

Tips to Help You BALADI

BALADI gives you a structure and an order to follow: Breathe, Appreciate, Label, Allow, Disidentify, and Investigate. These steps help you remember all of the vital components to investigate falsehoods and other forms, and provides a sound order for investigating them.

Defining Form

When we BALADI, we investigate various forms within the body. A form is any object that can be known with our senses. That means thoughts, sensations, falsehoods, behavior impulses, behaviors, feeling tones, and loving feelings are all forms. You can investigate any of these things. Rather than list them each time, we simply refer to them collectively as “form.”

Tips to help you BALADI

• Memorize the steps of BALADI

The steps of BALADI are Breathe, Appreciate, Label, Allow, Disidentify, and Investigate. You will need to recall these steps to help you do the process on the fly.

• Memorize the purpose and relevant questions for each step

Routine repetition of the information, and attempts to practice the BALADI practice in your daily life will help it all sink into your memory. Here are the purposes behind each step:

Breathe helps you become mindful and “be the knower not the known.” Do this whenever a storm rages that is too tough to handle.

Appreciate helps you bring in some joy and inner resources. Do whenever you need more resources to help with the investigations.

Label helps you “name it to tame it.” As you mindfully label what is being known, it helps mental and emotional processes slow down, allowing you to see more clearly what all is at play. This helps you to identify the loudest, and most disturbing falsehood present, and do the rest of the BALADI steps on it.

Allow helps you remember “what you resist, persists,” and “this belongs.” It reminds you to look to see if any aversion is arising to whatever form you’re investigating.

Disidentify reminds you to: “take the backwards step” into formless awareness, not identify with temporary forms, and remember that “what you see, you cannot be.” You are the sky, not the passing clouds. Turn to this step (or the Mindful Pause) whenever the form you BALADI becomes too frightening or painful to hold mindfully.

Investigate helps you recognize the patterns and relationships between falsehoods and their corresponding emotions, and behavior impulses, and also helps you see their unkind, untrue, and unhelpful aspects. Investigate also helps you see the wisdom, love, and truth of liberating insights such as “all life is sacred;” “if it’s not kind, it’s not true;” “the now is all there is;” “what you believe, deceives;” “this, too, shall pass;” “what I see, I cannot be;” “we are all one;” and “all forms are impermanent, impersonal, and cause suffering when identified with.” Investigate helps you see

• Understand the order and follow it when learning the practice.

As you learn BALADI, use the structure and order of BALADI to help you become comfortable with each step and to understand on a felt and experiential level the benefits of each step. During labeling, find the loudest falsehood present to investigate (or, if it is unclear which is loudest, take any falsehood you clearly identify), then do the other practices (ADI) on that falsehood.

Then return to labeling to find the next loudest falsehood (or another falsehood) and do the rest of the practices on that falsehood. Continue in this way with all falsehoods present until you have loving responses to all of them and you feel peaceful, happy, and grounded in your inner love.

So, the order is actually more like: BALADI-LADI-LADI-LADI.



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• Aim for progress, not perfection

BALADI has a lot of moving parts and things to remember. Love and appreciate yourself as you set these intentions and practice BALADI -- even when you forget things, get confused, or feel it is not working.

Appreciate the effort you put in to doing your best with the BALADI intention-setting and practice. The more you practice BALADI, the easier it becomes. The easier it becomes, the more benefits you will gain from it, and these benefits will motivate you to practice even more.

Be patient, and keep practicing with all the love in your heart.

• Create a Supportive Culture

Tell your roommates, partner, family, and close friends about your Mindful Pause and BALADI practices. Let them know if they ever see you put your hands on your chest and stomach and/or close your eyes to go inward, that this is a signal that you have been triggered and are doing a practice to access your balance, composure, wisdom, and love.

Let them know when this happens, they can support you by giving you some space and silence, or by taking a Mindful Pause themselves. Let them know you do this out of love for all life and a desire to treat them with the love, kindness, and compassion they deserve.

Then, you can do BALADI whenever you are triggered, or if those around you become triggered. It will be a way to signal a mindful time-out as a way to prevent conflicts from escalating. Once completed, the discussion can resume, but now infused with more mindfulness, love, and wisdom.

• Be flexible and follow your intuition

During the Mindfulness Fundamentals course, you have been exposed to various investigative questions. The specific wording is not important. If you ask the same question a different way, that's fine. You will find that some questions help you see a specific aspect more clearly than others. Use whatever questions work best for you. For example, the disidentify part, there are

numerous questions that can be asked to help you disidentify from the forms you investigate. Find which questions work for you, and use them.

As your understanding of each aspect of BALADI deepens, and your proficiency grows in asking questions and mindfully investigating their answers, you will develop an intuitive sense of what needs to be investigated next. At this point, let go of the prescribed order and let your intuition guide you. You will find you still hit all of the aspects, but in an order that makes the most sense for whatever you are dealing with.

Addressing afflictive emotions without any perceivable thoughts behind it

Here are some tips on how to proceed if you have an afflictive emotion but no perceivable false thoughts associated with it. First, compassionately investigate the emotion to see if it will share with you the falsehood behind it. You can do this by asking: Are you a version of craving or aversion? What do you want? (Craving) What do you not want? (Aversion) How do you see the world? What are you reacting to? Why are you arising? If you could talk, what would you say? What do you want to tell me? What do you want me to do? How do you want me to behave?

This investigation might bring to mind the falsehoods behind the emotion. Also, be on the lookout for falsehood of *emotional reasoning* – in this falsehood we project our emotions onto reality. For example:

- “I feel overwhelmed, therefore my problems must be too big to solve.”
- “I feel like a loser, therefore I am a loser.”
- “I feel worthless, therefore I am worthless.”

When emotional reasoning is active, we identify with our emotions. This makes emotional reasoning a version of the falsehood of self-view.

If these investigations bring no clarity as to the falsehood behind the emotion, then simply BALADI the emotion itself.

Happy BALADling! ☺



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Labeling Practice

Labeling is simply naming or noting whatever is being known. Labeling involves us turning our attention inward to see what thoughts, types of falsehoods, emotions, sensations, behavior impulses, and their corresponding feeling tones are present. For ease, we refer to all of these things as simply “forms.”

In attempting to label the internal forms, we generate the courage to face them, feel them, experience them, and examine them. This helps us counteract our conditioned habit-pattern to run away from or act out unpleasant mental and emotional states.

As we label these inner forms, we relate to them more mindfully and skillfully without aversion or identification. Labeling help us, “name it to tame it.”

What to label?

We can also think of labeling as an investigation practice. It involves us asking three questions:

- 1. What is being known?** This helps us generate a list of forms: the thought “I hate this,” the feelings “anger, frustration,” the behavior impulse to break something, etc. For each form known, we also want to ask:
- 2. What is [name the form’s] feeling tone?** Possible answers include pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral – meaning neither pleasant nor unpleasant. These feeling tones, when unconscious,

condition the body-mind’s craving and aversion. By being mindful of feeling tones we stop putting wood on the fire of craving and aversion.

When determining an object’s feeling tone, the “correct” answer is the answer that is honest and genuine for you. Don’t answer based on your expectations, but based on your direct experience of how it feels in the body. If this causes confusion to arise, then label that as well: “Confusion is being known.”

3. Is [name the form’s] feeling tone worldly (sense-based) or spiritual (not sense-based)?

This question is especially important for pleasant feeling tones. The ego seeks refuge in sense gratification, but this habit leads to craving, which can lead to addictions and unskillfulness.

Thankfully, there is no danger or drawbacks from indulging in spiritual pleasures. They arise as the fruits of love and wisdom from gratitude, generosity, mindfulness, concentration, investigations, kindness, compassion, peace (equanimity), and joy.

By gaining a deeper understanding of worldly and spiritual pleasures through this investigation, we will be better able to turn to spiritual pleasures when we need refuge in times of

trouble. Thus, we avoid the suffering caused by addictions of all kinds.

If the above question is confusing, an alternate question to use is: "Is this pleasure sense-based or not sense-based?"

Use the "[Blank] is being known" format

When answering the question, "What is being known?" use the "[Blank] is being known," format to minimize your identification with the objects. Fill in the [blank] with whatever form you notice, such as "anger." Avoid using the "I'm [blank]" format which tend to increase identification. So instead of thinking "I'm angry," think "Anger is being known."

If your mindfulness is strong, you will feel a sense of peace despite the raging mental storm. If you feel peace, you can drop the "is being known" and just silently think the labels. For example: "Mental storm." "Emotion." "Anger." "Unpleasant feeling tone." And so on.

Work from general to specific

Start labeling things in general and work to specifics. For example, you may first note: "Mental storm is being known." Then, "Emotion is being known." Then, "Burning in chest and shaking hands are being known." "Hatred is being known." Then "The thought, 'He's an arrogant asshole,' is being known." Then "Judgment is being known."

Continue to do this. The longer you label things in this way, the clearer the different components of the storm will become, the more you will disidentify

from them, and the more you will be able to hold them peacefully.

As the internal forms become clearer, find the most disturbing falsehood present to investigate with the other steps (ADI). If you have multiple falsehoods active and you are not sure which is most disturbing, then choose whichever one will be easiest for you to investigate, or pick one at random to do the other steps on.

Investigation Leads to Insight

As we get good at labeling, and BALADI, we will start to have insights. Insights happen when we see things clearly and directly in ways that expand our hearts and minds. Insights help us open up to new possibilities, and always make us feel more light, unburdened, free, liberated, connected, and/or unified.

Imagine the Innocent Infant Within

One of the practices civil rights activists trained with so they could respond to acts of hate and violence with love and compassion can be called: Imagine the Innocent Infant Within. There is much we can learn from this practice to help us drop our judgment and forgive those who have harmed us.

It works like this: Imagine the person who you have difficulties with as they were when they were an innocent, newborn baby. Then feel your heart space and investigate this image by asking yourself:

- Is this baby sacred?
- Does this baby have inherent worth and value?
- Is this baby loved unconditionally by Life?
- Does this baby have hatred, prejudice or judgment?

Use these and/or similar questions to help remind you of the liberating insight that all life is sacred. They were and are beloved children of Life. If they exist, then like us, they too are loved unconditionally by Life.

It also reminds us that all people, no matter how unskillfully they behave, were once innocent newborn babies. No one is born hating, despising, and wanting to harm or kill others.

Then use your imagination to investigate the following questions. Do your best to feel the answer in your heart space too.

- What abuse, fear, and terror might this baby have experienced growing up to become so distorted and confused?
- Did their parents or guardians physically or verbally abuse them, or physically or emotionally neglect them to make them think such unskillful behavior is skillful?
- Did they learn how to bully others, from the bullying they received from their parents, siblings, or peers?
- What falsehoods (aversion/hatred, craving/greed, arrogance/self-view, etc.) are they under the spell of and what

suffering do those falsehoods make them feel?

- How few examples of love could they have had in their life if they behave this unskillfully?

Use these and similar questions to remind us of the bad fortune in their life that conditioned them with falsehoods and the resulting unskillfulness.

This reminds us that, like us, they are victims of their impersonal conditioning, which happened to them through no fault of their own.

Unfortunately, they had a lot of bad fortune which has harmed and warped them and caused them to harm others. This investigation reminds us that, "If not for my good fortune, I would be them."

Seeing their suffering, we are reminded of their need for love and compassion. During this course, we have seen directly how our own thoughts and emotions are conditioned and impersonal. This helps us treat ourselves with compassion and kindness despite our unskillfulness. It's not much of a leap to recognize that others run their impersonal conditioning as well. Like us, they also believe their conditioned and impersonal thoughts. Just as we have compassion for our unskillfulness, we must have compassion for their unskillfulness.

Remember, Mindfulness is Conditioned Too

Mindfulness helps us transcend our conditioning. With mindfulness, we disidentify from our conditioned thoughts and emotions, and infuse them with love and skillfulness. Yet before we start judgmentally accusing others of not being mindful or doing their spiritual work, reflect on how coming to mindfulness, being interested in it, and having the time and luxury to practice it is due to good fortune, or what some call grace.

The upshot is, we can't take credit for our practice. Our practice is due to entirely to impersonal good fortune. Only the delusion of self-view would take ownership of our practice, rather than give thanks for the gift of it. In the same way, we don't want to judge others for not



doing the practice that they have not been graced enough by their conditioning to come to. The best we can do is offer them good fortune through our loving, kind, and compassionate attitudes and behaviors towards them.

Prioritize Spiritual Over Material

When trying to forgive others, it helps to remember they did the best they could with what they were given. Although culturally, we favor those with worldly knowledge, material wealth, and physical beauty, love and wisdom actually favors those with spiritual knowledge, spiritual wealth, and spiritual beauty. It can help us forgive the rich and famous to remember that those who master the former to the neglect of the latter deserve our compassion.

A common judgment is to assume that wealthy people have access to more education and opportunities, and therefore, their faults are even more egregious. Yet we must remember that educational opportunities born of material wealth, often lead to acquiring worldly knowledge, and valuing material knowledge over spiritual knowledge. Worldly knowledge, just like worldly riches, does not help a person become free of their suffering. In fact, worldly knowledge provides a false view of where happiness lies: in accumulating things, wealth, power, fame, and control over others.

Furthermore, for some, wealth can insulate them from the problems of the world that exist to help spiritually mature. So, wealth is not always an advantage, but often a disadvantage when it comes to spiritual growth and becoming free of suffering. Once our basic material needs are met, more material wealth burdens and distracts us from the importance of spiritual riches. Being mindful of the drawbacks of material wealth and worldly wisdom may help you address any judgments held towards wealthy and powerful people.

Now, maybe this person did have access to spiritual teachings growing up. However, we must remember that not all places of worship teach pure spirituality. Too often, the teachings have been corrupted with falsehood. Many places of worship actively teach judgment, and encourage people to see life forms in the divided terms of: good versus evil, superior and inferior, worthy and unworthy. Imagine the tragedy of being conditioned like that from your place of worship -- what bad fortune indeed!

Another common falsehood of our culture is valuing outer beauty over inner beauty. We often feel judgment towards people, beings, and life forms who do not meet our conditioned and impersonal standards of beauty. However, from a spiritual perspective, we don't want to identify with these standards. From Life's perspective, all life forms are beautiful, worthy, and sacred. If your judgment arises based on looks and aesthetics, see that for the falsehood it is.

Possible investigative questions to remind you of these above priorities include:

- Are they rich in worldly knowledge or spiritual knowledge?
- Are they rich in material wealth or spiritual wealth?
- Growing up, might their parents or guardians have brought them to a corrupted place of worship that actively taught judgment (hatred) and seeing life in divided terms of good vs evil, superior and inferior, worthy and unworthy? Compassionately reflect: the place whose purpose is to help uproot falsehoods, actively instills them – can you feel the tragedy of this and offer them compassion?
- Does Life find them beautiful? Can I see and honor their inner beauty?

As you investigate your judgments towards others, be mindful of what priorities are at play (spiritual vs. material), and remember that spiritual wealth, wisdom, and beauty takes precedence, while those who lack these deserve our compassion.



Which View Makes More Sense to You?

Here are two contradictory world views courtesy of the egoic view and the wise view. Even though both views contradict each other, expect to find both as part of your mental makeup. Start to pay attention to which view operates in you at each moment throughout your day. Investigate both views, to see which one most enhances your welfare and the welfare of others.

Question	Egoic View	Wise View
What is our source of joy?	Joy comes from getting what I want and avoiding what I don't want. Joy comes from my external situation.	Joy comes from mindfully allowing everything to be as it is and responding skillfully to whatever arises. Joy comes from within.
What's the best way to relate to the now?	The now is a means to an end. If I struggle now, I can reap happiness in the future.	The now is an end in itself because it is all there is. If I sacrifice present moment happiness for future happiness, I will never be happy. I can only be happy now.
What's the role of craving and aversion?	Craving helps me get what I want and aversion helps me avoid what I don't want. Craving and aversion motivate me to achieve my goals so eventually I can be happy.	Greed and aversion are a primary source of my misery. They prevent me from peacefully allowing everything to be, enjoying the present moment, and lovingly responding skillfully to what arises. Rather than be motivated by the hatred of aversion or the greed of craving, I choose to have love motivate my actions.
Does all life have inherent value?	No. Things are good or bad depending on how they affect me and the things I care about.	Yes. All life is sacred. We are all one organism and interdependent with each other.
What makes you happy?	I am happy when I finally get what I want, and avoid what I don't want.*	I am happy when the mind relates to all life with love and is free of active aversion and clinging. Then I feel peace, joy, and freedom.

* Is it possible that in those moments when we get what we want and avoid what we don't want, that we are happy because at that moment the mind is free of aversion and clinging? Look and see!

Now it is up for you to find out in your direct experience which view is true, kind, and helpful. Ask of each view: How is this unkind? How is this unhelpful? How is this untrue? And pay attention to what you discover. Happy investigating!

Intention Setting for Week 9

BALADI

Purpose

Starting new habits takes effort. This intention-setting practice helps you memorize the steps of BALADI, and reminds you how to do it so you can practice it at least one a day this week.

Please read these intentions with the appropriate level of interest and engagement to help you memorize the key aspects and questions of each part.

You may need to keep the handout with you to reference when you start practicing BALADI.

Many investigative questions are offered here to give you a sense of the questions that will help you investigate your experience. The specific wording is not important. If you ask the same question a different way, that's fine.

Defining Form

These intentions refer to forms a lot, so let's define the term. A form is any object that can be known with our senses. That means thoughts, sensations, falsehoods, behavior impulses, behaviors, feeling tones, and the feelings of love are all forms. You can investigate any of these things, so rather than list them all out each time, we just refer to them all as forms.

Disidentification

In the disidentification part, there are many questions. Find which ones most resonate with you and help you disidentify from the forms you investigate. Then use those questions when you BALADI.

Progress Not Perfection

BALADI has a lot of moving parts and things to remember. Love and appreciate yourself as you set these intentions and practice BALADI -- even when you forget things, get confused, or feel it is not working.

Appreciate the effort you put in to reading these intentions regularly, doing your best, and practicing it. The more you practice BALADI, the easier it will become. The easier it becomes, the more you will master it, and the more benefits you will gain from it.

Be patient, and keep practicing with all the love in your heart.

Instructions

The instructions for these intention settings are the same as for all of the other intention setting.

Whenever helpful, review your other handouts on BALADI and its various aspects to refresh yourself on the details of those practices.



Intention Setting – Week 9

Instructions and clarifying info are in italics below, and headers are in bold. You need not read them out loud.

Today, I will BALADI (1)

BALADI stands for:

Breathe

Appreciate

Label

Allow

Disidentify

Investigate

At least once today, I will invest 3 or more minutes to practice BALADI. I may do the practice when all is well, or when I notice a falsehood alarm in the realm of my thoughts, emotions, or behaviors. If with other people, I will politely excuse myself, and find a safe and private area to BALADI – Breathe, Appreciate, Label, Allow, Disidentify, Investigate.

B is for Breathe

To Breathe, I will take a mindful pause for 10 breath-cycles or as long as it takes to feel mindful, centered, and grounded. This will help me “be the knower, not the known.”

A is for Appreciate

To Appreciate, I will give thanks: for mindfulness, for remembering to do this

practice, and for whatever else I am genuinely grateful for in the moment. Appreciation adds some joy and brings inner resources to the situation.

The remaining steps help me investigate my experience. To do this, I will ask relevant questions, then use my senses to answer the questions directly. Answers may come as words, or as wordless direct-knowings.

L is for Label

Labeling helps me “name it to tame it.” To Label, I will ask:

- What is being known? (*Mental storm, sensations, thoughts, falsehoods, behavior impulses, states of being, etc.*) I will label what is known using the “[Blank] is being known” format.

For each form known, I will ask:

- What is the form’s feeling tone? (*Pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.*)
- Is this feeling tone worldly (*sense-based*) or spiritual (*not sense-based*)?



As things become more settled, I will ask:

- What falsehoods, or states of being, are being known?
(*Falsehoods include: Futuring, Pasting, Fixed-View, Craving, Aversion, Judgment, Self-View, etc. States of being include: Kindness, Compassion, Peace, and Joy.*)

I will take the primary (*loudest and most disturbing*) falsehood as the focus of my investigation for the rest of the steps. If no falsehood is present, I will investigate whichever state of being is present.

A is for Allow

Since “what we resist, persists,” I do my best to allow and remember that “this belongs.” To Allow, I will ask:

- Is any aversion arising to this form?
- Can this form be allowed?

If there is no aversion, I go to the next BALADI step.

If there is aversion, I will ask the same questions of that aversion. I will continue to do this until I find an aversion that is allowed. Then I will take this aversion as the focus of my investigation for the rest of the BALADI steps.

D is for Disidentify

Disidentifying helps me “take the backwards step” into formless awareness. It reminds me to not identify with temporary forms, since “this, too, will pass.” It reminds me that “what I see, I cannot be.” To Disidentify, I ask:

- Is this form permanent or temporary?
- If I allow this form to be, will it go away on its own?
- Can I be something so temporary?
- Is this form conditioned or unconditioned?
- Is this form personal or impersonal?
- Am I this form? Does it define me?
- Am I the knower or the known?
- Is awareness harmed or affected by this form?
- Does awareness relate to this form with craving or aversion?
- Is awareness [blank]? (*In the blank, name any feelings you feel such as: fearful, lonely, sad, angry, etc.*)
- Does awareness believe [blank]? (*In the blank, name any thoughts that arise such as: I hate this, etc.*)
- Can I feel my formless nature? (*It may be known as spaciousness, emptiness, silence, or stillness*)
- Can this form harm or affect my formless nature in any way?
- Who or what am I?



I is for Investigate

Investigating helps me recognize the patterns between falsehoods, emotions, and behavior impulses, and see their unkind, untrue, and unhelpful aspects. It also helps me see the wisdom, love, and truth of liberating insights.

These liberating insights include:

- *All life is sacred.*
- *If it's not kind, it's not true.*
- *The now is all there is.*
- *What you believe, deceives.*
- *This, too, shall pass.*
- *What I see, I cannot be.*
- *All forms are impermanent, impersonal, and cause suffering when identified with.*
- *I am one with all life.*

To Investigate, I will ask:

- Where in the body do I feel this form (*falsehood/state of being/emotion*)?
- What does this form feel like in the body?
- What is the feeling tone of this form?
- How is this form: Unkind? Untrue? Unhelpful?
- If the form is a falsehood, how would I feel if I could never believe this falsehood again?
- What contributes to the arising of this form?
- What contributes to the cessation of this form?

- If the form is a falsehood, how can I prevent this form from arising?
- What spiritual lesson is this form here to teach me?
- If the form is a falsehood, what is an honest, kind, helpful loving response to this falsehood? How does this loving response feel in the body? What is the feeling tone of these feelings? How do these feelings inspire me to respond?

If investigating falsehoods, after investigating one falsehood thoroughly, I will return to Labeling to see what other falsehoods remain and start the process all over again. I will keep doing this practice until the body becomes calm, peaceful, and grounded.

The next time I journal, I will write any insights generated from this practice, so I can better remember, review, and integrate these insights into my life.

The next time I use my meditation log, I will log one investigation for every BALADI practice attempted.

** Take a one-breath-cycle-long mindful pause **

Way to be skillful! Give thanks for completing your intention setting, and celebrate with your celebratory move. Mark in your log that you completed this intention setting, then have a glorious day!

