

Dogzen Dyads

This is a brief outline of the Dogzen Dyads. It describes the basic rules of the Dyad and gives a few examples of Dyad instructions you can use to increase awareness of awareness.

The Set Up

Since this is a two-person meditation technique, first find a partner to work with. Sit down with the partner at a comfortable distance apart, facing each other. You can sit on chairs or sit on cushions on the floor. The partners should be at the same height, though. Sit with your back straight and with your head balanced above your spine. Keep your body relaxed and your breathing free and easy.

At any point in time, one person is the *active* partner and the other is the *receptive* partner. Arbitrarily choose who will be active first. It changes every five minutes, so it really doesn't matter who starts.

Dyads are usually 40 minutes long, consisting of eight 5-minute periods. At the end of each 5-minute period, a bell rings and the partners change receptive and active roles. Each person, therefore, gets four active periods and four receptive periods.

The Social Covenants of the Dyad

The partners make certain agreements to prevent relationship issues from interfering with the flow of the Dyad.

Both partners are open to real interpersonal contact and to the truth. Both approach the Dyad with the intent to be present for each other, to allow the other the freedom to experience whatever comes up for them, and to be open to any communications about what comes up. The receptive partner does not have to agree with what the active partner says, but should listen and try to understand.

They also agree to keep what is said during the Dyad in confidence and not gossip about it to others. In addition, they agree not to comment about what the other says, not during the Dyad or even afterwards. If something about their partner or what their partner said comes up while they are in the Dyad, they just let it go and focus on their own process.

The Receptive Partner

The receptive partner has two roles: as the one who starts and stops the practice interval, and as the receiver of the active partner's communications.

Start/Stop: to start a 5-minute practice period, the receptive partner gives the active partner his instruction. When the bell rings ending the period, he says, "Thank you" to acknowledge the work done by the active partner and to indicate that the period is complete.

Receive: As the active partner works on his instruction, the receptive partner just listens and tries to understand whatever the active partner says, keeping attention fully on the active partner for the whole five minutes. He endeavors to be an *empty listener*, and doesn't mentally judge or evaluate (good/bad, right/wrong) what the active partner says. He doesn't try to lead or teach the active partner, nor does he try to sooth or take care of the active partner. He also avoids drawing attention to himself. He just receives from a state of emptiness and with an open heart.

The Active Partner

The active partner receives the instruction from the receptive partner and then sets out to comply with the instruction. He either contemplates or attempts to perform some action, depending on what the instruction requires. He then communicates to the receptive partner what came up from his doing the practice. On average, the active partner should spend about half the time doing the practice and half the time communicating what comes up.

When the active partner communicates, he does his best to get the receptive partner to understand what he is saying. He watches to see if the receptive partner is getting it, and does his best to make the message clear. He does not comment in any way on what his partner said during his turn as the active partner.

The active partner works on the same instruction (or set of instructions) for the entire 40-minute Dyad.

Giving the Instructions

When the receptive partner gives the instruction, he should use the same exact wording each time. Try not to add extra words like “please” or “OK, so tell me...” or anything like that. Keep the wording clean.

The receptive partner should “mean it” when he gives the instruction to his partner. He gives the instruction as a request, for example, “Tell me what awareness is.” He is requesting that they really do this and then he listens to what they say in response.

Both partners should know what the instruction is trying to accomplish. If they don’t, they should discuss it with the instructor or with each other and get it clear before the Dyad starts.

Some practices have multiple instructions. You do each one in order, and then repeat. To move to the next instruction, the active partner indicates with a nod or “OK” when he has completed the one he is on. The receptive partner then acknowledges with a “thank you” and gives the next instruction. At the start of the next 5-minute period, you always begin with the first instruction again.

Some Useful Instructions

The following are some of the instructions we have used during our Dogzen practices. They are especially helpful for increasing awareness of awareness. People usually have some preferences for one instruction or another. It is usually best to work on an instruction that you like and are motivated to work on.

Instruction: “Tell me how you know you are aware.”

This is a good first question to work on when you first begin your work with Dogzen. We’re not necessarily looking for a “right answer.” The instruction directs the active partner to be aware of his awareness and to be open to what that is like. The goals are to become more aware of awareness and to experience what occurs in consciousness when you set out to become aware of awareness.

Instruction: “Tell me how you know I’m aware.”

This encourages the active partner to put his attention on the receptive partner and discover the other’s awareness as an experience. Doubts about knowing another’s awareness can come up. The active partner works through this.

Instruction: “Tell me what awareness is.”

This has the same objectives as the previous instruction. It should not be done as an intellectual exercise. You’re not trying to define awareness, but trying to become directly aware of awareness and to articulate what you discover when you do that.

You can also use “Tell me what awareness is” alternated with “Tell me what awareness isn’t.” This is good for clearing up confusions.

Instruction: This practice has three instructions:

- a. “Put your attention on the [object].”
- b. “Detach awareness from the [object] and be aware of awareness itself.”
- c. “Tell me your comments about that.”

Before the Dyad starts, the active partner chooses an object he wants to put his attention on and tells the receptive partner.

The active partner holds his gaze on the object until his mind is steady. He doesn’t try to analyze the object or figure out anything about it. He just steadies his gaze on it.

For the second instruction, the active partner loosens or detaches his gaze from the object and shifts his attention to the awareness itself. He tries to become directly aware of his awareness, letting go of the object he is aware of.

The third instruction gives the active partner a chance to communicate what came up when he did the practice

Instruction: “Get your awareness across to me.”

For this instruction to be effective, the active partner needs to already have a clear experience of awareness itself. This practice emphasizes getting the actuality of awareness across to another. How do you do that? That’s what this is about. You find out how to get awareness across to another by doing the practice. The word “your” is optional. Some people object to it because they are working on a “no self” model.

Instruction: This practice has two instructions:

- a. “Tell me how to be aware of my awareness.”
- b. “Tell me how to be aware of your awareness.”

For these instructions to be effective, the active partner needs to already have a clear experience of awareness itself.

With the first instruction, the receptive partner is inviting the active partner to tell him how to be aware of his own awareness. It’s like saying, “Teach me about me.” The active partner attempts to describe to the receptive partner how to be aware of awareness. In so doing, he inevitably reflects on his own experience of awareness so he can get it across to the receptive partner.

The second instruction is also a “teach me” instruction. The active partner is to tell the receptive partner how the receptive partner can become aware of the active partner’s awareness.

Instruction: This practice has two instructions:

- a. “Be aware of the awareness of another.”
- b. “Tell me your comments about that.”

The active partner sets out to be aware of the awareness of another, typically their partner. This doesn't mean that they try to assume the exact same viewpoint as the other, but just that they become conscious that the other is aware in the same way that they are.

The active partner notices how his own awareness shifts when he does this. In other words, what is it like to be aware of the awareness of another?

The third instruction gives the active partner a chance to communicate what came up when he did the practice.

There are many more instructions you can use to increase awareness of awareness. The ones listed here are just a few that have been tested, so we know that they are pretty good.

It is important, when making up a Dyad instruction, that you do not just have a person focus on some mental idea or look for or chase after some memory of a prior event. All the instructions listed here focus awareness on itself in the here-and-now. They don't direct you to your intellectual mind or memories.

