

SHAMATHA MEDITATION



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Mindfulness Meditation or Calm Abiding is probably one of the most widely practiced meditations throughout the ages and in various spiritual traditions. In the Tantric Buddhist tradition Shamatha (Shinë in Tibetan *Shee neh*) is a simple yet very potent mindfulness practice that trains the mind to rest in spacious awareness. The goal in this practice is "no Goal". This is the practice of allowing, allowing thoughts to arise and dissolve while remaining focused on the breath.

In Shamatha we simply focus on the breath. To a beginning meditator this may sound boring and tedious. This may be true at first but just like working out at the gym we strengthen the muscle of the quiet mind. Through consistent practice we come into a loving relationship with our practice.

"When you most think you should get up from your cushion is when you should most remain seated. Don't give up!"

This is a crucial practice for the path of the awakened mind warrior. It is absolutely critical for our personal and spiritual development as it trains the mind in awareness whose affect is to lessen the constant agitation of mind movement. Calm abiding meditation relieves stress and can aid in lessening our reactivity in life. The benefits for calming of the mind are countless and can greatly help relieve our human suffering.

PREPARING FOR PRACTICE

It is important to sit comfortably, preferably on a cushion so that your knees are lower than your hips. This prevents the meditator from struggling against the pull of gravity on one's back. If your knees stick straight up and are higher than your hips, use a bigger cushion (keep your hips higher than your knees). If you have back issues then by all means use a chair. Sit with spine erect, head lifted with chin slightly tucked down and back.

Very important - Be Comfortable! If you are in pain or discomfort the mind is more easily agitated. Support your practice by sitting properly and using cushions when needed.

 Set an amount of time for your meditation: 15-30mins. Use a timer on your smart phone or some other form of timer so that you are not distracted looking at a clock every 5 minutes.

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-  Sit upright, stabilize the mind through taking 3-4 cleansing breaths. (If you know any breath practices from yoga class or otherwise you can start with those)
 -  The eyes are slightly open looking down about three feet in front of you on the floor (this is why the images of the Buddha's eyes look half closed, they are demonstrating a practice). Now, begin to lightly focus on the flow of breath gently moving in and out through your nostrils. You can begin by noticing how you feel different with your awareness now on your breathing. Deepen your focus on the breath moving in and out through the nostrils, in and out.
 -  When you find your mind active in thought, distraction or opinion, internally say the word "**Thinking**" and instantly bring your awareness back to the flow and texture of breath moving in and out of your nostrils. Using the word "**Thinking**" you are simply labeling your thought as such, just silently say "**Thinking**" and return to breath awareness. When thoughts occur, allow yourself to be free judgments about how many thoughts, what kind of thoughts or how frequent. Simply label the thoughts by silently say "**Thinking**".
 -  Keep your body still, if you must move to stretch or scratch an itch, do so slowly and with awareness and then still your body and mind again. If thoughts occur, say to yourself "**Thinking**" and return to the awareness of your breath. Bring your awareness ever more inward. Please remember that to endure a numb leg is not going to serve you, if need to allow blood to flow through your limbs, just do so slowly.
 -  Bring your awareness ever-deeper inward allowing thoughts to arise and dissolve while remaining focused on the inhalation and exhalation.
 -  Continue with this practice for 15-30 mins. When complete take a deep clearing breath and relax.
 -  We complete our practice by dedicating the merit of our practice to all beings everywhere.

"May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. May all beings be free from the poisons of aversion and attachments. May all beings know happiness and the true cause of happiness and may all beings know peace"

This is a practice, and practice requires patience and self-care. This means we agree to allow ourselves to be where we are in our practice. Being gentle and judgment free will support us to continue on our meditation journey with more ease.

This meditation was given to me by my Teacher, Pema Khandro Rinpoche