

And—A Five Dimension Checklist

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When unawareness sets in, it's easy to forget to consult the five dimensions of heartmind, as a road map for awareness. (See either the Five Dimensions chapter, or WIPITS Checklist for definitions). I've considered getting these dimensions tattooed on my palm, so they'd be at hand when consciousness seems dormant.

Even though the word *and* is sometimes dismissed as a mere connective, isn't spiritual practice the ultimate connective? We can use the word *and* as a reminder to see what's available for sampling on the awareness menu. The first three dimensions, *physical*, *mental*, and *emotional*, are likely to be familiar territory, and the *open awareness* dimension starts to emerge and encompass them, as we have gain experience with meditations and exercises that help us tune in on body and environment.

It might seem tempting to head for the *full-empty* dimension (the nature of being) if we're eager for enlightenment or want instant results. However, trying to head for the heights before we're familiar with the terrain is akin to the time Ezra and I went up in a hot air balloon and landed in a tree. The view from the sky was

great, but when it came to getting out of the tree, with fingers intact, we (and the pilot) had to be rescued by a crane.

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Global inclusivity can be invited to emerge by checking in on the five dimensions, to see what has gone missing, or what is being over-attended. Until the five-dimension definitions start to come alive experientially, they can be reviewed periodically, as fingers pointing toward the moon of the moment, so that they become part of our repertoire of awareness pointers.

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A little directed attention with the *and* checklist shines light on all five dimensions, *and* lets us know which ones are still in the dark. As attention can rest undivided in the open awareness dimension, at least periodically, the spaciousness functions as a backdrop through which physical, mental, and emotional content can arise and pass. This makes possible a merger of the *observer*, or objective awareness and the *experiencer*, embodied sentient perception of bodily sensations and sensory phenomena.

Remember, when we consider the fifth dimension, full-emptiness, trying to figure out what it is intellectually is guaranteed to bring forth the mental fog that hangs heavy in the valleys of our mind and shuts down the other dimensions. All we need to do, when reflecting on whether the full-empty dimension, is question whether it's a living reality for us, or still as clear as mud. Then move on, so that mindfulness can return to what's happening now.

Increasing familiarity with the first four may convince the *full-empty* dimension to come calling. When we use tools like the *And* checklist, it's essential to stay alert to the point of practice: awakening to what each moment presents, *and* its actual nature. *And*, we can continue to question "What's most important," so that we don't lose sight of the smorgasbord of the moment by getting lost in the forks and spoons.

All of this purposeful attention may sound exhausting, due to its unfamiliarity. Still, it's a merciful act, encouraging conventional intelligence and kindness to blossom into profound compassion, insight, and love.

—Elizabeth Hamilton, excerpted from
*Untrain Your Parrot—and Other
No-Nonsense Instruction on the Path of Zen,*
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