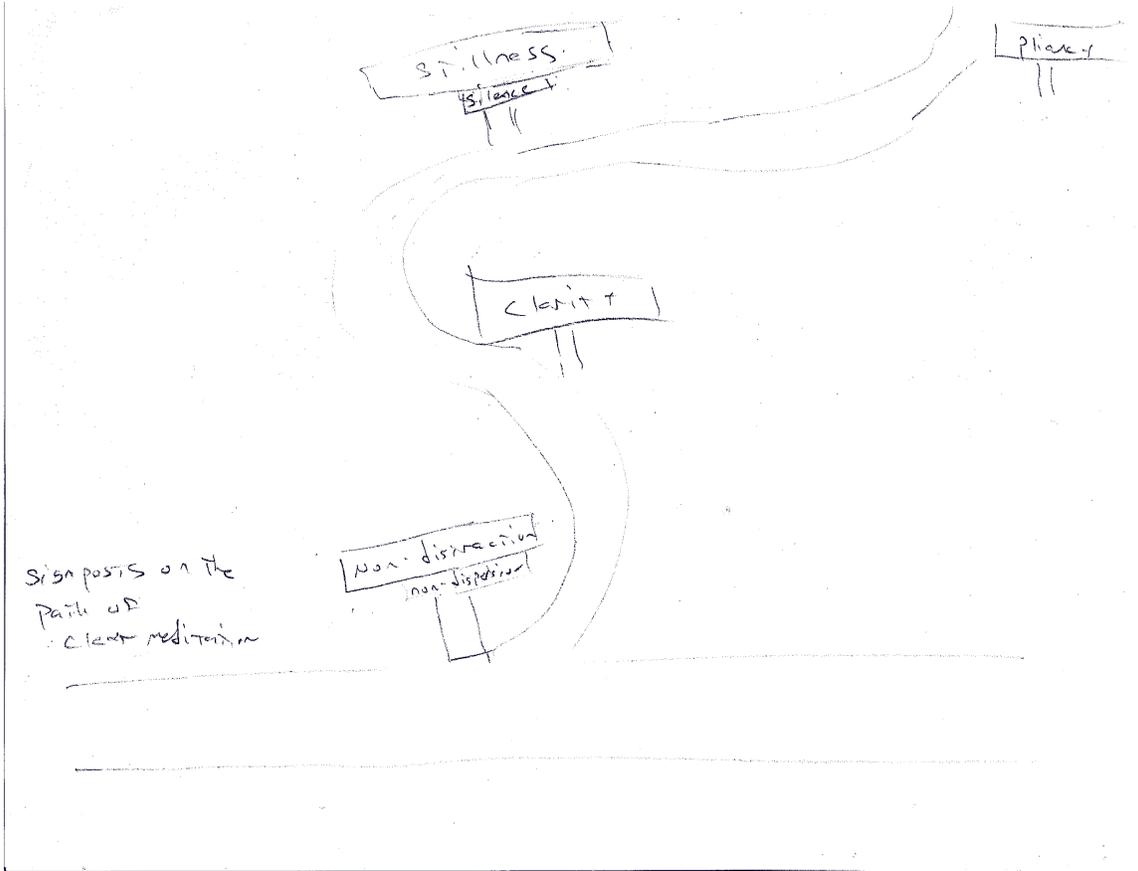


Signposts on the Path of Clear Meditation

by Jason Espada



Signposts on the Path of Clear Meditation

Preface: three points for reflection

Reflecting on the following, will, without a doubt, bring the motivation to practice consistently and enthusiastically, and to produce the result:

1. that the mind can be developed limitlessly;
2. that the more we develop the qualities of calm abiding, the clarity and stability of the mind, the better; and,
3. that there is a great need, and many profoundly meaningful advantages for us all to doing this: we will be better able to free our own mind from confusion and affliction; we will be able to more effectively develop any quality we would like, and we will be better able to help others in many ways

Signpost one: non-distraction,
which gradually, *very gradually* becomes non- dispersion

We step onto the path with mindfulness, as a conscious decision. Or, seeing that the mind has become distracted, we return by way of recollection.

Signpost two: clarity

We proceed and cultivate the quality of attention we can call ‘the clarity born of a deepening sense of relaxation’. Here we should make efforts to sustain the flow of awareness, as Gen Lamrimpa taught, emphasizing stability first, which here means a relaxed continuity of attention. It’s ok if it’s not too clear at the beginning, or at times in the intermediate stages. If we are practicing correctly, steadily letting go of thoughts as they arise, not grasping them, not following them, and attending to our object of meditation, then naturally clarity will come, in its own time.

stay on the path with awareness – this applies here, and equally after signpost three:

To continue to guide and to improve the quality of the mind, we use an overall awareness of the process to know if the mind is staying with its object, and the quality of the mind itself that is engaged in practice. If there is any dullness at all, then gently, and gradually bring more of the energy of clarity and wakefulness, vividness and discernment. And if there is any distraction, then relax more deeply, calm the body and the mind, and bring more focused mindfulness, or collectedness.

In all of this it's best if we can practice consistently, with compassion for ourselves, and with compassion for others, with patience, and with joyful persistence.

The Thai meditation teacher, Ajaan Lee taught that the mind can be firmly centered in its object, 'without tilting, leaning or wavering'. In the analogy of walking a path, this would be like staying, in a relaxed way, comfortably and solidly in the center of the path.

Signpost three: stillness
silence, or inner quiet

Proceed and cultivate stillness with awareness, silence, inner quiet and calm with clarity.

We can sustain a good continuity in our meditation by having a strong motivation, and clear confidence in the path that we are on, and then by not grasping at results: good, bad or indifferent, determine to simply keep practicing.

Signpost four: pliancy

The result of this kind of practice, in any amount, is increased flexibility or pliancy, in that the mind is relatively more and more free of distraction and dullness. This is a mind that is by degrees more serviceable. To the extent that we practice and actualize this pliancy, suppleness, or service-ability, to that extent we can use the mind in any way we would like. Any efforts we can make in this direction will be worthwhile.