



One Earth Sangha

Working with Personal and Collective Reactivity

Six Somatic Practices with Heather Sundberg

This is a transcript of a practice given on January 29, 2023 to participants in Steady Through the Fire, an EcoDharma Exploration led by Heather Sundberg. Watch the video practice [here](#), or the full program recording [here](#).

Heather Sundberg: Let's talk about the six somatic practices. I'll name the six and then we'll do a guided meditation so we can experience them directly. My understanding is that this guided meditation will be broken out as a recording so you can then use it at other times.

So firstly, six somatic practices support seeing clearly, responding with compassion, increasing resiliency in the face of not just personal reactivity but collective reactivity. And they are designed for this. Manuela Mischke-Reeds put together the themes and then I infuse them with dharma. So, they're not hers, they're not mine, they're ours.

Number one, if you remember nothing else, please remember this: move and keep moving, physically. Because when we isolate, when the despair and the fear get too big, it induces the immobility response, what we call the freeze. So we want to look for opportunities to move. That is especially important as meditators because many of us have been trained that we should sit still or it's not good meditation. There is value to sitting still when our system is constantly agitated and distracted. But there are times when the rivers of what we are feeling are moving through us that



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we want to have skillful, mindful ways to move even within meditation. Not to mention walking, exercising, you know, just moving. That was number one.

Number two, embodied fluidity. The resource of internal external water element. Number three, accessing aliveness. Number four, the mindfulness to track for needs, such as the need to control, need to know, need to have a plan, need to have clarity, need to have certainty, and on and on and on. Number five, opening to the rawness with compassion. And number six, invite lingering in pleasant experience, internal and external, which is a great resiliency booster. Suffering more and denying all pleasure is not better practice, especially not for resiliency in the face of collective reactivity. So those are the six, and now we'll go through them in a short guided meditation.

So, just starting with that sense of regrounding, whether it's pressing the hands into the thighs or taking a deeper breath, a sense of space around the body. For practicing "move and keep moving," even while we're meditating, if you put your hands on your thighs, we can just make some small movements with each finger on the thigh. So perhaps we start with the pinky finger on the right hand and just press it gently into the thigh and feel that warmth, pressure, contact. Just a little press and then the ring finger and the middle finger. Let me just keep going. Pointer, thumb pressing, left hand, thumb pressing. And as we keep pressing the fingers, we can add "buddho" as we press a finger. And then the next finger, awake, which is what buddho means. So pinky on the left hand, buddho, and then go back to the ring finger on the left hand, awake, buddho, awake, buddho, awake, buddho, awake, buddho, awake. Really you can say any two words that feel right. Buddho is how often people are taught to meditate in Thailand, saying buddho on the breath. So just do one more round yourself.



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You can include that in any part of this short guided meditation, where you feel like you need a little movement, but for right now, we're going to cue into the water element in the body. The water element on a sensation level in the body might include fluids of digestion, might include the wetness or dampness in the mouth or the nose and the sensations that tell you, might include feeling the flow of blood or pulse somewhere in the body, if that's not activating for you. Really any sensations where there's a sense of current or flow can fall under the heading of water element, internally.

Sometimes people even call up an internal image of their favorite body of water where they like to go, to use as a support for this. And within this experience of the water element, it can also cue in a little bit more to the experience of aliveness in the body. Sometimes that will show up through sensations of warmth or tingling or uplift and the sensations or the energy of the body. Sometimes it's supported by bringing a subtle smile to the heart or a subtle smile to the corners of the mouth. And there's that sense of uplift, of aliveness, straightening the spine a little bit. And then we can add to that a tracking and mindfulness. Even as we're practicing this way, there might be this sense of, "I need to know what's happening, I need to know what's next," a need for more clarity. And just in the recognition of these needs, just as a sense of softening and widening and grounding a little bit, I can think, oh, what I can know now is the sensations of sitting. What I can control now is that sense of kind of coming into contact with a sensation or with the breath, not in a controlling type of way, but in a choiceful way so that we're including some of these deeper currents.



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And when we notice any kind of struggle happening within our experience, that is a beautiful time to open to the tenderness of the struggle, of the rawness with some care. Whether it's bringing attention to the upper chest and the space of heart, taking a few more breaths with warmth and care to whatever the struggle is, putting a hand on the heart, if you like, opening to the tenderness and the rawness and breathing with it.

And then last, but certainly not least, inviting lingering in pleasant experience. We can do that by connecting with a pleasant sensation in the body, or if there's a pleasant sound, or even opening the eyes and resting the gaze on a pleasant view out the window or our favorite color in the room, just some sensory contact that's experienced as pleasant and then we linger. We take some breaths and take some time with the pleasantness itself so the whole system gets suffused with that pleasantness, including beauty. And if the mind-body goes back to something you're struggling with, just pendulate back, move the attention back to that which is pleasant and include that too. So it's these six: move and keep moving (internally and externally), the water element (internally and externally), accessing aliveness, mindfulness of needs, opening to the rawness with compassion, and lingering in the pleasant. Thank you.