

Noting and Labeling

There are a variety of techniques used in Unified Mindfulness. The most prevalent and easy to master is *noting and labeling*. Noting and labeling is a contemporary interpretation of the Buddha's unique discovery of directed attention, revived by Mahasi Sayadaw in Burma, and now ubiquitous in modern mindfulness systems. This particular style of noting and labeling is unique to Unified Mindfulness.

Basic Instructions: Noting

A period of noting practice typically consists of a rhythmic sequence of individual acts of *noting*. Each instance of noting has two parts, which are repeated for the duration of the session:

1. Clearly acknowledging a sensory event.
 - A very brief but essential moment in which you notice a sensory event, are consciously aware of having noticed it, and pivot your attention toward it.
 - A sensory event means the experience of something through your senses, be it physical, mental, or emotional; whether experienced internally or externally; and regardless of the stimulus being objective or subjective. In other words, *any* sensation of touch, taste, smell, seeing, hearing, thinking, and feeling emotion.
2. Focusing intently on that event (soaking in).
 - Soaking your complete attention (as much as you are able) into the sensory event for several seconds.
 - Getting to know that experience in detail, experiencing it directly, penetrating, etc.
 - After several seconds, releasing your attention to a waiting state.

Basic Instructions: Labeling

Labeling is an optional tool that can be used in addition to noting, in order to help keep the attention on the noting process. It is recommended that when you start out, you use the option of labeling. This will reduce the frustration of a wandering mind and increase equanimity, and will ensure that if you need to use labeling in future, you will already be proficient at it.

1. Use a label at the instant that you acknowledge the sensory event.
 - *Use a label* means to say a word specific to the event, either out loud or in your mind.
 - Say the label word with a gentle, matter-of-fact tone of voice, regardless of the intensity of the event.
 - Say the label very quietly in your mind if you have good concentration.
 - Increase the “mental volume” of the label or speak out loud when your concentration is weaker.
2. Choose effective labels
 - A label should be general enough to be able to remember without effort.
 - A label should be specific enough to distinguish between different kinds of sensory event.
 - You might use different sets of labels for different meditation sessions.
 - Remember that labels are a tool to assist with noting. Don’t worry about “getting it right.”
3. The Unified Mindfulness basic labels are:
 - **SEE**
 - **HEAR**
 - **FEEL**

Unified Mindfulness: A Contemplative Odyssey