

## Stabilizing and Calibrating Your Instrument

**O**f course, as with any instrument — whether it is a radio telescope, a spectrophotometer, or a bathroom scale — you have to first calibrate it and stabilize the platform on which it sits so that you can get reliable readings.



Some of the meditation practices that the Buddha taught serve to stabilize and calibrate the mind so that it can do the deep work of seeing into the actuality of what is being observed. Obviously, if you are trying to look at the moon but you set up your telescope on a waterbed, it would be hopeless even to find the moon, never mind keep it in view and study it carefully. Every time you shifted your posture even a little bit, you would lose the moon completely.

We face a similar situation with our own mind. If we are going to use the mind to observe and befriend and ultimately understand itself, first we will have to learn at least the rudiments of how to stabilize it enough so that it can actually do the work of paying attention in a sustained and reliable way and thus, of becoming aware of what's going on beneath the surface of its own activities.

Even our best efforts can easily be thwarted by all the ways in which we distract ourselves. Our attention is not very stable and is invariably carried off someplace else a good deal of the time, as you will experience for yourself with the guided meditations. With ongoing practice, we at least become far

more familiar with the mind's comings and goings; over time, in important ways, the mind learns how to stabilize itself, at least to a degree.

Even a tiny bit of stability, coupled with awareness, is hugely important and transforming, so it is very important not to build some kind of ideal about your mind not wavering or being absolutely stable in order for you to be "doing it right." That may happen in rare moments under particular circumstances, but for the most part, as we will see, it is in the nature of the mind to wave. Knowing that makes a huge difference in how we will approach the meditation practice.