

Meditation: Uncovering Insight
Foundation: Attention and Energy
*From **Wake Up to Your Life** by Ken McLeod*

Base of Attention

Rest attention on the breath for a few minutes at the beginning of each session until attention becomes stable.

Ecstatic Practice: Raising the Level of Energy

Raising the level of energy has four steps: frame, field, expansion, and rest. It is called ecstatic practice because you experience a pleasurable shift in energy as you open to experience. It transforms the energy of experience into attention. Practice this ecstatic technique both in formal sessions and during the day.

Begin with sensory experience. Sit in front of a window or open door. The window frame or door frame is the frame. Let your gaze rest on the window until you can see the whole frame all at once. This step sets the frame.

Open to the whole field defined by the frame. The field is everything in your field of vision that falls within the frame, regardless of its distance from you.

Initially, your eyes will pick out an object in the field, and your attention will collapse down to that object. As soon as you notice that you are looking at only a part of the field, expand from that object to the whole field again. In ecstatic practice a collapse down to an object is analogous to being distracted by a thought in breath meditation.

You will soon be able to see everything in the frame simultaneously and will feel a shift. Rest in the shift. You relax, and a pleasurable feeling pervades your body and mind. Subject-object differentiation lessens.

Work first with a well-defined frame, one that is small enough that you can actually open to the whole field. Then extend your practice by using larger and larger frames until you can use the physical limits of your field of vision as the frame.

During the day, practice this energy transformation when you go for a walk, go shopping, or take a break in your workday. Shopping malls are good places to practice because they are full of visual objects, and the walls and ceilings provide natural frames. Sit in front of a waterfall until you can see every drop of water as it falls. Look at a tree, using the outline of the tree as a frame, until you can see every leaf and every branch at the same time. Look at a lawn, and see every blade of grass at once.

Once you have a sense of the shift in energy from working visually, work with the other senses. During the day, listen to a piece of music, hearing every instrument at the same time. Whenever your attention goes to one instrument or one strain, expand to include all the music and every instrument. Listen in the same way to people talking. Extend the practice to the sense of touch so that you are aware of all the clothing you are wearing, what you are sitting on, and any stiffness or tension in your muscles, all at the same time. Then include taste and smell as well.

Finally, include thoughts and feelings, until you can open to everything that arises in the moment, internally and externally, and experience it all simultaneously. This step extends the practice to emotional sensations and transforms the energy of all experience into attention.

Needless to say, you won't do all this in your first session. Over time, however, you become more adept at the practice and can open to more and more. In your formal meditation sessions, spend ten minutes doing this practice, resting in open experience and transforming energy into attention. Now you are ready to look.