

Orientation & Orienting to Pleasure Practice

Orientation means: connecting to the environment through the senses. The goal of this practice is to invite more of the attention out into the immediate environment. The reason for this is that the biology feels safe when it is naturally mapped in the here and now, and so, by encouraging & aligning with what is natural for our biology, we aid it in finding a state of homeostasis, a place of equilibrium. This increases our capacity to be with life as it comes to us. When we are in the state of orientation (connected to the present environment through the senses), our body-mind is able to respond accurately to the environment in our life (less affected by conditioned associations caused by trauma). Furthermore, it is in its ideal state for processing any unresolved trauma should that happen, organically, and often implicitly when we are fully engaged in the present. Instead of thinking of trauma as an event that we must re-visit, we work to directly re-organize the biological de-synch that has occurred in the body-mind due to trauma. Orientation is the best and most efficient route to doing this. Not only is orientation the most basic and foundational step in healing trauma & rewiring conditioning, but it is also the end goal. It is how we want to live our life, in a state of here-and-now embodied presence, not hyper-attuned nor disconnected from the environment, but simply connected to it in a neutral way. From this neutrality arises our emergent creativity.

1. *****Orient*****

Let your eyes go where they want.

If this is hard, you may have to effort a little to find your curiosity.... Where are you naturally drawn? Don't force it, but allow your curiosity to naturally emerge. As you allow your eyes to land somewhere, notice color, texture, light/shadow, shape, etc. as if you've never seen this thing before.

Some ways you can reinforce orientation to stabilize it:

*Use a thought to simply label what you see: "table," "window," "rock," "cloth," "carpet," etc. Use thoughts to label the colors, textures, shapes, etc. of the things that you see : "bright," "orange," "creamy," "soft," "smooth," "translucent," etc.

*Use your imagination/mind's eye. Close your eyes and see the same object in your imagination, then open them again to see it physically. Or, close your eyes and see if you can recall what is around you in the room or space. Or, close your eyes and see your own body in the room, sitting/lying/standing wherever you are, then open your eyes and look out into the space again.

*If eyes want to close, enjoy other senses instead, and/or enjoy other senses along with the visual, for example:

*Allow in sounds, with ease.

*You can play with honing in on one sound and allowing others to fade into the background. You can try noticing all the sounds at once. You can play with having eyes closed or open as you do this.

*Notice smells, with ease.

*Notice any taste, with ease.

*Notice textures, temperature, compression of what is touching your body, or feel surfaces with your hands and fingers and notice the feeling of the particular things you touch.

*Label any of these other senses with thoughts if that helps: "hard," "smooth," "fuzzy," "wet," "cool", "warm", "grainy," "feathery", etc.

*Orient in 360 degrees. Allow yourself to feel your body in space, receptive to incoming data through your senses from any direction.

Less is more. Be more curious about what wants to happen than in making anything happen. Be curious about what comes easily & simply, which is the key to finding the perfect neutral zone for you.

2. *Orient to Pleasure*****

Once you feel present and neutral, be curious about how the incoming data is contacting you in a pleasant way. Notice any internal sense of enjoyment or pleasure that occurs in response.

*Is there a sensation in your body that is pleasant: an opening, a letting down, a warmth, a spontaneous breath, a lightness, a smile on the lips, a sigh, etc.?

*Is there a positive emotion that arises as you orient: relief, tenderness, joy? Simple enjoyment? Is the state of orienting and being curious enjoyable for you in some way?

Once you have taken a sip of that pleasure, return to orienting again, letting the environment in through the senses in a neutral way. We are taking bite-sized pieces of pleasure so we can get used to experiencing pleasure for its own sake, without it flipping back into a negative experience.

Think of it like a sandwich: Orient. Pleasure. Orient. Repeat.

It is good to practice orienting often, every day if we can. But in an easy way. One way to practice is to take little breaks in the midst of your day to orient for even just a minute. You might also try orienting as a regular meditation practice for a short period of time in the morning or evening. Eventually "being oriented" is no longer only a state that we cultivate with intention, but a trait that is re-wired into our neurochemistry, meaning, we don't have to try to be oriented, because we naturally are. Because Orientation is our natural state beneath our conditioning, the more we practice it the more we settle into it. When we are naturally oriented, we enter "flow state," and our life experience has a continuity, which makes us resilient. Orientation provides the foundation from which we can grow like a strong tree. We grow in our capacity to participate in life in our own authentic way, and to respond with compassion to those around us naturally. Unfolding our sense of purpose becomes easeful & enjoyable.

Enjoy practicing!

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