

## **EFFECTS OF BODY AWARENESS**

Establishing mindfulness of the body very calmly and fully has wide-ranging, transformative effects on the mind. Below is a set of tables in which these effects are listed. The state and dynamics of the different aspects of the mind are described with the body relatively absent (in the normal case of the untrained mind) opposite the case where the body is fully present in the mind (when mindfulness of the body is very clearly established).

Each row in the tables is a progression from the previous one representing mindfulness practise (the domain in the left column) or its fruit (the right column) going deeper and deeper.

| <b><u>Body is not present in the mind</u></b>   | <b><u>Body is present in the mind</u></b>   |
|---|---|
| Only pleasant, unpleasant feelings are present – The body is only recognised by these feelings and has no presence of its own | Neutral feeling is present – the body has ‘presence’  |
| Posture (and movement) are merely automatic/habitual  | Posture – aware of (and in control of) how you are sitting standing or lying  |
| In activity the body is projected out into the world, it is merely a tool   | In activity a background awareness remains  |
| Aware only of the purpose of movement   | Aware (and in control of) active movement   |
| Aware only of yielding to an outside force of some kind   | Aware of (and in control of) movement which is allowed  |
| Not aware of the breath   | Aware of the breath   |
| The body is sensed as feelings only   | Elements are sensed – the consistency of the body parts, hard or soft etc.  |
| The outer appearance of the body of is seen as an impression of like or dislike   | The outside of the body is seen neutrally as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails teeth and skin                 |
| The inside of the body is ignored or referred to only in relation to some purpose   | The inside of the bodies is imagined just as it is, just as being present   |
| Only feelings are sensed within the body  | An imagined image of an inner body part is stable   |
| Samādhi is experienced as clear outer awareness or space (upacāra)  | We experience an ‘external bodily nimitta’ – a calm, clear, stable image of the inner reality of the bodies of others |
| Samādhi is experienced as clear inner awareness or space (appanā)   | We experience an ‘internal bodily nimitta’ – a calm clear, stable image of the inside of our own body                 |

| <b><u>Absent body as it influences physical feeling</u></b>                                     | <b><u>Present body as it influences physical feeling</u></b>  |
|---|---|
| Pain increases as the mind focuses on feeling   | Pain diminishes or stays the same   |
| Suffering increases as the mind resists the feeling   | Perspective on or relationship to pain changes, causing less suffering  |
| Mind sees body and physical feeling as the same   | Mind sees body and physical feeling as different  |
| Body is assumed to be real, material  | Body image is immaterial  |
| Bodily inner parts or organs are absent so that physical feelings are experienced 'in the dark' | Bodily inner parts or organs are present in awareness so that feelings are seen, in a new light, as separate from that which feels them, also the ultimate impermanence of feeling is seen as it is experienced |

| <b>Absent body as it influences mental feeling</b>  | <b>Present body as it influences mental feeling</b>   |
|---|---|
| Suffering increases as the feeling is trapped inside  | Perspective on or relationship to pain changes causing less or suffering – feelings arise in an open mind   |
| Bodily organs are absent so that emotional feelings are experienced ‘in the dark’                                     | The inside of the body is present. The emotion is experienced in a new light and either sublimated or if the emotion still arises, it appears transformed and outside, related to the object (real, remembered or imagined) that was or is its source |
| We are attracted to an object or drawn into an activity and lose the background awareness of the body                 | Through the lack of desire, dispassion, we experience in the context of seeing the reality of the body, we are not drawn in and we sustain the body in background awareness. We therefore experience the new object of desire in this context         |
| When we are averse to an object or activity this throws us back into our feelings                                     | The cool awareness of dispassion is unaffected by an unpleasant object  |
| We notice the breath only as air entering and leaving   | The breath is sensed throughout the body and calms feeling  |
| Our feelings about our body influence the feelings we experience inside them – we are not aware that this is the case | The emotional feelings we have in the body are seen as the results of an action of body or mind in the same way as physical feelings  |
| Feelings are trapped in the body  | Feelings are released and experienced in an open field of awareness that extends beyond the body  |

| <b><u>Absent body as it influences the quality of the mind itself</u></b>                          | <b><u>Present body as it influences the quality of the mind itself</u></b>                        |
|--|---|
| The body is merely a tool of the mind  | Mind is composed, control of the body helps to control the mind                                   |
| Feeling and therefore the mind are restricted to, trapped in the body                              | Mind is centred and movements of the mind out into the world are clearly seen                     |
| Mind moves with feeling, is never at rest, vibrates with the heat of passion                       | Mind becomes still through resting on the body, is cool with dispassion                           |
| Mind focuses through grasping feeling  | Mind is open, mind sees the mind  |
| The focussed mind is dark and therefore blind  | Mind is open, bright and sees   |
| Mind is bound to the feeling of material elements  | Mind is released from the actual material elements  |
| We always have thoughts or feelings about the body that prevent us from accepting it the way it is | We can accept the body as it is in bare awareness   |
| Mind is in the body  | Body is in the open mind  |
| The body is a source of fear to the mind   | The body is a natural source of wisdom in the mind  |
| The body is a source of desire and craving to the mind   | The body is a natural source of compassion in the mind  |
| We experience the suffering of attachment to the body  | We experience freedom from suffering – the mind detached from the body – the body remains present |
| We are in denial of our own mortality  | We are aware of and accept the mortality of the body – we see death but also see the deathless    |

| <b><u>Absent body as it influences thought</u></b>   | <b><u>Present body as it influences thought</u></b> |
|--|---|
| Unless the body is a theme in thought the body is absent from consideration  | The body is taken into account in all consideration |
| Only relative impermanence is seen   | Absolute impermanence is seen                       |
| Only relative impersonality is seen  | Absolute impersonality is seen                      |
| Thought is experienced as located in the head in subjective experience, as and when we are understanding it to be so | Thought is freed from being trapped in the head     |
| Ignorance naturally arises   | Wise thought naturally arises                       |
| Craving naturally arises   | Compassionate thought naturally arises              |

| <b><u>Absent body as it influences sense of self</u></b>  | <b><u>Present body as it influences sense of self</u></b>  |
|---|--|
| We assume that our automatic pilot knows how to operate the body  | As we take over supervision from the automatic pilot we realise that we don't know our own bodies so well – the sense of self in relation to it diminishes |
| We are not aware of the sense organs themselves as we use them – giving the impression of a subject or self independent of the body | Sense organ is present in awareness so for example we are aware of the eye that sees – there is no sense of self that results                              |
| We look for solutions to sickness or ageing – the body is represented as a problem to get over                                      | We are clearly aware of the processes of sickness and ageing and our limited ability to change these – we see these as facts of nature                     |

I offer this for your reflection.

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