

INTERMEDIATE COURSE IN MINDFULNESS

2. TUNING UP

Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration, Wisdom

Near the beginning, the middle and the end of a 45-minute meditation session assess the strength of the five faculties. Notice which of the five faculties might be strong and which might be weak. Whichever ones are weak, apply yourself to strengthen them. Explore how you can strengthen the presence of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and discernment. Explore how the five faculties can support your efforts in meditation. Do you tend to emphasize one of the faculties at the expense of others?

At the end of the sitting, write down your assessments of the presence of the five faculties through the sitting. Also record how successful you were at cultivating or enhancing the faculties. What happened to your meditation when you brought the faculties into more of a balance?

Also keep track of the five hindrances when they arise. The hindrances are pre-occupations that make it difficult to be present. Try using the five faculties as antidotes to being lost in pre-occupation. For example, for doubt bring up whatever faith, confidence or inspiration you can; for restlessness, you might cultivate concentration; for lethargy you might apply energy; for aversion, mindfulness and for desire, wisdom/discernment. After the sitting write down a few notes about how successful you were at using the faculties as an antidote to being pre-occupied. Also note how your meditation proceeded when the hindrances were no longer hindering.

Finally, jot down any other notes about the meditation process during your sittings. For example, how did the meditative process change over the 45 minute sitting. Also reflect some on how you might have been more thorough in applying yourself in your sitting. Could you have given yourself over more completely to the meditative process?