

A GUIDE TO
RADICALLY
ACCEPTING
your thoughts
IN MEDITATION

BY HIEN HONG

*Avidya. Asmita.
Raga. Dvesa. Abhinivesa.*





I made this guide because I think that the hardest thing about meditation is knowing how to process what comes our way.

If you are looking at this guide, chances are you already know the many benefits that come from a regular meditation practice.

But how do you keep practicing when your annoying, sometimes painful thoughts show up? When I first tried a regular practice, I felt reluctant to continue because things came up that I did not want to deal with.

I believe knowing some yoga philosophy helped me find **radical acceptance** of what was coming my way as I tried to find mindfulness.

In this guide you will learn about three components that make up my personal practice: the philosophy, the self-auditing, and the commitment.

I want to give credit to the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali* for helping inform me of the philosophy I will explain. I hope you find this guide useful in helping you embrace your own version of Samadhi Living.

With love,
Hien

PHILOSOPHY

In the *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, there is a description of the *kleshas*, or five root causes of suffering in book two.

- 1 AVIDYA/ABSENCE OF SELF-AWARENESS
- 2 ASMITA/"I AM"-NESS
- 3 RAGA/ATTACHMENT
- 4 DVESA/DISLIKE
- 5 ABHINIVESA/THE WILL TO LIVE

The thoughts that come up into our minds while meditating will likely fall into one out of five of these categories.

Simply recognizing the things that bother us is important in wiring our minds for a mindful practice. **The point isn't to change our thoughts, but to recognize them and radically accept them.**

PHILOSOPHY

To help you get a better idea of the five, I will include examples of each *klesha* that may come up as you're meditating.

1 AVIDYA/ABSENCE OF SELF-AWARENESS

Another interpretation of *avidya* is spiritual ignorance. Avidya may be described as "lacking the big picture." After all, when we don't have self-awareness, we are more susceptible to believe whatever seems convenient -- even if it's not true.

Thoughts relating to fear, anxiety, and exaggerated assumptions are common.

Examples

"I suck at meditation"

"Things will always be this way"

"I have to do ... because there's no other option"

When you notice it...

Accept the fact it may be *avidya*. Remind yourself "This too shall pass" or "There's a bigger picture" and breathe into that possibility.

PHILOSOPHY



ASMITA/ "I AM"-NESS

Asmita can be thought of as ego.

When we think of our truth as how it affects "I" that is *asmita*.

Of course, it's unavoidable. But if we cannot see beyond how life affects the precious "I" it can be detrimental.

Patañjali describes *asmita* as not being able to distinguish the seer or "I" from the act of seeing itself.

Examples

"I am so hurt because of ..."

"I think ... is wrong and I am right"

"I feel (emotion) and it makes me think of ..."

When you notice it...

Accept that you have an active ego. Tell yourself "There goes my ego" and then put whatever thoughts to rest.

PHILOSOPHY

3

RAGA/ATTACHMENT

Raga is probably a bit easier to understand because most of us recognize feelings of attachment or desire.

We have attachments because we think they will somehow make us happy. Sometimes raga is a specific outcome or thing we want, other times it's a perpetual train of thought.

Examples

"I want ..."

"If only ... than I will be happy/some other positive outcome"

Any obsessive thoughts

When you notice it...

Accept that you are attached to whatever it is. Maybe tell yourself "My mind is really into that, but I can just breathe for now."

"ATTACHMENT IS HOLDING ON TO PRIOR HAPPINESS." -PATANJALI (2.7)

PHILOSOPHY



DVESA/DISLIKE

The flip side of attachment is dislike, or aversion. *Dvesa* is being attached to something you do not want.

We think we would be better off without the things we dislike. Negative feelings are commonly associated with *dvesa*.

Examples

"I do not want/I dislike ..."

"It is because of that I am unhappy/negative outcome"

Repression of certain thoughts or feelings

When you notice it...

Accept the fact you are feeling bothered. Tell yourself "That's okay I feel this way, but I don't need to look into it right now" and put the thoughts to rest.

"DISLIKE IS HOLDING ON TO PRIOR PAIN." -PATANJALI (2.8)

PHILOSOPHY



ABHINIVESA/ THE WILL TO LIVE

The last of the *kleshas* has always been a bit harder for me to understand. Some interpretations of it is "fear of death" or "fear of change."

Let's recap the first four kleshas: absence of self-awareness, "I am"-ness, attachment, and dislike.

They seem to reflect each other. Not having awareness leads to thinking about yourself (ego). Wanting what has made you happy leads to not wanting what has hurt you.

The last klesha encompasses the rest.

I understand *abhinivesa* as the struggle. The idea is **not** to give up and die, but to drop the struggle. Anytime I find myself struggling and trying to come up with answers, that is my "will to live" getting in the way of me actually living. **So when you notice it...** Accept that you're being human and tell yourself "I don't need to struggle with it" and keep breathing.

PHILOSOPHY

I decided to share the philosophy behind my meditation practice because:

- 1) It gives a foundation for understanding the thoughts that will inevitably appear during meditation.
- 2) I believe in the power of **radically accepting** the truths we don't want to.

"THE RUMINATIONS FROM THOSE KLESHAS ARE TO BE ENDED BY MEDITATION." -PATANJALI (2.11)

Meditation is hard because sitting with whatever truth comes up is hard. If we are sad, we don't want to sit with that. We want to change the tune. If we are happy, we'd rather go take that energy and celebrate.

But it is through slowing down and **radically accepting the thoughts that come to us, especially the ones that makes us suffer or feel dreadful**, that will lead to mindfulness.

I shared the examples and what to tell yourself when you notice the kleshas **not** because I want you to think differently, but to let you know that it is possible to "un-klesha" your meditation practice.

SELF-AUDIT

I know that writing things down is not for everyone. But if you want to hold yourself accountable and be consistent, it is important to find a way to **self-audit** your meditation practice.

Some people use a smart phone app like Insight Timer or ZenFriend. I myself use Insight Timer.

But if you're not into that, you can try to create a meditation diary or a log on paper or digitally.

THE DIARY

Just like having a diary where you record down your day, you can make a diary especially for your meditation practice. Free write what comes to mind. Here's an excerpt from my digital meditation diary*:

December 13, 2015

When/Where: At 11 p.m., I did a 10 minute meditation in my room. (Earlier, I taught my friend yoga in the morning. I counted that as my own practice, as I demonstrated for all of it.)

Observations: I felt aversion (dvesa), as if I more or less hated meditation. I listened to some binuaral beats from my meditation app. I couldn't stand sitting, so I ended up in child's pose for the majority of the 10 minutes. For the last 3 minutes, I had to sit up, open my eyes, and try hard to not look around. I didn't feel strong emotions other than a Yuck-I-want-to-move-can't-stay-still restlessness.

*I made mine into a yoga + meditation practice diary, but it's up to you to add what you want.

SELF-AUDIT

THE LOG

Although I enjoyed the free writing that came with the diary, I started a log. Keeping records this way is more quantitative. Here's an example of a meditation log I whipped up in Microsoft Word with the table maker.

| Date | Time | Location | Yoga? | Meditation Style? | Kleshas? (Avidya/Asmita/Raga/Dvesa/Abinivesa) | Mood? | Other |
|-------|---------------|----------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Jan 1 | 9-9:30 am | My room | No | Guided meditation from insight timer | Noticed raga | Tired, relaxed | Felt hungry |
| Jan 2 | 10-10:10 p.m. | My room | Yes, earlier in the day | Seated | Noticed abhinivesa, struggled to sit up straight and complete the practice | annoyed | N/A |
| Jan 3 | 6-6:45p.m. | Studio | Yes, after meditation | Seated&then walking | Noticed asmita | Grief, anger | It was easier to walk than sit |
| Jan 4 | | | | | | | |
| Jan 5 | | | | | | | |
| Jan 6 | | | | | | | |
| Jan 7 | | | | | | | |

There are infinite ways for you to design a meditation log, and several tabs you can try to keep data on.

On days where you skip meditation, you could also use the slot to list the reason why. (For me, a lot of it was distraction from watching Netflix and then forgetting about it.)

I included a log you can download too.

COMMITMENT

After introducing you to yoga philosophy and my self-auditing methods, I will now talk about the hardest subject of meditation: commitment!

How do we keep the inclination to do a practice that is hard? The answer is in: **1) Simplifying it as much as possible** and/or **2) Mixing it up.**

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- When starting out, maybe try to notice one of the *kleshas*. It's possible to not notice any or all in a session.
- Make meditation part of your routine. Choose to meditate at the same time of day, for the same amount of time.
- Find a meditation community in your area (meetup.com is helpful). Going once a week completes one day in your diary or log entry.

MIX IT UP

- Try guided meditations.
- Challenge yourself with meditation themes. January might be for trying to meditate for 45 minutes a day, February might be for trying walking meditation.
- Learn about different styles -- whether through guided meditations or with different groups.

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS PERFECT MEDITATION."-HIEN HONG

COMMITMENT

FIND YOUR REASON

We all have our reasons for doing things. Knowing yours for practicing meditation is important in keeping a practice alive.

For me, I do it to recognize my own *kleshas* (root causes of suffering) and to radically accept them. Because of how it has helped me be more mindful of my thoughts -- I think it is too valuable to not share!

A REVIEW

There are five kleshas: avidya, asmita, raga, dvesa, and abhinivesa.

To track my meditation practice, I self-audit in the form of a diary or log. I often revisit it to see if I've noticed any changes to my meditation style preference or moods.

And in order to stay committed to my practice, I strive to keep it simple while mixing it up as needed. One is to make it feel easier, the other is to make it more fun.

Tell me on social media what you thought of this meditation guide.

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