

# Insight (Vipassanā) Meditation

## Building on Samatha and Mettā — From Settling to Seeing

Mindfulnessmeditationgroup.com     Steve Lovinger March 2026

### 1. From Settling to Seeing

In our last two sessions we developed samatha (calm abiding) and mettā (a warm, open attitude toward experience). These are not separate from insight practice—they are what make it possible.

Samatha steadies attention. Mettā softens resistance. Together, they create a mind that is stable enough and open enough to observe experience clearly.

Vipassanā means *clear seeing*. Not thinking about experience, but directly observing how it actually unfolds—moment by moment.

With sustained observation, certain patterns tend to become obvious:

- Experience is always changing (impermanence)
- Holding on to or pushing away what changes creates tension or friction (Dukkha, unsatisfactoriness)
- What we call “self” shows up as a process—shifting, conditioned, and not under full control

These are not ideas to believe. They are things to notice.

### 2. The Key Link: Sensation (Vedanā)

Each moment of experience carries a basic feeling tone:

- Pleasant
- Unpleasant
- Neutral

This happens very quickly—usually below conscious awareness.

From there, a familiar chain unfolds:

**contact → feeling tone → reaction (grasping or resisting) → tension**

Most of the time, this happens so quickly we don't see it.

This process is happening all the time, not only in meditation, but throughout daily life—when someone speaks to you, when a thought arises, when irritation or desire appears. These reactions are not deliberate. **They are conditioned and automatic.** Vipassanā practice begins to make this process visible.

Instead of immediately reacting, we begin to notice the feeling tone and the urge to react. That noticing introduces a small gap. In that gap, the chain can soften.

### **3. The Practice: A Natural Deepening**

These are not separate techniques, but ways the practice can unfold.

#### **a. Breath as Anchor**

Begin with the natural breath—at the nostrils, chest, or wherever it is clear.

- Notice the physical sensations of breathing. Notice each inhale and exhale, and the gap between.
- Let the breath be natural—no control
- When attention wanders, return without judgment

You are already practicing insight here—seeing change, moment by moment, the impermanence of the breath.

#### **b. Body Scanning**

With some stability, move attention through the body.

- Rest attention briefly in each area
- Notice what is present: pressure, warmth, tingling, discomfort, or absence
- No need to change anything

Unpleasant sensations are not problems—they are useful. They make reactivity easier to see.

#### **c. Open Awareness**

As attention stabilizes, allow it to open.

- Let sensations, sounds, thoughts, and emotions arise and pass
- No need to select or control anything

Even the sense of “me noticing” can be observed as part of experience.

### **4. The Operative Quality: Equanimity**

Equanimity is not indifference. It is the ability to remain present with experience without automatically reacting.

This is where mettā and vipassanā come together. The same openness that allows kindness also allows us to stay with discomfort without resistance.

A useful question during practice:

**Can I let this be, just as it is, for this moment?** Not forever—just now.

## 5. Reflection

Bring to mind a recent moment of reactivity—irritation, desire, anxiety.

- Where did it show up in the body?
- What was the feeling tone—pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?
- What was the immediate urge—to hold on, to push away, to ignore?

This is not analysis—it is learning to recognize the process as it happens.

## 6. Home Practice: A 15-Minute Sit

Use this as a guide, not something to get perfect.

- **Minutes 1–3: Settling.** Sit comfortably, close your eyes. Feel the weight of the body. Take three deliberate breaths, then let the breath return to normal.
- **Minutes 3–7: Breath anchor.** Rest attention at the nostrils or chest. Simply observe the breath as sensation — its rhythm, texture, temperature. When attention wanders, return gently.
- **Minutes 7–12: Body scan.** Move attention slowly from the crown of the head downward to the feet, then back up. Pause wherever sensation is vivid. Observe without changing anything.
- **Minutes 12–15: Open awareness.** Let go of any fixed focus. Let sounds, sensations, and thoughts arise and pass. Continue noticing whatever arises without holding on to any of it.
- **Close:** Before opening your eyes, rest for a moment in the quality of awareness itself. Notice whether the mind feels different than when you began.

**During each stage of the meditation, notice any feeling tones that arise.**

These handouts are offered freely. Additional resources at [mindfulnessmeditationgroup.com](http://mindfulnessmeditationgroup.com)