



# Carolina Mindfulness Collective

## Self-Inquiry (“What is ‘Who?’”)

“Self-inquiry”: A playful curiosity about the quality of bare awareness, true desire, or the center of subjectivity.

### Self-Inquiry

Think or say these words right now: “I am”, “Me”, “Mine”, “Myself” ... What do you notice? What does it feel like to direct your attention toward your own “self” in this way? Reasonably enough, we all feel very confidently as though we *are* ourselves, but we seldom investigate what it is really like to *be* to be ourselves.

Self-understanding is a very important aspect of living, but what does it even mean? When all of our unique habits, preferences, and aspects of personality are analyzed and studied thoroughly, are we learning all there is to know about what we are? Do these things truly identify us? What do we find when we set them aside?

There are many vital things to know about the self, but they are generally mere *attributes and descriptions*: none of them are the “real me”. Finding the “real me” may sound easy if we simply look (after all, if I am always and only “me”, knowing myself should be easy),

but what we find when we look for the most elemental and central part of our nature is typically quite surprising — we may not really be what we think we are.

Self Inquiry is a practice that extends the effort of self-knowledge out as far as possible, and it can be a path of great confusion and frustration. Over time, however, humbly resting in the often-disorienting “unfindability of self” can ultimately lead to a sense of wide-open and illuminating goodness within which we can find our real worth and substance.

## “What, Why, When, How...”

A. *What* it is and is not (definition of the mechanism of action):

- Self-Inquiry is: playful curiosity about the quality of bare awareness, true desire, or the center of subjectivity
- Self-Inquiry is not: a description of the traits of identity or parts of self; it is not an introspective analysis of personality

B. *Why* practice it:

- To practice sitting with the inevitable “unanswerability” that we will face in life through mystery and impossible questions
- “Un-answer” the question “who am I?": deeply know myself as more than just that “something” that seems to exist behind my eyes looking out at the world from inside my head
- Exercising deep curiosity about oneself is *fascinating*

C. *When* to practice it:

- Formal Practice: 10-12m of unbroken practice involving 100% of your attention (try to aim for the same time/place everyday)
- Informal Practice: apply the technique to shorter durations throughout the day and/or during situations and interactions

D. *How* to practice it (instructions for “What is ‘Who?’”):

- Evoke: notice the sensations associated with the basic feeling of self-identity (trigger this by thinking the phrase, “I am”)
- Investigate: search for the center of that subjectivity (“where/ what/who am I?”)



Find more Practice Resources here