

# The Practice of Letting Go

There are a number of times when our mind clings to something tightly, and it is rarely helpful:

- I am right, the other person is wrong
- That person is living their life in the wrong way, they should change
- My preference is the best way, others are wrong
- This is the thing I want, I don't want anything else
- I really don't like that, it sucks
- I should have that person in my life, loving me
- I shouldn't be alone, shouldn't be overweight, shouldn't be however I am, shouldn't have this life

In all of these cases, and more, our minds are fixed in a certain viewpoint, and we often judge others. We complain. We are attached to what we want and what we don't want.

It leads to stress. Unhappiness. Anger. Righteousness. Being judgmental. Distancing ourselves from others. Closed-offedness.

And it leads to being closed off to the beauty of this moment, as it is, full of openness and possibilities.

If you'd like to work on letting go, I would like to offer a simple practice.

## The Practice of Letting Go

You can actually practice this all day long, because even if we don't realize it, we're clinging and hardening and fixing upon viewpoints all day long.

Here's how to practice:

1. **Start by realizing that you're hardened.** Notice that you are stressed, upset at someone, feeling like you're right, complaining about someone or a situation, not open to other viewpoints, putting something off, avoiding, tensed. These are good signs that you are holding on, hardened in your viewpoint, fixed, attached, clinging. Get good at noticing this.
2. **Notice the tension in your body.** It's a tightening that happens from your stomach muscles, through your chest, into your throat, up to your forehead. Think of this as your central column, and it tightens up when you think you're right, or someone else is wrong, or you really want something or don't want something.
3. **Start to relax those tightened muscles.** This is the heart of changing from holding

on to letting go. Whatever is tight in your central column, relax. Try it right now. What is tight? Relax that. Soften.

4. **Open your awareness beyond yourself.** Once you've done this (and you might have to repeat the relaxing, multiple times), you can open your awareness from just your own body and your self-concern, to the world around you. Become aware of the space around you, the people and objects, the light and sound. Open your awareness to the neighborhood around you.
5. **Become aware of openness & possibilities.** With your mind opening, you can start to feel more open. Your mind is no longer closed, but has made space for possibilities. You are not fixated on one right way, but are open to everything. This is the beauty of not-knowing.
6. **Open to the beauty that is before you.** Now that you are not fixated on rightness or your way or the way things should or shouldn't be ... you can take in the actual moment before you. You've emptied your cup, and made room for seeing things as they actually are, and appreciating the beauty of this moment, the beauty of other people, and of yourself.
7. **Step forward with a not-knowing openness.** From this place of relaxing your fixed mind, of opening up ... take the next step with a stance of not-knowing. You don't know how things should be, let's find out! You don't know if you're right or wrong, let's explore! You don't know the answers, you just hold the questions in your heart, and move into open possibilities.

It's that simple. And of course, it takes a lot of practice. You can do this at any moment, but it's helpful to have a short time of day when you set a reminder and then take a few moments to sit still and practice with whatever you've been clinging to today.

When we practice like this, we are shifting from our habitual patterns of self-concern and shutting out all possibilities, to openness and not-knowing, to unlimited possibilities and seeing the breath-taking beauty of the world in front of us.