

Linda Clair
Five-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Center, November-December 2021
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 2A – Sunday morning discussion

Question: When doing the walking meditation, I've noticed that all my attention is on the soles of my feet, and the legs as well. Would you suggest bringing the body scan into the practice, or just come back to the breath?

Linda: I wouldn't suggest bringing the whole body scan into it. Put your main attention on your feet, be very aware of the breath of course, and your posture too – because a lot of people walk along with their head down. Try and keep your head fairly well up, and look down. Another really good thing to do while you're doing the walking is to use your vision as well. Often when you look at something you hone in on it – and it might be you look at the person in front of you, what they've got on, "Oh, that's nice." So as soon as you start to focus on anything try and blur your vision, and by that I mean stop focusing, just try and look at things as a whole rather than honing in on one thing. Be very aware of your feet, lifting and touching. Lifting your feet, feeling your feet touching the floor, being aware of your posture, your breath – there's quite a bit going on really – and the vision is really important as well.

Question: So you wouldn't suggest closing your eyes?

Linda: No, keep your eyes open, so you don't bump into someone or something, and stay balanced. But you can use that as a practice when you're walking. Because most of us having our eyes closed doing this, or a few people just slightly open. When you're walking it's like meditation in motion, and it's more challenging in a way because you're using your vision as well, and there is so much happening that you need to be aware of. It's great to do it in conjunction with the sitting because the sitting stills you to a degree, so some of the momentum goes out of your body. So when you get up and start walking, it's not like a normal walk where you get up and you're going somewhere – we're not really going anywhere, we're just walking – so it's an excellent practice to do. But I'd say open your eyes, don't close your eyes; challenge yourself by using your vision. But notice when you start to hone in on certain objects. I'd say don't look around like that, just use your vision to keep you balanced and to see where you're going. It's very interesting watching it like that, the vision thing.

Question: It's been really challenging this time around – I don't know why. Usually I enjoy it but this time there is so much going on in my mind.

Linda: Well, good. So use it as a challenge. And often the stiller you become, the more starts to arise. You can tend to think this practice is going to get easier as it goes on, but it just becomes more and

more challenging – you see how much is going on, all these little bits. So see that, come back to your breath, feel your feet. So you're finding the sitting challenging as well, or mainly the walking?

Question: Both. I'm quite lucky in that I don't really experience any physical pain or discomfort, but it's all kicking off. From the first sit yesterday and I was thinking, "Gosh, if this is what it's like on day one I might leave tomorrow." No.

Linda: It will change, so try not to assume anything. You don't know what's going to happen. You're getting pain in your body?

Question: Yes, on the back of my neck on the left side. I'm not quite sure what to do with myself.

Linda: Well, your posture is pretty good. Feeling pain when you're sitting does not mean you're doing something wrong. It will predominately happen when you're sitting. So don't try and get rid of it, don't feel that you're doing something wrong. It's just some sort of energy blockage maybe, which is not something that's wrong. Don't try and do anything with it except feel it, be with it, watch your reaction to it. And this tendency to go, "Oh, there's something wrong with my neck, I need to do something about it or I'm going to injure myself." If it's too much sitting on the floor – and this goes for everyone – if you want to alternate and sit on the floor for half an hour then sit on a chair, do that. Sometimes it is good to experiment with that and see.

But the reason you're here is to be challenged. Each retreat you never know what's going to happen, and you can't assume that because last retreat it was really enjoyable and easy it going to be like that his time. You just never know, and that's the hard thing about it, it's not this progression of events. With this practice you never know what's going to come up or how you're going to feel, which makes it interesting. Tomorrow the pain might go, or it might be stronger, I can't say. But use everything. If it does become too much though, during the walking or after the walking, go and sit on a chair for a while. Because sitting on the floor can be more intense – but it also grounds you as well.

So it's still just the first day too, settling in, and by tomorrow things will be different.

Question: When A. mentioned the snakes, then every little shadow I thought was a snake.

Linda: I haven't seen any yet? Did you see one?

Question: Just at the corner of the yoga room, by the rocks there, about a metre long, a brown.

Linda: (More talk about snakes, edited down.) There is a snake bite drill sheet on the wall, but just be aware of what you're doing outside, and don't leave your shoes outside because little ones will go in shoes sometimes. We have a couple of retired registered nurses here.

Question: I want to talk about resistance, which is relentless and comes in all forms it seems. I'm still making it a thing, a thing outside myself, like I do with the ego. They're things that I have to fight and wrestle with; then at other times I go, "No, just relax, just watch, just be calm." But it seems like it's a

really entrenched habit to see them as separate. Would it be a habit, something to overcome as a habit, rather than...?

Linda: So resistance – the best way to deal with resistance is not to resist it, just to be with it. The resistance is necessary. What we tend to do is see it as something in the way: “If the resistance wasn’t there I’d be enlightened, it would all be fine.” But the resistance, and the way you deal with resistance, is a big part of the practice, a really important part of it. And the only thing you can do when it comes up is accept it like everything else.

But we tend to see it as a problem, and it’s not a problem, it’s more a regulator. It’s regulating how much energy comes in to your body at one time, and it will hit parts of your body or your psyche at different times and of course it’s difficult to deal with – it’s not comfortable, it’s really uncomfortable. The habit is to blame it and see it as something in the way – “It’s not me, it’s the resistance.” But the resistance is in you. It’s actually protecting you because this is like an electrical circuit and the resistance is restricting the amount of energy that comes in to your body at one time, the amount that you can take. Then, once you clear that bit of resistance, it will appear somewhere else in another form, another place. The best thing to do with it is just to sit with it, but it’s not easy.

Question: Does owning it as part of yourself help? So that I don’t see that, or ego stuff, as separate but go, “It’s all one, it’s all me.”

Linda: I don’t know if anything really helps, except to just be with it. If you’re doing that to try and get rid of it more quickly, to do something with it, to justify, or to try and accept it – I don’t think saying anything to yourself is actually going to make it easier. When there is this very strong resistance it’s very uncomfortable, there’s no easy or fast way through it, but the less you struggle with it the shorter the time it will be there. Because it’s the struggling that strengthens it, and trying to examine it and analyse it and blame it and all of that.

So you see it and just be with it as much as you can, breathe into it, if you’re feeling it as pain breathe into the pain. But there’s no easy way through this. It’s just there and it needs to be there at that time. It does feel relentless but eventually your body becomes pure and free enough so the energy is just moving freely around it and there’s virtually no resistance. But as long as you are in your body I’d say there is a certain amount of resistance, just that you’re in this body, where there is some form of resistance. But it becomes so minute that it very rarely appears, and you don’t see it as a problem, you see it as a way of becoming even freer.

So it’s time to move.