**Breath, body and mind**

The ultimate unity or fundamental interdependence of things is the startingpoint of zen – a unity that encompasses body as well as mind and self as well as surroundings.

Mind follows body; or does body follow mind? In 1999 Daniel Nettle published the results of extensive research and showed what zen masters have been saying for centuries: we become happy when we smile.

Meditation improves the natural course of breathing. Most people think like they breathe. Who thinks superficially usually also breathes superficially. Who breathes calmly thinks calmly. Who breathes deeply can experience deep insights.

The emphasis in yoga and meditation is on deep and natural breathing. Working consciously on the deepening of our breath is meaningful, as long as we do not force or rush things.

By maintaining long counts (ooooooooone, twoooooooo, threeeeeee) , we naturally tend to breathe out longer.

Fysiologically there is a big difference between someone who has not been to the toilet for three or four days and someone who does go regularly …. When we breah deeper and calmer, our belly moves quietly up and down, which massages our stomach and intestines. Among other things, this improves natural bowel motion.

Zen is training of the spine. The physical stability that we build up systematically by meditating makes it simpler for us to learn to think what we want to thing.

In the spine, unity of body and mind manifests itself.

A healthy body is by definition very sensitive. By having too many thoughts we are often not aware of our physical sensations. Many people often only see and smell the flowers in a vase when others talk about it.

Practice: extra sports! E.g. now 1x per week, then go to 2x; if now 2x, go to 3x/week.