Meditation on the senses

A very good beginners meditation is to meditate upon the senses so we can help to induce the fifth limb of pratyahara, the withdrawal of the senses. This is necessary because most of us will be used to looking outwards rather than inwards and will have little control over our senses. Here we repeatedly move inwards and outwards until we are happy to remain with senses turned inwards, much as when we try to relax we can initially tense and relax, tense and relax so we know the difference and can let go.

This meditation also helps us to recognize that in essence a disturbance interfering with our ability to concentrate only arises within us rather than outside us because it is only when we resist something being there that it becomes a source of irritation or frustration. So this meditation is also designed to develop patience and tolerance towards everything that is occurring around you!

Antar Mouna

Antar translates as ‘inner’ and mouna as ‘silence’. This meditation has several stages and here is stage one which can be taught to less experienced students because it teaches pratyahara, the withdrawal of the senses, where through externalizing then internalizing the senses repeatedly we eventually can reset the senses and more easily look inwardly.

The Technique:

Sitting comfortably and closing eyes become aware of the body, experiencing the sense of touch; for example noticing if you can feel the touch of the floor beneath the body, where clothing touches the skin, the feel of the air upon the skin, just feeling……continue with this for a few minutes and it may be that eventually your interest in the sense of touch will diminish…….

Now direct awareness to the far distance and simply listen, noticing what sounds you can hear, spend a little time with each sound, then moving on to another sound… continuing in this way…. You are simply listening without judging or analyzing, without the need to become involved or to think, you are just listening………

Now we move awareness to any sounds you can hear within the room, again focusing upon each sound you can hear for a short while and then moving on the next sound you can hear… again let there be no judgment or evaluation……. As you continue to work in this way with for several minutes it may be that gradually any interest in sound is lost……….

Now move awareness to the flow of the breath, noticing the simple rise and fall of the breath…… without controlling, simply watching…. After a few minutes again return to an awareness of sounds you can hear in the far distance…..then within the room…….After a few minutes returning awareness to the movement of the breath…..Work in this way moving between sound and the breath……….

Finally rest your awareness inwardly now……becoming aware of quietness inside yourself………….see if you can thankfully relax into a silent space within the body…………

This technique is a very good way to begin meditations in general and can be taught on a regular basis to students just beginning their journey.

Daily meditation on the senses

Whenever you find it hard to sleep or you wish to spend a moment in your day becoming quiet to re-energise the mind and body try using this first stage of antar mouna and you may find it is helpful

Also, in daily life if an irritating disturbance arises for us we can see if changing our focus to how the breath moves the body and/or the quiet spaciousness inside lessens or negates the frustration or irritation experienced….