

Neurodharma Reading Guide

Chapter 1: Mind in Life

1. This introductory chapter uses the metaphor of the many pathways that go up the mountain of awakening. What routes have you set out upon in your life to guide your spiritual practice? What aspirations have you had on these paths?
2. What are some of the qualities you've admired in teachers or people you respect? How does it feel to look for these aspects within yourself?
3. How do you think the concept of "neurodharma" could influence your personal and spiritual development?
4. What are some ways you can practice "letting go, letting be, and letting in" in your daily life?

Chapter 2: The Enchanted Loom

1. Can you identify ways that "craving" might be contributing to additional suffering in your life?
2. What is your innate disposition towards life? (e.g. optimistic, fearful, trusting, despairing) Do you believe it's possible to "use your mind to change your brain to change your mind" – to alter the way you see life?
3. Are there examples in your life when you've used mindfulness, meditation, or prayer practices and seen positive effects? Explain.
4. What is your initial response to the Seven Steps of Awakening?

Chapter 3: Steadying the Mind

1. What if any has been your experience with Buddhism or Buddhist meditation practice and how has it influenced your life?
2. What is your natural temperament and how has that affected your ability to concentrate?
3. Thinking back on some learning experiences in your life, what has contributed to your ability to really integrate the material or practice you were studying?

4. After practicing with the “Feeling Grounded” meditation, describe the experience and any lasting benefits you may have had from taking in the good. Practice also with the Five Ways to Steady Your Mind practice and report on any outcomes.

Chapter 4: Warming the Heart

1. The author states that mindfulness and meditation practice are not sufficient for cultivating an open and receptive heart. What practices could you use to develop warmheartedness and empathy towards others?
2. What are some examples of healthy and unhealthy desire in your life?
3. The author says that healthy desire is “pursuing beneficial ends with skillful means while being at peace with whatever happens.” What do you think about this?
4. What have you experienced after practicing with the Four Good Wishes for a time?
5. How can you bring more self-compassion into your life?

Chapter 5: Resting in Fullness

1. What are your responses to the Buddhist idea that all life includes suffering?
2. How might the idea that “the conscious mind may forget, but the body remembers” manifest in your life when considering your childhood experiences and upbringing?
3. Describe some experiences that resulted from using the Link Step in your daily practice.
4. The author suggests that suffering is optional, as long as we practice letting go instead of holding on. What can you say about this in your own life?
5. Recall a stressful or confrontative event and reflect on how your fundamental needs (for safety, satisfaction, and connection) might have influenced your response to the situation.
6. In “growing strengths matched to your specific needs,” how would you answer the four questions in this section?

Chapter 6: Being Wholeness

1. Recall an example when you felt divided over making a decision – important or mundane – and reflect on what parts of your mind were active and possibly in conflict. Are there “rooms” in your mind that have been exiled or not accepted?

2. The author offers several ways that we can train our minds to rest in fullness (the Green Zone) including Sensory Focus, Not Knowing, Let Your Mind Be, and Gestalt Awareness. Which practice works best for you and why?
3. Which of the Five Hindrances are most challenging for you and how have you worked with them?
4. What types of awareness practice have you used and what benefits have they offered? Describe any experience you've had with resting in awareness, particularly if there's been a felt sense of wholeness.
5. Try the self-awareness experiment offered at the end of this chapter and report on any insights.

Chapter 7: Receiving Nowness

1. What is your experience of the Present Moment?
2. How does this compare with the author's description of wakefulness, alerting, and orienting?
3. The author states that our experiences are *compounded*, made up of parts within parts within parts. After practicing with the guided meditation, "Parts Passing By," describe any experiences or sensations that may have enhanced your understanding of this idea.
4. What is your reaction to *impermanence*, recognizing the ephemeral nature of all experience? How does practicing with bodily sensations, as the author suggests, affect your experience of the transient nature of reality?
5. What refuges do you draw upon in life to give you strength, shelter, and inspiration?
6. The author says that all "eddies" are by nature impermanent, compounded, interdependent, and empty. What would it mean to "love the eddy and be the stream" in your life? How would that look?

Chapter 8: Opening into Allness

1. In this chapter the author attempts to answer the question, "Does the self exist?" How do you feel about this question and the idea that "you will never find the presumed full self in your actual experience?"
2. Have you ever had a felt experience of the "emptiness of all things?" If so, what was it like? If not, have you read about or heard of such an experience from others?

Based on, and for use with [*Neurodharma: Science, Wisdom, and Steps to the Highest Happiness*](#), Rick Hanson, Ph.D., New York: Harmony Books, 2020.

3. Practice with the guided meditation “Relaxing Self-ing” and report on any experiences or insights that might have added to your understanding of “no-self.”
4. Describe an experience where you may have moved from an *egocentric* to an *allocentric* perspective – and vice versa. What did that feel like?
5. What does “awakening” mean to you?

Chapter 9: Finding Timelessness

1. How do our more popular views of “nirvana” compare with the way *nibbana* is defined in this chapter?
2. What has been your approach to the transcendental in your life? How does it compare with how it is described here?
3. As you work with this material, what aspects of everyday life can you use to practice with unconditionality, or the feeling of possibility? Describe some of these.
4. When the author describes a “deeper awareness looking back at you” or a “love beyond yours living through you,” how does that make you feel?
5. The author asks questions about how we might understand the meeting of the conditioned and unconditioned. What are your thoughts on how a deep sense of quiet might be “an opening to what may lie beyond ordinary reality?”

Chapter 10: The Fruit as the Path

1. What has been your experience of reading this book? What made sense and what didn’t?
2. What will you take away with you into your everyday practice?
3. How do you work with the balance of compassion and equanimity in your daily life?
4. What might be the result of being more at peace with whatever happens in your life? (including how others feel about you?)
5. As you practice with the “Offering with Peace” meditation, how might your sense of “a larger offering moving through us all” grow?
6. BONUS QUESTION: Do you take delight in your practice? Are you enjoying the ride?