mind's innate ignorance, and awareness weakens the ego. In addition, the more we become aware that the ego is the cause of misery, the more we will be motivated to become awakened and to be free of the egoic influences.

Personally, I feel that this Buddhist practice has helped me become less reactive over the years, and it has also become part of my habits. When practicing stillness, it appears that awareness can function more healthily. This creates a "healthy distance" between me and feelings. I am less inclined to judge what is happening within, and the mind becomes less "noisy." This creates a good mental environment for "stillness."