

Sati – The Power of Present Moment Awareness in Uncertain Times

Steve Lovinger April 2025

Theme for Today

In the face of social, political, and financial upheaval, it is easy to become overwhelmed, reactive, or disheartened. Today, we ground ourselves in *sati*—mindfulness or present moment awareness—as a way to reconnect with clarity, stability, and compassionate engagement.

What is Sati?

Sati is the Pāli word most often translated as “mindfulness,” but it carries a richer meaning:

- Present-moment **awareness with discernment**
- The **remembering** of what is skillful, wholesome, and true
- A capacity to **observe experience directly**, without immediately grasping, resisting, or becoming lost in narrative

In *sati*, we are not ignoring the world’s pain, but we are choosing to meet it with clarity instead of confusion, with presence instead of panic.

Why Sati Now?

When we are bombarded by news cycles, disinformation, political cruelty, and the emotional reactivity of others (or ourselves), *sati* allows us to:

- Pause and **see clearly** what is actually happening within and around us
 - **Interrupt the cycle** of reactivity by noticing it arise
 - Choose **wise and compassionate action**, or *non-action*, from a place of stability
 - **Preserve our humanity** when society feels inhumane
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Short Reflection

“Let us feel into the body... noticing the contact with the ground... the breath moving through... allowing thoughts and emotions to arise and pass without resistance.

Notice any pull toward wanting things to be different or toward identifying with a ‘self’ who is either in control or being wronged.

Can we instead rest with what *is*—just for this moment? And in that resting, can we glimpse the freedom of non-reactivity?”

Discussion Prompts (Breakout or Full Group)

1. **What tends to pull you out of present moment awareness most strongly these days?**
 2. **What have you noticed about your reactivity—to news, politics, or people around you?**
Can you identify that moment *before* the reaction takes over?
 3. **How do you distinguish between being present and being passive?**
 4. Can present-moment awareness itself be a form of resistance or social engagement?
 5. Is there a small way you've practiced *sati* in daily life recently that helped you respond differently?
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Quotes to Spark Insight

- “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” — **Mindfulness Teacher**
 - “Most suffering comes from imagined fears. Live fully in the present, resisting the habit of bracing for disasters that may never come.” — **Seneca: Vanquish Your Anxiety**
 - “When watching the news, don’t just watch the news. Watch what is happening *within* you as you watch the news.” — **Ajahn Sucitto**
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Closing Practice (5 minutes)

Sit in silence, returning to breath or body.

Gently notice how the mind drifts—maybe to frustration, sorrow, anger, planning.

Each time, return to the breath or body—not to escape, but to see clearly.

Offer this intention:

“May I remain aware. May I remain steady. May I respond with care and clarity.”
