



Guidelines for watching films

In preparation for each viewing session, sit comfortably. Let your attention move effortlessly, without strain, first to your body then to your breath. Simply inhale and exhale naturally. Follow your breath in this innocent, watchful way for a while. Notice any spots where there's tension or holding. As you grow aware of them, let your breath travel into these spots. To release tension you may experiment with "breathing into" any part of your body that feels strained. Never force your breath.

Your gentle attention is sufficient to help you become more present and balanced, as it spontaneously deepens and corrects your breathing if it is constricted. Experience your condition without inner criticizing or comment. If you notice yourself judging or narrating, simply listen to the tone of your inner dialog as you come back to your breath. Lay judgments and worries consciously aside.

As soon as you are calm and centered, start watching the movie. Most deeper insights arrive when you pay attention to the story and to yourself. While viewing, bring your inner attention to a holistic bodily awareness (felt sense). This means you are aware of "all of you" — head, heart, belly, etc. Once in a while you might notice your breathing from an inner vantage point — from your subtle, always-present intuitive core. Observe how the movie images, ideas, conversations and characters affect your breath. Don't analyze anything while you are watching. Be fully present with your experience.

Afterwards reflect on the following:

Do you remember whether your breathing changed throughout the movie? Could this be an indication that something threw you off balance? In all likelihood, what affects you in the film is similar to whatever unbalances you in your daily life.

Ask yourself: If a part of the film that moved you (positively or negatively) had been one of your dreams, how would you have understood the symbolism in it?

Notice what you liked and what you didn't like or even hated about the movie. Which characters or actions seemed especially attractive or unattractive

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to you? Did you identify with one or several characters?

Were there one or several characters in the movie that modeled behavior that you would like to emulate? Did they develop certain strengths or other capacities that you would like to develop as well?

Notice whether any aspect of the film was especially hard to watch. Could this be related to something that you might have repressed ("shadow")? Uncovering repressed aspects of our psyche can free up positive qualities and uncover our more whole and authentic self

Did you experience something that connected you to your inner wisdom or higher self as you watched the film?

It helps to write down your answers.

If some of the mentioned guidelines turn out to be useful, you might consider using them not only in "reel life" but also adapt them to "real life" because they are intended to make you become a better observer.

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