

## **Focusing, Mindfulness and Buddhist meditation**

*Campbell Purton*

### **Preliminary outline**

Outline of Focusing – giving attention to our experiencing of situations.

Noticing bodily *sensations* can help – such as a tightening in the stomach, a pang – which make us realise we are a bit jealous.

Also noticing *feelings* of liking and disliking, e.g. “it seems a good idea but.... I don’t really like it”.

Also noticing how we want to describe our experience, our *discriminations*, e.g. “is this really embarrassment I’m feeling? isn’t it more like shame?”.

But the most important thing in Focusing is attending to what we are *making* of our circumstances. What we are concerned with may not be describable with our usual words (such as ‘embarrassment’ or ‘shame’). We may have to make something *new*, using a picture or metaphor.

### **Mindfulness**

Compared with Focusing, the basic mindfulness practices are relatively simple: the ‘body scan’, the ‘raisin exercise’.

Both of these involve giving attention to bodily sensations, e.g. the colour, feel, taste, and smell of the raisin.

### **Buddhist meditation**

There are many traditions, but most of them talk about two aspects of meditation – ‘stopping and seeing’, and ‘tranquillity and insight’. The point is to calm the mind so that one can see things as they are. This often starts by concentrating on the breath, or on an image, or just watching the play of the mind.

Early Buddhist thinkers wrote about what you find when you sit down and watch your mind.

The traditional classification is that you can notice what you are:

sensing – sounds, colours, bodily pains

feeling (liking/disliking)

discriminating

creating, making (the Sanskrit term is ‘samskara’ – difficult to translate)

noticing

### **The relationship between Buddhist meditation, mindfulness practice, and Focusing**

The Buddhist account of what we experience includes *all* the above things.

Mindfulness practice concentrates mainly on bodily sensing.

Focusing concentrates mainly on what we are making of things.