



# Loch Kelly

## The Way of Effortless Mindfulness

A REVOLUTIONARY GUIDE FOR LIVING AN AWAKENED LIFE

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Praise for *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness*

# Introduction

**M**y life before I began to practice effortless mindfulness was completely different from the way it is now. Growing up, I was neither calm nor contemplative. I struggled with some form of dyslexia and ADD, and I had an underlying feeling that something wasn't quite right, that something was missing or out of balance. The only time I experienced relief from this background anxiety was while engaged in sports, feeling myself in my body and in "the zone." Once, during an ice hockey game in junior high school, the score was tied 1-1, and after the last time-out, I dropped into a sense of well-being, effortless focus, and connection with my teammates. It was as if time slowed down, and playing together in this concentrated way brought me into a profound sense of embodied joyful flow! It was after this taste of effortless mindfulness that I started wondering: *How did this happen, and could I find a way to intentionally access this joy of being in other parts of my life?*

As I grew up, I became increasingly curious about and hungry for other ways of experiencing this dimension of life. Like many in my generation, I tried reading spiritual books, traveling, romantic relationships, artistic pursuits, being in nature, and even sex, drugs, and rock and roll as I sought lasting happiness. My search eventually led me to graduate school in psychology and spirituality, where a new door opened. I received a travel fellowship to study at a university in Sri Lanka and at meditation centers in India and Nepal. There I met teachers who devoted their lives to meditation, awakening, and compassionate living. With one of these teachers, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, I was introduced to the advanced yet simple approach called *effortless mindfulness*, which is a different form of mindfulness from the kind that is so popular in the West today. Effortless mindfulness is a way of opening to a natural, wise, and loving awareness that is already present within us, which reveals qualities of well-being, clarity, and compassionate

action. It is a way of shifting out of the chattering mind and into the source of our mind, which is already awake and aware—where we can rest, engage, and feel unconditional love. Effortless mindfulness is a unique form of mindfulness that allows us to immediately open to clarity and love in the midst of our busy everyday lives. The way of effortless mindfulness is about both waking up and growing up, so it combines a unique meditative and psychological approach to healing trauma and living an awakened life.

Effortless mindfulness gave me a way of relieving my underlying suffering and connecting to an inner joy that I didn't even know existed. My life is freer and easier than it was before I discovered effortless mindfulness, and for this I am deeply grateful. One example I can share is that writing my first book, with my dyslexia and ADD, took me ten years. Given the title of this book, *The Way of Effortless Mindfulness*, it might not surprise you that I wrote it through the practice of effortless mindfulness. Though there was still the pain of writing with ADD, this book flowed out into form in just nine months. The gift of effortless mindfulness has been finding a new willingness to show up fully with my quirks and struggles. The more I'm able to let go, the greater the unconditional, loving support that has appeared within, around, and throughout my life. I experience deeper levels of vulnerability and courage by opening to parts of myself that I avoided in the past. I've been able to feel my interconnectedness with other living beings, and as a result, I've gained a new level of motivation to be of service.

Since my first encounter with effortless mindfulness over three decades ago, developing this practice within myself and teaching it to others has been my life's inspiration and vocation. This book is meant to be like a letter to a friend. It is an invitation. I am more of a coach or a guide than a preacher or a guru. I am here to share pointers and principles so you can find effortless mindfulness for yourself, as if to say, "Hey, the water is great! Come on in! Guess what? We can awaken together!" I am convinced that accessing the natural well-being of unconditional love is learnable and teachable and hope this book will help you find what is already yours.

## **A Different Form of Mindfulness**

Effortless mindfulness is a unique form of mindfulness. What most people in the West know as mindfulness, I call *deliberate mindfulness*. The teachings of deliberate mindfulness stem primarily from the Theravada and Zen

traditions of South and East Asia and the initial practices of Tibetan Buddhism. Deliberate mindfulness has also been brought into secular settings in the United States through mindfulness practices for physical and psychological treatment and stress reduction, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). I love these practices because they provide a way of cultivating calm, patience, and intentional lovingkindness. I have taught deliberate mindfulness for decades as a teacher at New York Insight Meditation Center and have seen the practice help countless people. I deeply value deliberate mindfulness and its benefits. I am grateful for the popularity it is gaining in the West because it is allowing people to find greater peace of mind.

Effortless mindfulness, on the other hand, can be considered a different form of mindfulness, which is sometimes taught after having developed a deliberate mindfulness practice. It can also be a helpful alternative approach for those who have had difficulty with concentration practices or sitting meditation. Though often considered advanced, it can be a good starting place for people who are new to meditation. The effortless mindfulness practice begins with an opening to an already awake, optimal mind from which we can be effortlessly focused. The full unfolding leads to a life that is not more detached, however, but more embodied, intimate, courageous, and wise.

Effortless mindfulness has its roots in the world's wisdom traditions that are often described as *direct path*, *essence traditions*, or *nondual traditions*. The premise of the direct approach in all meditative traditions is that *the awake loving nature we are seeking is already here within us and can be accessed immediately*. The primary nondual tradition that the effortless mindfulness map and practices in this book draw from is called Sutra Mahamudra, which began in North India and links the three main traditions of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, and Tibetan. Sutra Mahamudra was primarily a movement of lay practitioners who developed a style of practice to facilitate awakening—a shift and upgrade of awareness, mind, and identity—in the midst of everyday life. Effortless mindfulness is ideal for our contemporary Western culture in that it demonstrates that awakening is possible for anyone without having to leave home, friends, work, or family.

## **Benefits of Effortless Mindfulness**

In bringing effortless mindfulness into the contemporary Western context, I have grown increasingly interested in the particular obstacles and supports to living a genuine, awakened life. In this book, I present a way of working with the emotional, energetic, and psychological aspects of our human experience and identity. However, this book isn't about the philosophy of consciousness, mindfulness, or awakening. I present a theory and hypothesis, but also a set of practices so that you can experience the results for yourself. I have included plenty of meditations that are direct and experiential—glimpses into a whole new way of seeing and being. With effortless mindfulness, you'll uncover a sense of well-being that relieves suffering at its root.

Students who consistently practice effortless mindfulness describe a relief from judgmental thinking, a deep sense of safety and well-being, a sense of openness and interconnection, and an ability to welcome strong emotions with less worry, fear, and shame. They also experience more compassion for themselves and others; a greater motivation, clarity, and optimal functioning at work; and a new capacity for creativity and loving relationships.

I believe that no matter where you are on your life's journey or in your meditation practice, you'll find something of benefit in engaging effortless mindfulness. I am convinced, after decades of studying, practicing, seeing students' progress, and conversing with colleagues, that awakening is truly possible in the midst of our everyday lives. This is possible because the awake nature that we are seeking is already here and available within us. Awakening is part of our common human heritage, spanning all traditions and cultures. In fact, I see clear indications that awakening is the next natural stage of human development. I have seen how those who are awakening have naturally begun to heal, teach, and support others, which seems to be part of a consciousness revolution.

Many of us are concerned about social, political, economic, and environmental issues on this planet. I believe that taking responsibility to find our own true sense of compassionate interconnectedness, and then helping others do the same, can be a radical collective healing that can bring a better future for all of us. My intention with this book is to bring a particular approach to awakening into our world so that it can transform our lives and communities.

## The Flow and Structure of This Book

*The Way of Effortless Mindfulness* is a unique, comprehensive guidebook to an advanced yet simple form of mindfulness that brings immediate and lasting benefits. It offers a systematic map to navigate consciousness. I begin by introducing ways of discovering an already awake awareness that is the source of your mind and identity through experimenting with micro-meditations or “mindful glimpses” and noticing the results. Each individual will find that different glimpses are more suited to them than others, and the unfolding is equally unique.

Part 1 of the book starts by introducing the fundamentals of effortless mindfulness. Then I compare and contrast effortless mindfulness with the more familiar deliberate mindfulness in order to give you a clear sense of this lesser-known style. I go on to introduce the Five Foundations of Effortless Mindfulness and a series of practices that are effortless-mindfulness versions of classical deliberate-mindfulness practices such as one-pointed focus, lovingkindness, and insight meditation.

Part 2 is a deeper dive into effortless mindfulness as a way of living an awakened life. Here I point to details of the map of awakening and give a series of mindful glimpses for each of the Five Foundations of Effortless Mindfulness. I am interested in offering a set of practices for effortless mindfulness just as there are standard deliberate-mindfulness practices. Some of my standard mindful glimpses are also available in my first book, *Shift into Freedom*, and in audio and video form, so you can listen to them after you read them.

Part 3 offers ways of further supporting awakening, along with an appendix that discusses some of the traps and detours that prevent us from unfolding and embodying awakening. I describe the integration of awakening and psychotherapy and conclude with tools and techniques to continue your journey of embodying effortless mindfulness.

This is a practice book to help you not only understand effortless mindfulness, but most importantly, to experience it and embody it—to live from effortless mindfulness. If you had picked up a book about how to ride a bicycle, intellectual explanations would not be the primary way to learn, and the same applies here. Instead, I encourage you to adopt a beginner’s mind, open your heart, and enjoy the ride.



Part I

# Discovering

## The Next Stage of Mindfulness

**M**ost of us love the feeling of effortless. Some of the happiest times in our lives happen when we flow with the silent music of life. The sight of a dancer, athlete, or bird moving with ease and grace inspires us. What if you could learn to shift into a level of mind in which suffering could be relieved and wisdom, love, and joy naturally uncovered? What if you could discover a reliable way to access a sense of safety and open-heartedness that shifts us out of the confusion we have been so tightly caught in? What if awakening—shifting your consciousness into a more compassionate way of seeing and being—were something you could learn? What if there were an art, a science, and even repeatable methods to live from effortless mindfulness? My experience is that there are! This reality has been reported by ancient wisdom traditions and by many people I've met, and it's possible for you.

Effortless mindfulness is both a natural capacity and a skillful way to connect with ourselves and others. It is a way of being mindful from a different level of mind than we are used to. There is more to effortless mindfulness than meditation. Effortless mindfulness is primarily an off-the-meditation-cushion way of weaving together contemplation and compassionate actions. Effortless mindfulness begins by opening to a natural spacious awareness in order to become more wise, embodied, and creative. A new ethical motivation springs from the realization of a loving interconnection with all of life.

When I teach effortless mindfulness, I'm often asked, "How do I know when I'm really doing it? What does effortless mindfulness feel like?" Each person experiences a different facet of the diamond of effortless mindfulness as it shows its qualities to us freshly each time. A glimpse of

effortless mindfulness might initially feel like any of the following:

- You feel relief.
- Your mind is wide open and without an agenda.
- Your thoughts are less prominent or have moved into the background.
- You are free of worry, fear, and judgment.
- You are able to effortlessly focus on something, without concentrating.
- Your center has moved from your head to your heart.
- You are resting as a field of seamless awareness that is outside and within your body.
- You feel aware from the Now and able to be aware of the past, present, or future when needed.
- Everything seems to be flowing easily, happening naturally without any effort.
- You experience a sense of joy and well-being not related to what is happening.
- You are aware from boundless, interconnected, loving presence rather than a detached point of view.
- You feel aware from nonconceptual awareness rather than thought.
- You know all is well, with nothing missing and nothing to push away.

## **Introducing Mindful Glimpses**

One of my main techniques for connecting and experimenting with effortless mindfulness is through what I call *mindful glimpses*. Many people

have told me that this is one of the simplest, most elegant, and effective ways to learn effortless mindfulness. A glimpse is a type of shifting, letting go, dropping, or stopping to allow a natural clarity and connectedness to emerge. Glimpses are the initial effortless effort of opening, surrendering, resting, or turning awareness around to find our open mind and open heart. They are “micro-meditations” or “rest stops” where we can refresh or reboot our whole body-mind system. A glimpse is not an insight from our conceptual mind; it is the direct experience of the essential peace, love, and wisdom that’s always been here. It is a paradigm shift, an identity shift, a shift of consciousness to a new view and a new you that feels true. In Tibetan Buddhism, glimpsing is sometimes called “flashing on awakened heart-mind.”

A mindful glimpse is similar to a Zen *koan*, a simple inquiry that can’t be solved through logic and that takes you out of your conceptual mind and small self. Unlike a koan, a glimpse does not start with thinking. It starts with awareness unhooking from thought. The effortless mindfulness glimpses I offer in this book can be done with eyes closed or open anytime during your day. They initially take from ten seconds to ten minutes to do, but they shift you into a new operating system that allows you to enjoy their continuous benefits. The primary way of practicing effortless mindfulness is *small glimpses, many times*.

You can see glimpses as invitations to pause and shift your awareness, to have a chance to taste the peace beyond conceptual understanding. Several of my students have told me that dropping into one small glimpse has been as life changing as going on a long meditation retreat. I have found that different glimpses work well for different people depending on their learning styles. So if one glimpse in this book doesn’t click for you, no worries. Just keep reading and try the next one.

When we do traditional sitting meditation, it can take a long time for the mind to settle. In contrast, here’s an example to give you the direct experience of the immediacy of a glimpse.

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GLIMPSE **Wordless Awareness**

1. Allow your awareness to move from reading these words to hearing the sounds around you.

2. Now shift from hearing sounds to an interest in the open, objectless space all around.
3. Rest into this alert wordless awareness. ■■

After you have read the mindful glimpses in this book, I suggest you record the ones you like best in your own voice, at a pace that seems right for you, and then listen to your own voice lead you home.

## **You May Not Know That You Know This Already**

When I describe effortless mindfulness, some people tell me they've had this feeling walking in nature, playing music, gardening, making love, driving a car, or during a special moment in their past that they long to return to. Many of us have been intuitively practicing some form of effortless mindfulness throughout our lives—while being creative, with loved ones, or while playing sports. And some of us have experienced it when we suddenly became calm and clear during a crisis.

For example, we may have shifted into effortless mindfulness while hiking with friends. While hiking, we may notice that as soon as we reach the summit of the hill, our goal seeking stops for that moment. Our identity as a seeker relaxes as we look at the sky and feel our awareness and mind open into it. We might look at our friends and feel a sense of connection and open-heartedness. We feel fully present, with no problems to solve and nothing to push away. We look at the trees and feel connected and part of nature. Our separate sense of self relaxes to reveal a wordless experience that rests in a place of “all is well.” At times like these, we feel freedom, clarity of mind, joy, connection to nature and other people, and a sense of well-being. However, we often associate these enjoyable qualities with an activity or place without realizing that the source is already available within us.

Because we don't always know that the source of our joy and freedom is already available to us, we might later say, “I miss that incredible feeling I had while hiking last week. I'll have to wait until my next vacation to return there.” Yet, if we try to recreate an experience by doing the same activity again, our expectation may keep us from relaxing the seeking mind enough to allow effortless mindfulness to be revealed.

Without knowing it, most of us do our favorite leisure activities to experience effortless mindfulness and its natural qualities of freedom and joy. We do what we love to experience effortless mindfulness. However, effortless mindfulness and its qualities are not dependent on what we do or where we are. So even at work or in the New York City subway, we can discover the inner freedom, love, and clarity that are who we truly are.

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### GLIMPSE **Memory Door**

First, read this mindful glimpse below. Next, choose a memory of a time you felt a sense of freedom, connection, and well-being. Then do this mindful glimpse using your memory as a door to discover the effortless mindfulness that is already here now.

1. Close your eyes. Picture a time when you felt well-being while doing something active like hiking in nature. In your mind, see and feel every detail of that day. Hear the sounds, smell the smells, and feel the air on your skin; notice the enjoyment of being with your companions or by yourself; recall the feeling of walking those last few yards toward your destination.
2. Visualize and feel yourself as you have reached your goal and are looking out over the wide-open vista. Feel that openness, connection to nature, sense of peace and well-being. Having reached your goal, feel what it's like when there's no more striving and nothing to do. See that wide-open sky with no agenda to think about, and then simply stop. Feel this deep sense of relief and peace.
3. Now, begin to let go of the visualization, the past, and all associated memories slowly and completely. Remain connected to the joy of being that is here within you.
4. As you open your eyes, feel how the well-being that was experienced then is also here now. It does not require you to go to any particular place in the past or the future once it's discovered within and all around. ■■

## Effortless Mindfulness Is Like a Flow State

Effortless mindfulness is not only experienced during meditation or relaxation. When we open into it, we find a new balance between being and doing. In this age of multitasking, *effortlessness* may be hard to understand, let alone value. There is a Chinese phrase, *wei wu wei*, often translated as “effortless effort” or “effortless doing,” which is activity that is natural and in harmony with everything. In Tibetan Buddhism, effortless mindfulness is sometimes called *non-meditation* because we discover the spontaneous flow of wisdom and action. Effortless mindfulness is compatible with an active, engaged life since it can be practiced with eyes open, anywhere. You can look out of your window at work and, in a few minutes, shift from a sense of feeling worried or fearful into effortless well-being and compassionate connection. You can return to your activity, now operating from effortless mindfulness.

You may know a form of effortless mindfulness as “being in the zone” or in a flow state. Flow is one of the most important areas of research in contemporary psychology. Many of us consider flow an optimal way of functioning while doing complex tasks. In 1990, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, PhD, published his seminal book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, based on years of research. Csikszentmihalyi and his team studied the ways people engage in sports, art, music, scientific research, and other tasks in order to enter a state of flow.

Csikszentmihalyi points to these seven qualities of flow:

- Knowing that an activity is doable, that our skills are adequate to the task
- Being completely involved in and focused on what we’re doing
- A sense of ecstasy
- Great inner clarity: knowing what needs to be done and how well we’re doing
- A sense of serenity: no worries about oneself; a feeling of going beyond the boundaries of ego

- Timelessness: being thoroughly focused on the present so that hours seem to pass in minutes
- Intrinsic motivation: whatever produces flow becomes its own reward<sup>1</sup>

Most people master the task they are good at to enter the flow state. But in effortless mindfulness, we first shift into an integrated flow state, and then we can do any task from heart knowing.

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### GLIMPSE **From Your Heart**

1. Pause . . . notice your next out-breath . . . then, with the next in-breath, let your awareness move from your head down to your heart.
2. What is it like to know from your heart? ■■

## **Introducing Awake Awareness**

To practice any form of mindfulness, we shift our awareness and level of mind to see things differently. Deliberate mindfulness uses attention and our observing mind, whereas effortless mindfulness comes from a particular level of mind and awareness that is not as familiar. Among other names, this unique level of mind and awareness has been called source of mind, nature of mind, unity consciousness, natural awareness, true nature, optimal mind, and heart-mind. I will call this level of awareness and mind *awake awareness*.

Awake awareness is the foundation of knowing, like the quantum field from which individual particles of thoughts or waves of feelings appear. Awake awareness is formless and contentless, yet knowing. At first, awake awareness feels like the absence of thought and an opening into more space. Then, we notice an alertness, a clarity, and a feeling as if we are aware from the open space. It's not the same experience as knowing from thought, and it does not feel like "I" am aware. It is more as if we've shifted into an awareness that is already awake by itself, without our help. This is why it is called *awake awareness*.



Here's a deeper look at what awake awareness is and isn't:

- Awake awareness is our primary level of knowing, which is prior to thinking, includes thinking, and is also beyond thinking.
- Awake awareness is not an altered, transcendent, or even a meditative state. It is not attention, and it's not *mindful* awareness; neither is it mindlessness or zoning out.
- There are many types of consciousness (patterns of experience) such as emotional consciousness, hearing consciousness, and thinking consciousness. Awake awareness is what makes consciousness conscious. Thoughts, feelings, and sensations are dancing patterns made of awake awareness.
- Awake awareness is clear and open, resting as peace of mind, while trusting that information or insight will come when needed.
- Awake awareness is the same in all of us, yet our individuality arises from it. Rather than looking to our thoughts, memories, personality, or roles to identify ourselves, through effortless mindfulness we come to know awake awareness as the primary dimension of who we are. Once we experience awake awareness as the foundation of our identity, we experience our conditioned thoughts, emotions, and sensations as waves within the ocean of our life.
- Awake awareness cannot be harmed by any strong emotional state. In other words, awake awareness is the source from which all emotional states arise and are experienced. We don't have to leave or change our feelings to find essential well-being.
- Awake awareness is nonconceptual, invisible, formless, boundless, and timeless, yet it is our optimal level of knowing and the foundation of our identity. It is experienced in those times when we peek beyond the veil of our conventional experience and notice the silence that is the fabric of our everyday reality.
- Awake awareness unfolds into open-hearted awareness, and then the

natural qualities of well-being, compassion, and intuitive intelligence are revealed.

Awake awareness is the most important discovery we can make on our path of effortless mindfulness. However, in this approach, awake awareness is not the end goal, and we do not seek to remain in a detached witness state or a state of pure awareness. Instead, awake awareness will unfold into awake awareness-energy embodied and into open-hearted awareness. Similarly, as we will explore later in this book, effortless mindfulness could be called “effortless mindfulness embodied” or “effortless heart mindfulness” as we learn to live an awakened life.

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#### GLIMPSE **Background Awareness**

1. Take one slow, deep breath.
2. Let out a sigh.
3. Now, let your awareness open to discover the background awareness that is already effortlessly awake and aware without your help.
4. Notice that you can effortlessly focus *from* this background awareness. ■

The practice of effortless mindfulness begins as a simple shift or letting go to discover a naturally awake awareness that is already present all around and within us. One of my students described the experience like this: “I’m not aware of an open mind and an open heart. I’m aware *from* an open mind and heart that is connected to everything.” When we tap into this feeling of viewing from our wordless awake awareness, it opens us to a relief from suffering, natural joy, and compassionate connection with people and the world around us.

We have been taught that our intelligence, identity, and safety are based on developing and being centered in thought-based knowing, or what I will call our *small mind*. When we shift from our small mind to awake awareness as the source of mind, we discover that we are already effortlessly mindful.

Effortless mindfulness is the way of knowing, creating, and relating from awake awareness. Although effortless mindfulness begins by letting go of everything, we ultimately become embodied, energetic, loving, and fully human.

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## GLIMPSE **Eyes of Awareness**

1. With a soft gaze, simply see what is here in front of you.
2. Notice the awareness that is looking through your eyes.
3. Now close your eyes and notice the same awareness that was looking out is still here.
4. Simply rest as this wordless awareness, which is now aware of itself.
5. Without creating a thinker, be the awareness that welcomes and includes everything. ■

## **Why We Haven't Discovered Our Greatest Natural Gift**

You might be asking: If awake awareness as the source of effortless mindfulness is already here, why haven't I discovered it yet? This is a good question. One reason we don't discover it is that we don't have awake awareness on most of our Western psychological maps. Many people who have longed and strived to be free of suffering have missed awake awareness, not because they lacked desire or commitment but because they didn't know what to look for or where to look.

The Shangpa Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism gives four insightful reasons we don't naturally discover awake awareness, which I find quite helpful:

1. Awake awareness is so close that you can't see it.
2. Awake awareness is so subtle that you can't understand it.

3. Awake awareness is so simple that you can't believe it.
4. Awake awareness is so good that you can't accept it.

Let's take a closer look at each of these:

1. "So close that you can't see it" means that awake awareness is hidden in plain sight. It is closer than our own breath. We can't find awake awareness because awake awareness is not an "it." Awake awareness is neither an object nor thing that can be seen, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. It isn't a thought, emotion, image, belief, feeling, or even energy. Awake awareness is invisibly inherent within us and is where we're looking from. We need to learn how to have awake awareness look within, turn around, or rest back, so that awake awareness can discover itself. Then, awake awareness is the source of mind from which we are able to perceive.
2. "So subtle that you can't understand it" means we can't know awake awareness with our thinking mind. Neither the five senses, the thinking mind, the ego, the will, the imagination, nor attention can *know* awake awareness. Just as the eye cannot hear sounds, thinking and attention cannot know awake awareness. Only awake awareness can know awake awareness. Awake awareness is experiential. It is a more direct way of knowing that is beyond thought or prior to thought, although it can utilize thought when needed. What you'll discover as you do mindful glimpses is how to separate awake awareness from our thinking mind and have awake awareness know directly, without using conceptual knowing.
3. "So simple that you can't believe it" because once it's discovered, awake awareness is natural and not complex. The only thing that makes it seem difficult is that it's unknown—until it's discovered. Many people who are looking for spiritual fireworks are surprised when the "aha!" holds no drama. However, you feel free of suffering, free from worry about worry, free from fear of fear, and free from anger at anger. This

simplicity is why, in Zen Buddhism, awake awareness is often called “ordinary mind.”

4. “So good that you can’t accept it” because you didn’t need to earn it, develop it, or be good enough to get it. It’s hard to believe that the well-being, innocence, and basic goodness that you’ve been looking for is who you truly are. Awake awareness is deeper than any shame-based feelings or long-held beliefs of being worthless, wrong, bad, stupid, or unlovable. You can begin to feel an inherent sense of safety and support that you had previously been looking for in things, people, and achievements. It relieves you of the pressure to try to do things perfectly or become somebody someday so that in the amorphous future you will be okay. Discovering awake awareness as the source of mind and the foundation of our identity is such a precious feeling that some people have tears of joy upon finally feeling it: you get to come home to who you have always been.

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## GLIMPSE **The Peace Within**

What is here now if the peace you are seeking is already here? ■

### **Awakening as the Next Natural Stage of Human Development**

The way of effortless mindfulness is one approach to living from awareness and compassion. Effortless mindfulness begins as a meditation practice but becomes a holistic way of sustaining our most optimal way of living—the shift that has traditionally been called *awakening*. It’s a term shared by many religions, used by spiritual teachers, and studied by historians. In the introduction, I defined awakening as “a shift and upgrade of awareness, mind, and self.” A fuller definition of awakening is moving from our current, limited mind and small self to a new, upgraded operating system of optimal mind and expansive, interconnected Self.

The term *awakening* is an apt one because people who’ve had the experience report that it resembles waking from a dream. We spend much of our lives sleepwalking while hoping the project of improving and

developing our separate sense of self will help us feel happy and connected. When we wake up from this daydream, we may be surprised to realize that our limited perspective is only a small part of a vaster reality.

Awakening may seem like a distant, unattainable goal or a lofty challenge, but it's no more unreachable than any other stage of learning and growth that you've already lived through. Awakening is not limited to those who join a monastery, live in a cave, or are Olympic athletes of meditation. After working with thousands of meditation students and psychotherapy clients as well as colleagues who teach meditation, neuroscience, and developmental psychology, what I've learned is this: awakening is the next, natural stage of human development.

There are many ways to awaken. Some are spontaneous and may occur during a time of great peace and connection with a beloved or with nature. Some occur during a time of heartbreak and hopelessness, and more than one person has told me that as they were having a breakdown they had a *breakthrough*. However it happens, the small mind and small self reach their limits, and awake awareness shines through. Effortless mindfulness is a practice that leads to and supports awakening.

Initially, we *wake up* from the small mind and small sense of self and into awake awareness as the boundless ground—the unity of the infinite and the finite. Then, we *wake into* an embodied, interconnected feeling of flow and being home. Then, we *wake out* to natural, creative, and compassionate activity and relationship with others.

I believe that awakening is a natural stage of human development and that we need to humbly and honestly share stories with each other about our own growth in this regard so that we can open the conversation and normalize this concept in our culture. For me, initial awakening was a radical shift to uncover an essential dimension of well-being, a feeling that everything is ultimately okay, that who I essentially am is okay. This realization is nothing like imagination, belief, or a temporary meditation state. Although awake awareness is invisible, the knowing that “all is well” is as real and intimate as the feeling of my body breathing. What is revealed with awakening is a sense of interconnection with everyone and a realization that we are essentially the same. It feels like unconditional love, as if there are no circumstances that could change this emotion. The new view is from a tenderhearted presence that is here, even when challenging things are happening. Over the years, with consistent practice of effortless

mindfulness, this foundation of freedom, well-being, and unconditional love has become the new normal for me and many of my colleagues and students. With practice, it can become yours as well.

The way of effortless mindfulness is practiced through small glimpses of awake awareness as a way to fine-tune our consciousness in the midst of our day. When we get caught in thought, we can “learn to return” and “train to remain” as our awakened nature. After a series of small glimpses, many times, effortless mindfulness becomes “second nature.” We trust the feeling of knowing and talking from what feels like a continuous intuition. We “know by heart” without the paralysis of analysis, like gliding down a hill on a bicycle with our hands off the handlebar.

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#### GLIMPSE **How to Do Not-Doing**

Can you let go into the awake awareness that is resting deeper than sleep, yet wide awake? ■■

### **On Our Way to Effortless Mindfulness**

As in any learning process, there are obstacles, traps, or points of difficulty that everyone encounters. One of them is our doubt, thinking something like, “Other people are getting it, but I’m not.” However, the interesting thing about effortless mindfulness is that your doubting part, your sincere effort-making part, and your thinking mind will never get it. If you think, “I will never get this,” in some ways you are correct because the “I” that is trying to “get it” can’t.

If you had never ridden a bicycle, I could describe how to ride: put your left leg on the left pedal, then swing your right leg over the bike, push off, and begin to move before you put your foot on the right pedal, and then pedal as you try to balance and keep your hands steady on the handle grips. It can make some sense, but it’s only when you get on the bicycle, start riding, and get a feel for it yourself that you will know balance and effortless riding.

Ultimately, you don’t need to intellectually understand how to do effortless mindfulness any more than you need to understand the physics behind how your body balances when you ride a bicycle. You need only to shift into awake awareness as the place of knowing. From there, the

knowing will teach itself.

Try the following mindful glimpse to experience these teachings more fully.

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#### GLIMPSE **Relax the Problem Solver**

To begin this glimpse, start from wherever you are. Notice the sense of “me” that is here now. Notice the feeling of having a sense of self as a doer or problem solver. The small sense of self keeps its centrality by being a problem solver. It can be helpful in solving everyday problems, but it is mainly trying to solve the problem of identity, which it can’t do. This manager part is usually felt within your body looking out of your eyes. Notice the location, shape, size, and feeling of this “me” that is trying to be helpful and undertake this mindful glimpse. It usually has thoughts and worries like, “Am I doing it right?” or “I don’t think I will get it,” or “How do I do this?”

The goal is not to escape everyday problems, situations, or issues that need to be dealt with. Instead, experience what it’s like to step out of the problem-solver identity: relax this manager and notice what’s here. When awareness looks directly, notice what changes. What is absent and what new qualities arise? What is the new feeling of what or who is here?

1. With open or closed eyes, ask yourself: *What is here now when there is no problem to solve?*
2. Let your awareness unhook from the problem solver, drop, open, feel within and all around. Who is here? What is aware? What is here when there is nowhere to go and nothing to do? Nothing to know or create or become? What is here, just now, when you are not the problem solver? What is here when you are not orienting by thought, you are not going down to sleep, and you are not going back to daydream? Just feel; what is this?
3. Now, ask yourself: *What’s aware now, when there is no problem to solve?*
4. Feel the qualities that arise. What’s absent that was here a few



minutes ago? What natural qualities are here now?

5. Where are you aware from? What is this feeling of being?
6. Now, from fresh beginner's mind, inquire: *What's here now when there's no problem to solve?* ■■

In the next chapter, we will look more closely at what is unique about effortless mindfulness by comparing it with the more well-known form of deliberate mindfulness.

## Discovering Effortless Mindfulness

**I**n general, mindfulness can be defined as a way of being conscious of our internal and external experiences, of being engaged and related to what we are doing. The opposite of mindfulness is mindlessness: being distracted, spaced-out, or impulsive. It's doing things without thinking about them, not being clear about our words or actions. Mindfulness is a basic human capacity and has become part of contemporary Western culture as we have joined millions of people around the world who have been practicing mindfulness for millennia.

Mindfulness is one of the most important things we can discover for our health and happiness, and over the past twenty years, empirical research has repeatedly shown that it reduces stress-related symptoms, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain as well as improving cognitive function, boosting immunity, and lowering blood pressure. Mindfulness is now taught in schools, community centers, hospitals, gyms, prisons, and businesses. Gradually, mindfulness meditation as a basic tool of healthy living is becoming as routine as eating well, exercising, and getting enough sleep.

When I look back at my life, I realize my mindfulness training began when I was quite young, while playing sports and doing art projects in elementary school. My first formal meditation instruction was in Transcendental Meditation (TM) when I was sixteen. During college, I practiced Christian contemplation, attended Quaker meetings, and went on a Zen retreat. When I attended graduate school for a master's degree in psychology and spirituality, I traveled to Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal on a fellowship to study varieties of meditation and healing. It was during that year, over three decades ago, that I was fortunate enough to be introduced to both deliberate and effortless mindfulness. I started by spending six

months at the University of Peradeniya near Kandy, Sri Lanka, and in monasteries and meditation centers practicing *vipassana*, or insight meditation, from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, all forms of meditation that I call “deliberate mindfulness.”

Later, I traveled to India, where I heard the Dalai Lama give a public talk about direct path—or essence—traditions in Tibetan Buddhism, called Dzogchen and Mahamudra. He taught that the love and freedom we all seek is already equally within all of us, and there are ways to directly realize awake awareness as their source. I was so moved by his teaching that I enthusiastically raised my hand and asked who I could study this direct path with. He suggested a teacher, Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche in Nepal. I changed my plans and traveled by train, bus, and plane to meet with him at his hermitage on the slopes of the Kathmandu Valley.

It was through this teacher that I first heard the term *effortless mindfulness*. In his book *Rainbow Painting*, Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche writes that “there are two types of mindfulness: deliberate and effortless.”<sup>1</sup> He described effortless mindfulness as a simple yet advanced form of mindfulness. He taught that effortless mindfulness is the path to realizing and living from our nature of mind (awake awareness).

In Tibetan Buddhism, *rigpa* is the word for “nature of mind,” or awake awareness. Its opposite is *marigpa*, or “not rigpa,” which is the root of suffering. The cause of suffering is failure to recognize awake awareness, and the solution to suffering is in realizing and living from awake awareness. The shift into awake awareness is what makes effortless mindfulness possible.

When I met with Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche, he was sixty-one years old and had completed three separate three-year retreats in his lifetime. However, he explained that his uncle and teacher had shown him how to directly access effortless mindfulness when he was eleven years old, and he said that what he had experienced through the practice when he was young and what he experienced through those years-long retreats seem to be exactly the same.<sup>2</sup> He shared that this was one of the reasons he offered direct practices of effortless mindfulness to those who might be interested and ready to access their natural source of mind immediately.

When Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche first gave a small group of us effortless mindfulness instructions, it took only a few minutes. Yet I became as calm and clear as after my ten-day deliberate mindfulness meditation retreats in

Sri Lanka. But it was also a different type of calm. I felt alert, compassionate, embodied, and energetically connected to everyone and everything. My emotions were more accessible and spacious, and I related to them directly in a loving way. I began to laugh as tears of gratitude flowed down my face. The pervasive feeling of anxiety, self-centeredness, and fear, which had always felt like a normal part of who I was, dissolved. What was here instead was a profound sense of well-being, unity, joy, and gratitude. This full expression lasted through the day and had faded a bit when I awoke the next morning, but it remained in the background, and, more importantly, something fundamental had changed in me.

## **Deliberate and Effortless Mindfulness**

Because effortless mindfulness is a less familiar approach for most Westerners, it may be easier to understand it in contrast with the more familiar deliberate mindfulness, which is now so widespread that it is what most people call “mindfulness.” Most of the mindfulness books, centers, and teachers in the West have come from the Theravada and some Zen traditions.

In my own journey from the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka to the Tibetan tradition in Nepal, I could see these were different approaches to meditation. It’s important to say that both of these traditions have the same goal of awakening; they are simply different paths up the same mountain. I started with good training in deliberate mindfulness, and I am glad I had this period of deliberate mindfulness practice because I benefited from the wonderful teachers I studied with. Because of this experience with both traditions, I am able to help most people start their meditation practice with either deliberate or effortless mindfulness. I refer those who do not resonate with the effortless mindfulness approach to insight meditation or Zen meditation centers to learn forms of deliberate mindfulness. Just as my friends and colleagues have generously translated and brought deliberate mindfulness to our culture, I would like to offer a contemporary approach to effortless mindfulness to help people relieve suffering.

The word *effortless* isn’t simply modifying what is usually understood as mindfulness—like *easy* listening or *instant* coffee. We aren’t being asked to try to be effortless. (Trying to be effortless can be quite an effort!) Effortless mindfulness does not mean that there is not an initial effort. We learn how

to make an initial effort to shift out of our small mind to find an effortless awareness that is already here. It is also called “effortless” because mindfulness becomes spontaneously sustaining.

Effortless mindfulness involves as much unlearning as learning to uncover our natural well-being. The goal of effortless mindfulness is not to escape or transcend but to live a fully intimate human life. The immediate goal of effortless mindfulness is to transition into the new, upgraded operating system, which is embodied and open-hearted and has greater capacity to be with our full human experience. One student of mine reported, “I am feeling a deep sense that all is well, that who I am is okay. It’s not that there are not difficulties and pain, but now I feel a loving support within that gives me new motivation.”

In deliberate mindfulness, we intentionally cultivate a loving attitude, calm our small thinking mind, and then observe our thoughts and feelings. In effortless mindfulness, we shift out of our small thinking mind into the source of mind, which is already calm, focused, interconnected, and compassionate. The radical discovery is that the freedom, clarity, and natural love we seek are always right here. This natural awareness does not have to be created but simply uncovered. We don’t have to believe our shame-based stories and culture that we are unworthy and unlovable. Instead, the report from those who have looked within using effortless mindfulness is that basic goodness is the foundation of who we are. On the level of our essential nature, there is nowhere to go and nothing to develop. The practice of effortless mindfulness is learning how to discover, uncover, realize, or awaken to this hidden foundation of who we are.

In the Mahamudra tradition, the practices of deliberate mindfulness are usually taught in the beginning. However, effortless mindfulness can also be taught first, for those who are drawn to it. I have found it takes about the same amount of time to learn as deliberate mindfulness, and when you begin with effortless mindfulness, you still get all the benefits of deliberate mindfulness.

To look more closely at the difference between these two kinds of mindfulness, consider a widely accepted definition of deliberate mindfulness from Jon Kabat-Zinn, one of the important teachers to help bring mindfulness into contemporary culture:

Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on

around.

- Deliberate mindfulness practice actively cultivates the attitude of lovingkindness, whereas in effortless mindfulness, we discover a *natural lovingkindness* that is already here. This discovery of natural lovingkindness is the foundation of a new motivation for compassionate activity that is not based on external rules but comes from the direct experience of interconnection with all of life.

From the perspective of effortless mindfulness, you can't be in the present moment. Rather than paying attention "in the present moment," effortless mindfulness is being aware of present moments coming and going *here and Now*. This is a big difference, not trying to be in the moment or even just watching the changing moments that arise and pass. The Now is not the present moment. The Now is not the present time, either. The Now is timeless time that is aware of past, present, and future. The Now does not come and go and treats past, present, and future as similar relative experiences. So, in the Now, we can be aware of the coming and going of present moments while we make plans for the future or recall the past.

## Remembering Who We Are

The origin of the word *mindfulness* comes from a word in the Pali language, *sati*, which is translated literally as "remembering." In deliberate mindfulness, it means remembering to return our attention to the object of meditation, like breath, when attention wanders. Attention is defined by Merriam-Webster as "the act or state of applying the mind to something."<sup>4</sup> You can apply your small mind to your breath or a task, but eventually the small mind will wander, and you will become distracted. Maintaining continuous attention is difficult, not just because the attention does not remain stable but because the small mind is not a stable entity. American psychologist William James agreed: "There is no such thing as voluntary attention sustained for more than a few seconds at a time. What is called sustained voluntary attention is a repetition of successive efforts which bring back the topic to the mind."<sup>5</sup>

Deliberate mindfulness is being attentive from our small mind or a mindful witness; it requires us to continuously return to the task—re-

of experience, we see if we can feel awareness directly. We have learned to experience life as a subject looking at objects, even internal objects like thoughts and emotions. One helpful practice of deliberate mindfulness is called “mental noting.” In mental noting practice, our mindful witness becomes more precise by labeling thoughts, feelings, and sensations as they arise. In this mindful glimpse, we will let go of labeling and instead learn to trust the intelligence of awake awareness. Now we will have awareness feel what awareness is like when it is both the subject and the object. It will be helpful to have this invisible, contentless awareness know itself as we separate the awareness-based knowing from thought-based knowing.

1. To begin, simply close your eyes while allowing your awareness to remain open. Feel your breath moving within your body. Feel your whole body from within while noticing your breathing happening by itself for three breaths. Be easy and comfortable. Relax while remaining alert.
2. Take a moment to see what is here now. Notice how your body is feeling. Is it uncomfortable, comfortable, agitated, relaxed, tired, or neutral? Just be aware of your body without trying to change it. Just be aware of it as it is.
3. Now simply notice what is aware of these feelings and sensations. Feel the awareness in which these sensations are happening. Rather than being aware of sensations, feel the awareness that is aware. Notice that the awareness is not tired, is not in pain, is not agitated or anxious. Feel how this awareness is with your body.
4. Now notice the activity of your mind and thoughts. Just be aware of whether your thoughts are agitated, calm, tired, emotional, anxious, or neutral. Without changing anything at all, allow your mind and thoughts to be as they are.
5. Now notice the space in which thoughts are moving. Be interested in the awareness instead of the thoughts. Shift to notice not just the content but the context. Feel the awareness that is aware. Notice how awareness allows your mind to be as it

mind you're mindful from. In effortless mindfulness, it is not as important to focus on what thoughts and emotions are arising but rather to ask, "Who or what level of mind are they arising to?" In effortless mindfulness, we shift from focusing on what we are aware of into focusing on awareness itself—moving from a detached observer and into a view from interconnected awake awareness.

In deliberate mindfulness, we are aware, from our mindful witness, of things arising and passing. Effortless mindfulness invites us to be more intimately interconnected with our experience and all that is happening. This begins when we shift out of both our conceptual mind and our mindful witness and into awake awareness. Deliberate mindfulness focuses on the *contents* of consciousness, while effortless mindfulness turns back to be aware of the *context*—awareness itself. With deliberate mindfulness, we discover who we are not. With effortless mindfulness, we discover who we essentially are.

Effortless mindfulness does not lead to being detached from emotions but rather to both feeling more vulnerable and to having more capacity to be tender and welcoming of all feelings. The radical reports from my students are that our essential nature is loving, joyous, and free of worry, and we just need to untie the knots of conditioning to reveal these natural qualities.

One student who came to a daylong retreat was a dance and yoga teacher, originally trained in Russia as a ballerina. She said she had never before done a practice like effortless mindfulness. Near the end of the day, after doing a variety of effortless mindfulness glimpses, she said, "I am crying with joy because, for the first time in my life, I am able to intentionally feel fully embodied. This feeling of being aware of my body from within and from everywhere only happens once in a while. Embodiment is not just being in my body, but feeling connected to everything and everybody. It is what I love most about yoga and dance, and I chase it, but I never knew how to access it directly until now."

## **Leaving the Witness Protection Program**

In deliberate mindfulness, after an initial stage of calming our chattering mind, we establish a mindful witness to observe thoughts, feelings, and sensations. Insight meditation can lead to an important insight that "I am



insight meditation practices, like the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (which I'll explain in the next chapter), where we establish a mindful monitor to witness the contents of consciousness.

It is now accepted in the field of mindfulness research to refer to calm abiding as *focused attention* (FA) and the insight meditation practice as *open monitoring* (OM). Recently, a third type of mindfulness, *nondual awareness* (NDA), has been included in mindfulness research studies.

The term *nondual* is one of the best ways to describe effortless mindfulness. The Sanskrit word for *nonduality* is *advaita*, which means “not two.” It is pointing to the view that the dualistic way of perceiving—inside versus outside, subject versus object, and other versus self—is not the only level of reality. In Buddhism, *nondual* is defined as “two truths,” meaning that ultimate reality as formless awake awareness and everyday relative reality are experienced simultaneously. Some people define *nonduality* as “oneness” or “pure awake awareness” because it is beyond dualistic thought. Here, nonduality means that the dualistic relative reality we experience, of separate energies and things, is made of awake awareness. So awake awareness and appearances are not essentially two different things.

Nonduality begins with a recognition of a transcendent dimension of reality—awake awareness—and then sees this as the foundation of our everyday dimension of reality. So when we shift into nondual awareness, we experience objects both as interconnected and as a unique expression simultaneously. Nondual awareness is another way of describing the view from effortless mindfulness. Here are three descriptions that might be helpful to understand the difference in these three stages of mindfulness. Focused attention (FA) is like looking down from a tower to the river of your breath. Open monitoring (OM) is like looking from an open sky to thoughts, feelings, and sensations as separate objects, like clouds and birds, coming and going. Nondual awareness (NDA) is like being the entire ocean of awareness that is also arising as the unique wave of your body while feeling an interconnected flow with everything. For this reason, I often call effortless mindfulness *nondual mindfulness*.

In one research study, conducted in 2012 at New York University by Zoran Josipovic, PhD, and his research team, experienced practitioners of effortless mindfulness were asked to shift into nondual awareness while receiving a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scan.<sup>6</sup> I am familiar with these important results because I was one of the subjects in

this study. We were asked to do focused attention practices, open monitoring practices, and then nondual awareness practices. The results showed dramatic differences in the brain between the different practices, as I will explain below. The NDA practices I did while in the fMRI machine were the effortless mindfulness practices that I present in this book.

The study looked at our brain's two primary networks: the externally focused task-positive mode and the internally focused default mode. During goal-oriented activity, the default mode network is deactivated, and the task-positive network is activated. When we are daydreaming, creatively imagining, or thinking about a situation, our internal network is activated, and our external network is deactivated. Our brain continuously and rhythmically alternates between these two networks, which leads to a feeling of distraction. We can notice this when, for instance, we are standing in line and realize our attention goes outward to what's going on in the room and then shifts to become aware of something we're thinking about. We are not intentionally doing this; our brain is alternating, and our attention follows.

One insight from Josipovic's study was that one-pointed focused attention (FA) tends toward "suppression of the activity of the default network."<sup>7</sup> FA and OM each suppress one of the two brain modes. While suppressing one mode gives us relief, we cannot function for long from just one mode. If we are only focused on monitoring our inner world (OM), we cannot complete daily tasks; if we are only mindful of outer tasks (FA), we can become unaware of our inner life and lose the creativity that comes from free association and creative thinking. Josipovic writes that "NDA meditation is different from FA and OM meditations in that it enables an atypical state of mind in which extrinsic and intrinsic experiences are increasingly synergistic rather than competing." Effortless mindfulness balances the activity of the default-mode network and task-positive network so that we are equally aware of what we're doing and our internal state. Awake awareness is aware of what happens both inside and outside.

We don't want to completely shut down the default-mode network because it has positive aspects, including giving us the ability to imagine, free-associate, and think creatively. These advanced creative abilities distinguish us from other creatures as they enable us to imagine future outcomes and plan for them—an evolutionary advantage that we would lose if we were to repress the default-mode network entirely to make ourselves

What is unique about the effortless mindfulness approach is the use of local awake awareness as the primary way of glimpsing and shifting levels of mind. By *local*, I mean awake awareness that is appearing in one specific area, such as your head, or connected from spacious awake awareness-energy to any object. Local awake awareness, or simply *local awareness*, is able to know awake awareness because it is never separate from it. Local awake awareness provides a tool to navigate through your own consciousness. When awake awareness appears as the boundless ocean of awareness, I call it *spacious awareness*. When awake awareness appears within a particular location, I call it *local awareness*. Local awareness and spacious awareness are two aspects of the same awake awareness.

In effortless mindfulness, it is important to learn how to separate local awareness from thinking. Local awareness is normally identified, attached, or hidden within the thinking mind, so we don't realize that they can be separate. Here I will use the word *unhook* to describe the ability of local awareness to tune out of or disidentify from the thinking mind.

This important shift of local awareness can be reached in a variety of ways, such as with the inquiry practice in the Advaita Vedanta tradition of looking to the awareness within by asking, "Who am I?" or the Chinese text *The Secret of the Golden Flower's* technique of "turning the light of awareness around," or the Zen tradition's "taking the backward step." In Tibetan Buddhism, recognition of awake awareness as the foundation of who we are is expressed as "looking at your own face," emphasizing that when we recognize it, awake awareness is as intimate and familiar as our own face. It also suggests, instead of looking outward from your face, that finding awake awareness requires turning around to notice where we're looking from.

## **Five Foundations of Effortless Mindfulness**

Before I introduce some effortless mindfulness versions of common deliberate mindfulness practices, I'll share a more detailed map of effortless mindfulness. As a frame of reference, let's first look at one of the main sets of practices of deliberate mindfulness, which is called the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. As the Buddhist scholar Andrew Olendzki has said, "Most practitioners of insight meditation are familiar with the four foundations of mindfulness, and know that the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* . . . , the *Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness* is the cornerstone of the *vipassanā* [insight

The mindful glimpses in the effortless mindfulness approach use both the outer and inner doorways to have local awareness shift through each of the Five Foundations of Effortless Mindfulness.

## **Transitioning from Deliberate to Effortless Mindfulness**

I've developed a series of practices to help transition from deliberate to effortless mindfulness. These are initial techniques that introduce calm and focus as we work with effortless mindfulness to shift into an awake awareness-based view. They are a good entry point because deliberate mindfulness versions of these practices will be familiar to many mindfulness practitioners. They are:

- The Four Postures of Dynamic Stillness
- Focusing on the Breath from Within the Breath
- Beyond the Meditator
- Lovingkindness and Compassion Are Already Here
- Embodiment Scan

One of the advantages of starting meditation training with deliberate mindfulness is that it uses commonly understood terminology and instructions: "Bring your attention to your breath at your nostrils or belly." When we begin effortless mindfulness, we need to be patient at first to experientially learn something new: "Unhook local awareness from thought and have it move to know your jaw from within your jaw. Now have local awareness open to know the space around your body." Unhooking awareness has to be fast and direct so that awareness can separate from thinking; otherwise, we may be simply stretching attention. We do not need to intellectually understand how local awareness directly knows, any more than we need to know how we can balance on a bicycle. Similarly, we won't know what it feels like until we experience balance; we have to jump on the bike, push off, and get moving to balance and ride.

As we do these mindful glimpses, it is important to note that local awareness does the shifting through all five of the foundations. This means

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