

Whole Body Meditation – Special Workshop With Christopher Curtis Sensei in Shunshinkan Dojo, Maui Saturday, April 22, 2017

There are three things that are missing when you are having fun. Self-consciousness, past, and future. When you are in the present, there doesn't seem to be any self-consciousness. As soon as you become self-conscious, as soon as you start thinking about yourself, you are thinking about something you should do in the future or something that happened in the past. And then you are lost to whatever it is that you are doing now. And you cannot be enjoying what you are doing any more.

So, time passing, and self, are one and the same. When we are in a self-less condition, we are in a timeless condition. There is no time. Time is something that we only experience as an individual, separate, egoistic agent. Otherwise there is no time. I mean, there is no experience of time. Of course, go look in the mirror. You will see that time has passed. I am not saying there is no time passing, but I am suggesting that you don't experience it, unless you are self-conscious. Find out for yourself.

So, meditation is just being present, without self-consciousness. And these things we talk about, the universe expanding and contracting, they have attendant benefits. Ki Breathing is obviously very good for your body. But the fundamental thing is just to give you something to do that you can enjoy, so that the ultimate distraction of past, future, and self, disappear.

This next meditation, this last one that we will do, is called *Whole Body Meditation*. And it's actually quite different than *Ki Breathing* or *Ki Meditation*. And let me emphasize again, in this practice, just breathe normally. There is no special breathing in this exercise at all. The fundamental difference in this one is that I will talk you through the whole experience, so that it makes it very easy. Just follow my voice and do what I tell you and you will have a very nice meditation. The problem is, tomorrow morning, I am not coming over to your house. So, you have to do it yourself. This is just a kind of introduction. It's not like the teacher always does that. I do it for the students once in a while, but normally we just do it on our own.

Every Wednesday night we have a half an hour breathing, fifteen minutes of Ki Meditation (*Kakudaiho/Shuchoho*) and then fifteen minutes of Whole Body Meditation.

Student: Maybe we should emphasize that we are recording this because we, the students, have asked to have a recording of it.

Yes, well, people have said, "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a recording of this, and then you could be at our house every morning." I think that is sort of the idea, so that you can have a CD or some recording and you can listen. I can see that there might be a benefit to that.

I learned this from my teacher about fifty years ago. Well, I learned an aspect of this. And since then I have developed it much more through my practice with Tohei Sensei and Suzuki Sensei, and of course, through my own meditation practice. So what I am going to give you is quite a bit more than what I learned originally.

In Aikido, as I explained before, we practice experiencing the center of the Universe as the very lowest

part of our abdomen, which is basically right above our pubic bone. If you tighten up your stomach, it's just below where you can put strength. That is where all the weight of your upper body falls. If you drew a picture of the two hip bones coming into the pelvic girdle, and then drew a line right through where the bones and girdle meet, and then a line straight down through the middle, the center point where the two lines meet would be where this One Point, which is the center of the Universe, is located. We call this the One Point in the Lower Abdomen. The first of the Four Basic Principles that we practice in Aikido is "Keep One Point."

In Whole Body Meditation, we begin by breathing into this One Point, or into this lower abdomen. Everybody knows about the "hara" or the lower belly, which has been an Asian teaching for many centuries. This is that, only it is the very essence of that, the very bottom of that area. It is not a large, generalized area. It's very specifically at the base, where all the weight of the upper body falls. When you are sitting or standing it is the same feeling. And when you are feeling this experience you are also very, very stable. If this person comes and presses on my shoulder, I feel very stable. If I am not stable, and he presses, I either fall over, or I feel that I have to fight against his pressure, like this, to keep him from moving me. So this is not stable. If I want to move in Aikido techniques, for instance, or even if I simply want to stand up and talk to you folks, I need to be stable. And I don't want to have to rely on my physical posture to be stable. This is a very natural thing. It's not an artificial thing. It's not something that you put upon yourself. You may see some people having an artificial posture that is centered up in the chest, and is very stiff. This posture is centered here in the lower abdomen and it is completely natural.

So, when we are sitting we begin by breathing into this spot, and as I am talking about this right now, I want you to become aware of this spot I am talking about, and as you are breathing and listening to what I am saying, you can already be aware of breathing into this One Point. In other words, instead of breathing up into your chest, breathe down here into your One Point. Let your diaphragm expand downward, so that when your lungs take in air, they press the diaphragm down and it massages this area.

This is how we begin. This Point is the source of our power, life force. It is the spot where we experience life force itself. And again, I want to emphasize that this is not an idea. Well, it is an idea. It is a concept. When I say it in words, that's a concept. But I am pointing to an experience here. So when I say that we experience life force here, I mean it is possible to actually experience the life force itself, which is incredibly powerful, here in this One Point. So we breathe into this place, and we feel the rhythm of the breath going in and out. It's just natural. No special breathing now. You are just breathing into the One Point. And when you are doing this alone, you may want to spend as much as thirty or more minutes in each of these places, though when I do it with you in this class, I do it for three or four minutes, because otherwise we would run out of class time.

Then I will ask you to move to your heart area, here, and continue breathing into your belly, but now include your heart. So now you are breathing also through your heart. This heart is your seat of compassion in your body. It's not where you feel sorry for someone. That's up here in your head. Compassion is a very different thing. Compassion is when you want the other person not to suffer, and you will do anything to help them not suffer, and it's not very comfortable sometimes.

You are breathing into your belly and heart, and now gradually you expand up to your throat region. Your throat is of course your vocal area. This is the place that holds all of your expression. So the sound of your voice, the freedom that is in your voice, the power of your voice, it all comes from this center,

and of course below. You breathe into this. Your ability to express yourself is critical in this whole picture of your human life.

So now we are breathing in our One Point, in our belly, and also in our heart, and in our throat. This rhythm is now being felt throughout the whole trunk of your body, and of course throughout your arms, hands, legs, down to your toes, because legs and arms are part of the trunk. So now you are breathing through your whole body, except your head.

Now we will move on to breathe through the point between your eyes. The name is “ajna” in Hindu or “tente” in Japanese. This is the seat of insight. When you get the point of something, like when someone tells you a joke, and you get it, that happens here. OK? This is the seat of insight. So now we are breathing here, and now our whole body is breathing together, even though, again, we are still just breathing naturally. We call this “*Whole Body Meditation.*” Your whole body is in a state of vibrant, rhythmic movement, and this is meditation.

Alright, so we will begin. Please sit up straight. If you are a master, you can do this exercise slouching like this. But until we are, it’s better if we sit up.

We begin by breathing into our One Point. You can breathe fast or you can breathe slowly. There are no rules. I want you to be completely comfortable. Breathe in, and breathe out. The only thing I want you to do is get the feeling of breathing into this lower belly. And of course, you don’t have to push your breath out. You just relax and it naturally goes out. Breathing in, and breathing out. And as you breathe into your lower belly like this, notice that you can feel it all the way to your toes. You can feel it in your genitals, and you can feel it in your thighs, in your knees, back in your buttocks, and all the way down to your calves and your feet, to your toes and beyond. When you breathe in, it feels like you are breathing in down through your feet, way down into the earth, to infinity. So now the whole lower part of your body is humming. The breath becomes like a pump, that’s pumping this vibration throughout your body.

Gradually now, we move our attention up our trunk to include our heart area. We are still breathing into our One Point, but now we are breathing also into our heart. So now we are breathing with the whole lower trunk, from the heart on down to the tips of our toes. And as we breathe into our heart, we can feel the sweetness of loving kindness. You might want to stay here for a long, long time. But because of the limited time of the class, I am going to move to the next one now. But when you practice this on your own, feel free to take as much time as you like.

Now we are going to breathe into our throat. We are breathing into our One Point, breathing into our heart, and now we also breathing into our throat. Now, everything from our neck on down to the tips of our toes, and the tips of our fingers including forearms and upper arms, is all included in this vibration that is being pumped by the breath. Although this might feel quite powerful, it is very natural. Just allow the breath to have its way with you and enjoy experiencing the rhythm of the expanding and contracting of your whole body from your neck on down.

Finally, we’ll move up to that spot between our eyes, and we begin breathing into this spot. We can feel the pressure of the breath as we breathe into our One Point, and the pressure of the breath between our eyes, as the same.

We can now rest in this state as we experience then entire body breathing fully, maybe for some of you,

for the very first time. I invite you to enjoy this forever and often.

Thank you.