

# How To Meditate



## Deep Dharma's Overview of Buddhist Teachings on Meditation

## **Meditation, A Serious Overview** *Of Techniques and Options*

Here we are introducing meditation and explaining the basics, like where to meditate and for how long. Then we present some instant meditations, meditation that take only a minute or so and can have a quick, profound calming effect. These are ideal practices when you discover you are very stressed or panicky and need a reset. They are also useful before you go into a stressful situation, like a difficult conversation with your kids or a meeting with the boss that you expect to be confrontational. Next, there are the traditional single-pointed meditations, like mindfulness with breath meditations and mantra meditations, where you observe the breath or a mantra, then some simple non-breath single-pointed meditations, and there are some contemplative meditations where you contemplate a particular idea in a special way that bring calm and insight to the practice. The text finishes a chant, which is generally considered a form of meditation.

### Where Should I Meditate?

Sit comfortably in a chair or on a sofa, or, if you wish, cross-legged on a cushion and mat on the floor. This is an alert posture that readies the mind for meditation. *Avoid meditating in bed*, which sends a “I’m getting ready to sleep” message to the brain, rather than a “Be alert” message. (The aim of mindfulness meditations is to develop insights into the nature of phenomena, not to relax, though there are many styles of meditation who aim if to relax the meditator.)

If sitting in a chair, your feet should be touching the ground. Slip a pillow under them, or behind your back, if they do not rest flat on the floor. This is best done without shoes, ideally without shoes or socks. The lumbar region of your back should be slight forward so that you are tilted upright. There are lumbar rolls that you can buy which can be slipped against your lower back to help maintain this position. Your chest should be wide and open, head looking straight forward.

If cross-legged, sit on the front of a cushion on a mat. This will tilt the pelvic bone back slightly and lift your spine. Your chest should be wide and open, head looking straight forward.

Regardless of whether you sit on the floor or in a chair, relax the muscles in your face, then the neck and back and along the spine. Next relax the muscles in your base and core and around your pelvic bone, and finally relax your legs, quads and thighs and feet (wiggling your toes briefly will help relax your lower legs and feet).

Shift your body slightly back and forth to the right and left and allow it to settle into a comfortable position. Do the same, tilting forward and back a couple of time and the settling in a natural position. You can do the same with your head, stretching forward and back, right and left, perhaps cracking the bones in your neck, and then letting your head seat itself comfortable on your neck. Now you are ready to start meditating.

## Does Posture Matter?

Posture matters. Why? Because sitting properly helps develop a natural stillness and a looking-inward. Also, when our legs are grounded, whether cross-legged in a lotus-type posture or shoeless soles touching the floor, our mind knows where we are in time and space and so excitability declines and mindfulness arises from the calmness of coordinated pulmonary and cardiac systems.

Eyes can be open or closed. If open, softly gaze down in front of you. If closed, allow the eyelids to rest softly on each other and relax the muscle in your eye socket.

Next, bring your awareness to your base and buttocks. Allow them to relax quietly into the cushion or chair. Then do a short body scan, starting at the head, allowing it to settle alertly but softly onto your neck and shoulders, and let your shoulders and back to soften around your frame. Have your midriff and pelvic area tilted so that your back is upright, but still comfortable and unstrained.

Take a few natural breathes, just observing as the breath goes in and out and then begin your meditation.

## Cushions and Chairs

Cushions: firm cushions, which are breathable, and are either filled with cotton or buckwheat hulls, and cotton mats (often called *zafus* and *zabutons*, which are the Japanese words for them) are ideal. Removable, washable covers, at least on the mats, are recommended.

Chairs: chairs should have good lumbar support (a lumbar cylindrical pillow can us use if necessary to keep your spine upright and your pelvic bone in line) and the seat should be short enough so that your legs can bend at a 90-degree angle and your feet rest flat on the floor. A pillow behind your back is sometimes helpful. Some people prefer “slipper chairs.” These do not have arms, so you can sit cross-legged in them and have some back support. Most slipper chairs do not offer much lumbar support, so consider using a lumbar or other small pillow with them.

## It Is **Not** About Clearing the Mind

*This cannot be emphasized enough: it is not about clearing the mind.*

Contrary to popular ideas about meditation, mindfulness and mindfulness meditations are definitely *not* about clearing the mind. Mindfulness meditation are about directing the mind, with an attentive awareness to the mundane task at hand, to be fully present with whatever is happening. It is not about zoning out, becoming a blank slate or eliminating thoughts. It is about controlling where the thoughts are rather than letting our senses and our brain yank us around and stress us out with stories about what isn't instead of what really is happening.

## How Much Should You Meditate?

It is like practicing scales for a music student, or training at the gym for a CrossFitter. We need to do enough for it to be effective, but not so much that the exertion wears us out. How much meditation is too little or too much?

For some people, who at first find it just too hard to meditate for longer, starting with three minutes a day and adding a minute a week is enough but not too much. As a general rule, the minimum, according to research, should be 15 minutes a day; the maximum is generally thought to be about 40 minutes twice a day. A regular daily practice for most people should be about 30 minutes, once or twice a day. Like any skill, meditation requires regular practice.

We are not trying to become nuns and monks and spend weeks and years in caves meditating all day. We are simply finding time each day to scrub our minds of the day's stress and anxiety and to see how to be calmer and more peaceful in our responses to ourselves, our families, our friends, and the world. How long we meditate each day will depend on who we are and our life circumstances. Again, research shows us that 15 minutes is a beneficial minimum, and 30-40 minutes once or twice a day is a beneficial long-term daily practice.

Daily practice means everyday, and every day ideally is every day. But stuff comes up and there are just a days that get missed. Missing a day here and there is not a problem. Five days a week is a good daily practice. You can lengthen the period of meditation or increase the days, if circumstances allow. But be careful not to set a meditation goal that causes you stress and which is longer or more frequently than conditions in your life support. And always use a timer!

#### A Word About the Breath

Much of meditation and mindfulness is about observing or using the breath. We observe the different kinds of breath in meditation. As our practice deepens, we begin to notice we have a great many "breaths." There are, just to list some key ones, long, short, rugged, subtle, fast, slow, constricted, easy, modulated, amped up, barely noticeable, chest, diaphragm, nasal, mouth, noisy, shallow, flowing, halting, satisfying, difficult, unsatisfying, choppy, painful, conscious, automatic, sweet, wheezy, and huffy-puffy breaths. As we further our practice, we begin to notice that each type of breath is associated with a particular mindstate. Long, soft, easy breaths, for example, indicate a calm, peaceful state of mind, whereas short choppy breaths indicate an anxious or angry mind.

When we meditate, we notice that peaceful mindstates and thoughts lead to soft, long breaths and a calmed body. Feeling compassionate, for example, results in our brain syncing our pulmonary and respiratory systems; that slows the breath and heart rate, lowers our blood pressure, and relaxes our body. An angry thought, on the other hand, does the opposite. It separates our pulmonary and respiratory systems, taking them out of sync; our breath shortens, our pulse and blood pressure rise and our body tenses.

This illustrates that what we think directly affects our breath and body. Positive mindstates in a positive, peaceful and calming way, negative mindstates in a negative, stressful, tense way. We observe that to be angry we must have a shortened breath and a tense body.

The implication of this insight is far-reaching. If you are upset, all you have to do is lengthen your breath to return you to a calmer mindset so you can see clearly what is happening and make a mindful, appropriate decision about how to respond.

### Meditations

Meditating by observing the breath is the oldest and most traditional form of meditation, dating back well over 5000 years. The types of meditation we are promoting here, mindfulness meditation, is a practice designed to produce a sense of well-being in the practitioner. Mindfulness meditation, for the serious beginner, is based on *attentive awareness* of the breath and **remembering** to return to the breath when the mind has been distracted or drifted off.

In these meditations, we want to observe and notice and stay attentive to the breath. When the mind drifts off or is distracted, we simply notice the distraction as a distraction (“Ah, I’m thinking.” or “Oops.”) and, without judgment or recrimination, we *remember* to return to observing the breath with attentive awareness.

### What Is Mindfulness?

So exactly what is mindfulness, and mindful meditation?

Mindfulness, whether when meditating or driving a car, is deliberately paying attention to the present moment, non-judgmentally, observing to what we are doing and returning to it when we are distracted. That’s a Buddhist understanding. More about this from a secular perspective in the box below.

#### What Is the Meaning of Mindfulness?

It’s not uncommon for people to equate mindfulness with meditation. It’s true that meditation is one extremely powerful way to practice mindfulness, but that’s not all there is to it.

According to the American Psychological Association, mindfulness is:

“...a moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experience without judgment. In this sense, mindfulness is a state and not a trait. While it might be promoted by certain practices or activities, such as meditation, it is not equivalent to or synonymous with them.”

As we can see, mindfulness is a trait that can be brought on through practice. It’s not static, and some people find it easier to practice than others. It involves awareness—a non-judgmental reflection in the moment.

Kabat-Zinn tells us that mindfulness is to focus conscious attention on the “right here, right now.” It’s a concept that most who practice meditation will already be familiar with, and it’s why the two often go hand in hand.

A more comprehensive definition, then:

Mindfulness is self-regulation of attention so that it is maintained on immediate experience, thereby allowing for increased recognition of mental events in the present moment and adopting a particular orientation toward one’s experience that is characterized by curiosity, openness, and acceptance.

#### Wikipedia

“Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one’s attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment, which can be developed through the practice of meditation and other training.”

#### Mindful Awareness Research Center at the University of California at Los Angeles

“Mindful Awareness is the moment-by-moment process of actively and openly observing one’s physical, mental and emotional experiences.”

#### Psychology Today

“Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present moment.”

#### Mayo Clinic

“Mindfulness is the act of being intensely aware of what you’re sensing and feeling at every moment without interpretation or judgment.”

#### Daniel J. Siegel

“Mindfulness in its most general sense is about waking up from a life on automatic, and being sensitive to novelty in our everyday experiences. . . . Instead of being on automatic and mindless, mindfulness helps us awaken, and by reflecting on the mind we are enabled to make choices and thus change becomes possible.”

#### Jon Kabat-Zinn

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

#### Mindfulness Requires Remembering!

Mindfulness is a practice. When we are practicing, we choose an object, such as our breath, to observe. When we drift off or get distracted, we simply return to the object.

Again, it is the remembering to return to the task at hand, over and over, that is the core of mindfulness. Remembering, therefore, is a key element in mindfulness—remembering to be aware and paying attention to stay there.

## What Is Mindfulness Meditation?

Mindfulness meditation is a dedicated amount of time “sitting” quietly and focusing on a mental object, such as one’s breath. There are many different forms of meditation, here we only consider some of the key mindfulness meditations from, the Buddhist and yoga traditions. These are a mental training practice that is designed to familiarize the practitioner with insights into a way of perceiving phenomena that is patient, compassionate, and generous, and at the same time open curious, and accepting. It involves remembering, as discussed above, as well as observation and awareness.

*All that we are and experience is mind.  
Let’s make the best use of it we can.*

Because it can be hard to find and follow our natural breath, various techniques have been developed over the last 2500 years to make the breath easier to observe, such as counting or reciting a few words with the inhales and exhales or observing certain parts of the breath. These are explained in detail in the meditation instructions that follow. But there are dozens of different way of counting, far too many to list here, all of which will keep you closer to the breath, which is the reason for the counting.

### Types of Breath Meditation

There are two broad types of breath meditations:

1. *Instant Meditations* – These secular-style meditations are usually used for quick relief at times of high stress or anxiety; they are ideal for children who are having anxiety about school and exams, and for adults who are anxiety laden. And
2. *Traditional Sitting Meditations* – These are specific times, usually of 15 to 40 minutes, specifically allocated for meditating. These have a long term aim of shifting our world view in ways that allow us to respond in more peaceful, happy and healthy ways to the people, places, events, processes and things we encounter in our everyday lives.

#### *Instant Meditations*

There are two ways to use these instant meditations. You can do them any time you are feeling particularly stressed or anxious, or perhaps when you feel the first rumblings of a panic attack. This is a quick fix. The other way to use them is to practice them frequently, meaning five or six time (each 3-5 minutes) throughout the day. This has a generalized effect, leaving you calmer and more peaceful, overall, even when you are not meditating.

For most people, it is hard to remember to do something this frequently during the day; our normal daily activities just seem to dominate and distract, and we forget. If you have a timer or

cell phone you can set to ring or vibrate every hour, that would be an ideal way to remind yourself it's time to breath.

You can do these instant meditations when you are stuck in traffic, on hold during a phone call, waiting in line (grocery, carpool, for the car to get an oil change, anywhere), when someone said something that bothers you, when you are feeling particularly stressed or anxious, when you are feeling obsessive. when you are feeling pain, before falling sleep, when you get up and can't sleep. With a little practice, you will be able to do momentary meditations anywhere, standing, walking, sitting or lying down, eyes open, eyes closed, alone or even when you are surrounded by others at a meeting or when the kids are screaming.

#### *“Let Go” Instant Meditation*

*Do three Let-Go Breaths for an instant reset; repeat three times for a total of nine breathes for a deeper calming effect. This is a mental reboot; it can be done anywhere, anytime, in the kitchen standing in front of the sink doing the dishes, sitting at your desk in the office, in the car before you tart the engine, walking to a meeting—anywhere, anytime.*

Take a long slow, deep breath, inhaling through the mouth. Relax your lower belly as you watch the air move downward into diaphragm; let your abdomen contract fully. Relax as you exhale slowly and completely, through your nose.

As you inhale, say “let” to yourself: “l-l-l-e-e-e-t-t-t-t.” Say it so that you hear yourself saying “let” for the entire length of the inhalation. As you exhale, say “go” to yourself: “g-g-g-g-o-o-o-o-o-o-o.” Say it so that you hear yourself saying “go” for the entire length of the exhalation. Repeat three times.

Saying the words “let” and “go” for the length of the inhalations and exhalations helps keep you focused on the breath. This brings extra oxygen into the body, which is a signal to the brain to calm you.

Do a total of three sets of three.

#### *9-Count Deep Breath Instant Meditation*

*In this instant meditation, you take three long slow counted breaths, pause very briefly and allow the calming effect to wash over you; repeat three times for a total of nine breathes. You can do this standing or sitting or walking, anyway, anytime—; it is similar to the Let-Go Meditation.. It only takes about three minutes to reboot with this meditation, and it can be done anywhere, anytime.*

In this meditation, the breath should flow gently in and out, without exertion. Imagine the pace to be as if you were counting slowly “one one-thou-sand; two one thou-sand.” This is very slow, about three to four breaths per minute, rather than our normal 15 or so breathes per minute, or 30 or more breathes per minute when we are agitated, which is why it works so quickly and effectively.

Take a very slow, deep breath, inhaling through the mouth. Count in your head, not out loud, 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9, slowly as you inhale. Exhale to the slow nine count through your nose.

Repeat for three minutes, or nine breaths (a breath being an inhale and its exhale).

This can be a regular daily practice, done three or four times a day to keep you calm throughout the day, or can be used at particularly stressful or anxious times.

### *Two Simple Traditional Counting Breath Meditations*

These are two of the most common forms of breath meditation--simple counting. In this meditation, the breath should flow gently in and out, without exertion. It should feel like a “normal” breath, one that just flows in and out, not a breath that is being controlled. There are several ways of counting the breath in this meditation. Choose whichever seems most comfortable for you and which allows you to be counting with a minimum amount of distractions.

Method One – Counting each full (inhale/exhale) breath: Count in your head matching the numbers to the breath, inhale/exhale 1 – inhale/exhale 2 ...inhale/exhale – 9, inhale/exhale 10. Then count backwards: inhale/exhale 9 – inhale/exhale 8...inhale/exhale 2 – inhale/exhale 1. Then repeat: 1 to 10 and 10 to 1 for the allotted time.

Method Two – Counting each inhale and exhale separately: Count in your head matching the numbers to the breath, inhale 1 – exhale 2 – inhale 3 - exhale 4 ... inhale 9 - exhale 10. Then count backwards: inhale 9 - exhale 8 – inhale 7 exhale 6...inhale2 - exhale 1. Then repeat: 1 to 10 and 10 to 1 for the allotted time.

Like the variation above, this can be a regular daily practice, done for 20 to 30 minutes once to twice a day. It is particularly beneficial as a calming meditation, especially for difficult home and work anxiety and stress.

### *“Breathing In I Am Calm” Instant Meditation*

*Do this 9 times for an instant reset. That will take about a minute and a half. Repeat once or twice more for a deeper calming effect*

Take a long slow, deep breath, inhaling through the mouth. Relax your lower belly as you watch the air move downward into diaphragm; let your abdomen contract and expand fully. Relax even further as you exhale slowly and completely, through your nose.

As you inhale, say to yourself: “Breathing in I am calm.” You should hear yourself saying this for the entire length of the inhalation. As you exhale, say to yourself: “Breathing out I am peaceful.” You should hear yourself saying this for the entire length of the exhalation.

Saying these sentences to yourself keeps you focused on the breath and help shift you to a positive mindstate.

Repeat, for a deeper calming effect, once or twice more for a total of 18 or 27 breaths.

#### *Instant Metta Chant*

*You can repeat this for 30 seconds to a minute, in your head or out loud. Out loud is preferred, but not always practical. When said with meaning and concentration, this short metta chant grounds us in the present moment with an intention that is clear and calm. There is a longer, more traditional metta chant at the end of this section.*

“May I be safe, well, peaceful and happy.”

Developmental and learning research indicates that the final word in a short chant like this is the most powerful, so feel free to resequence the last four words. “Safe” as the last word would be my choice for children with attention, anxiety or fear issues; “well” for someone with health issues; “happy” or “peaceful” for those with affective challenges.

#### Single-Pointed Mindful Breathing Meditations (refer to *A Word About the Breath*, above)

##### *Four-Point Counting Meditation*

*This is a classic, ancient method of counting that makes it relatively easy to stay with the breath by locking an ascending count of four to the inhale and inversely, descending count of four to the exhale. Eventually, the two become so entwined that anytime we need to calm ourselves, we can just start slowly counting and the breath elongates and the mind stills. This four-count meditation is a classic Buddhist beginners meditation, though for many long term meditators, it can be used for years as a stabilizer—it just seems to crop up when we are doing walking meditation or struggling with a thought or feeling, though we might be doing another type of meditation.*

Settle comfortably into a sitting position. Check to see that the posture is alert and that your spine is erect but that the muscles in your shoulders and back are relaxed; feet grounded if you’re in a chair.

Relax and just begin to watch your breath. Notice when you are inhaling. Notice when you are exhaling. Observe the inhalation as an in-breath; the exhalation as an out-breath.

Begin counting: count 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 in sync with the inhalation, count 4 – 3 – 2 – 1 in sync with the exhalation. Continue counting each inhalation 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 and each exhalation 4 – 3 – 2 – 1 for the prescribed time. Inhale and exhale through your nose.

When you notice your mind has become distracted, gently and nonjudgmentally return to counting. Pickup where you think you were on the last count, or just start over with the next inhale or exhale. This isn't about clearing or emptying the mind, as we explained above, but about remembering to return to the breath when we notice we have been distracted.

Continue to the designated time. We strongly recommend using a timer.

### *Short Breath /Long Breath Meditation*

*In this meditation we observe ourselves taking three natural breathes and then one deliberately elongated breath, repeating the pattern of 3 and 1 for the designated time. What we call a "short breath" is a normal breath, whatever is natural, meaning unmodulated, at the time of the breath. This will, of course, change from breath to breath, but whatever comes naturally is a "short breath." A long breath is a breath that is considerably longer and deeper than your short breath; say about 25 to 50 percent longer and deeper. You should feel your body rise as your lungs inflate with the long breath and slowly sink as you exhale.*

Settle comfortably into a sitting position. Check to see that the posture is alert and that your spine is erect but that the muscles in your shoulders and back are relaxed. Feet should be touching the ground if you are in a chair. Relax and just become aware of your breath.

Simply observe your in-breaths and out-breaths for 10 or 15 seconds. Let's call these your "short breaths." Short breaths are simply the way you are breathing at the moment, naturally, with no attempt at control on your part.

Observe yourself taking three short breathes and then take one deliberately elongated breath. Notice the different characteristics of each breath, staying aware of the 3-and-1 cycle.

Remember to return to this pattern of breathing whenever you notice you have been distracted, by a sound or a thought or some other sensory contact.

Repeat three short breaths and one long breath for the prescribed time.

### *Long Breath Meditation*

*In this meditation, we deliberately elongate the breath, just a little, over the course of the prescribed time. This is the beginning of gaining control of our unhelpful and often inappropriate emotions and habitual responses to the people, places and events in our lives that stop us from being present, seeing clearly what needs to be done, and then acting in ways that leave us peaceful.*

Settle comfortably into a sitting position. Check to see that the posture is alert and that your spine is erect but that the muscles in your shoulders and back are relaxed. Feet should be touching the ground if you are in a chair. Relax and just become aware of your breath.

Simply observe your in-breaths and out-breaths for a minute or so, then begin to gently elongate the inhalation; the exhalation will take care of itself. Elongate the inhalation just slightly, just a tiny bit. Continue to observe and watch your inhalations, noticing how the exhalation adjusts itself to the length and strength of the inhalation.

Every minute or two, for the prescribed time, gently elongate the breath another just a little more. Elongate the breath softly and without tightness or exertion.

### *In Breath / Out Breathe Meditation*

*Here we are just observing the breath, noticing its impermanent, every changing nature, and noting the characteristics and traits of the breath, and the differences between the inhale and the exhale. Because the natural flow of the breath is the meditation object here, unaided by counting or manipulation, this is a subtle object of our attention. This meditation works best when we are relatively peaceful starting the meditation, not as a calming meditation for an excited or anxious mind.*

Settle comfortably into a sitting position. Check to see that the posture is alert and that your spine is erect but that the muscles in your shoulders and back are relaxed. Feet should be touching the ground if you are in a chair. Relax and just become aware of your breath.

Notice as the breath goes in and out, in and out. Notice when you are inhaling. Notice when you are exhaling. Observe the inhalation as an in-breath; the exhalation as an out-breath. Just observe.

Observe the differences between your in-breath and your out-breath. Observe which is longer, which is shorter. Observe which is stronger, which is weaker. Observe the changes in length and strength. Continue to observe the in-breath as an in-breathe, the out-breath as an out-breath.

Notice that there is a gap between the in-breath and the out-breath. Observe what happens in the gap. Observe how the breath changes speed, stops and then starts in the next direction.

Sit quietly, gently remembering to let go of any distracting thoughts, without judgment. When you notice a distracting thought, simply remind yourself to go back to observing your in-breath and your out-breath. Remember, this is a process of learning to stay present with your in-breaths and out-breaths; letting go of distractions plays a critical part in how we learn to stay present observing our breath.

Be present observing your breath. Notice when you are inhaling that you are inhaling. Notice when you are exhaling that you are exhaling. Notice if your back is still alert, your spine upright, and the muscles in your shoulders are relaxed. Adjust your posture as needed to help you stay alert.

Notice the gap between the in-breath and the out-breath. Observe what happens in the gap. Observe how the breath changes speed, stops and then starts in the next direction.

Sit quietly, gently letting go of any distracting thoughts, without judgment. Just observing.

Just observe. And remember, when your mind wanders, gently and non-judgmentally return to the breath. This practice is about attentive awareness and remembering, not about getting it right. It is a practice that for most practitioners takes years to do smoothly and with ease.

Continue in this way for the allotted time. When time's up, gently open your eyes and slowly bring your attention back to the room.

### *Beginning and Ending Meditation*

*This simple sounding technique—just noting the beginning and ending of the inhalations and exhalations—requires considerable attention to the breath and most practitioners observe that they are quite calm and peaceful when they do this practice. The insights that arise from this meditation, insights about the meaning of beginnings and endings, insights that arise unexpectedly after the meditation has been practice for a while, can alleviate most of the existential angst that pervades our lives. While this is a single-pointed breath meditation, it is also somewhat contemplative (See Contemplative Meditation below)*

Settle comfortably into a sitting position. Check to see that the posture is alert and that your spine is erect but that the muscles in your shoulders and back are relaxed. Feet should be touching the ground if you are in a chair. Relax and just become aware of your breath.

Notice when you are inhaling. Notice when you are exhaling. Observe the inhalation as an in-breath; the exhalation as an out-breath.

Draw your attention to you inhalation. Notice the beginning and ending of each inhalation. Be aware of the moment when the inhalation begins and the moment when the inhalation ends. Just allow the exhalation to occur naturally. When a distracting thought arises, simply return to watching the start and end of the inhalation.

After ten minutes, shift your attention to the exhalation. Notice the beginning and ending of each exhalation. Be aware of the moment when the exhalation begins and the moment when the inhalation ends.

Just allow the inhalation to occur naturally. When a distracting thought arises, simple return to watching the beginning and end of the inhalation.

After ten minutes, shift your attention to the gap between the inhalation and the exhalation, and the gap between the exhalation and the inhalation. Observe the beginning of the gap and the end of the gap, at the top and at the bottom of the breath. You may want to momentarily hold your breath to see the beginning and end of the gap clearly. Continue to observe the gaps for the prescribed ten minutes. When a distracting thought arises, gently and nonjudgmentally return to watching the beginning and end of each gap.

Inhale and exhale slightly deeper than normal through the mouth. Make the breath audible by gently constricting the back of the throat—loud enough so that you can clearly hear yourself breathing.

Stay attentive to the breath. When the mind drifts off or is distracted, we simply notice the distraction as a distraction (“Ah, I’m thinking” or “Oops”) and, without judgment or recrimination, we *remember* to return to observing the breath. The practice is attentive awareness and remembering—not getting it right all the time.

Continue to listen with awareness for the allocated time.

### **Others Breath Meditations**

#### *Triangle-Shaped Breathing 1-2-3/1-2-3/1-2-3 Meditation*

*Illinois state troopers call it tactical breathing; my yoga friends call it u-shaped breathing. In this meditation we count the inhalation 1-2-3, then exhale to a count of 1-2-3, and finally hold the breath for a count of 1-2-3. In, out, hold; that’s the triangle. Visualize a triangle while you do this meditation, if you wish. Doing this requires a great deal of effort and concentration, so it is ideal when the mind is very stressed or distracted. When distressed, do five to ten minutes. For regular everyday meditation, do 20 to 30 minutes.*

Settle comfortably into a sitting position. Check to see that the posture is alert and that your spine is erect but that the muscles in your shoulders and back are relaxed. Feet should be touching the ground if you are in a chair. Relax and just become aware of your breath.

Inhale to a slow count of 1-2-3, lengthening the inhale as needed. Exhale to a 1-2-3 count. Hold the breath for a 1-2-3 count. Repeat for the allotted time.

It is best to make this flow, not to tighten the windpipe when holding the breath, but just to coast for the 3-count from the inhale to the exhale. Just let the windpipe be still, rather than constricted and locked up.

Repeat this u-shape pattern, remembering to return to the breath if you become distracted, for the allotted time.

#### *Alternate Nostril Meditation*

*This is a traditional yoga practice. You can just sit down comfortably anywhere and do it, or even do it lying in bed. It is a fine way to start or end the day, and it will return you to sleep if you awaken in the middle of the night.*

Close one nostril with the gentle pressure of one finger then exhale and inhale through the open nostril; switch, close the other nostril, and exhale and inhale. Repeat with steady, gentle, long breaths—close the nostril, exhale, inhale; switch nostrils, exhale, inhale.

Stay mindful and aware of the breaths. Keep your attention focused on the breaths and the movement of your fingers closing and opening the nostrils.

Most people find it is best to use one hand, leaning gently on the face (sometimes the elbow on a chair arm), pressing with the thumb and forefinger, rather than using two hands. Whichever works most easily for you is ok.

If you have many distracting thoughts, hold the inhalation for a second or two with a strong focus on it. This will generally strengthen the meditation object (the breath) enough to minimize distractions.

Continue for the allotted time.

### *Mantra Meditations*

A mantra is a short sound, word or even phrase spoken, traditionally spoken in Sanskrit. It's repeated to help keep our mind and body focused on the moment.

Start by whispering it gently, in a contiguous way (without a break between the reps), then say it in your head, to yourself, silently; finally, let it just repeat itself without you telling it to do so. 15 to 30 minutes is ideal for calming. When you notice you have become distracted, like in breath meditations, simply return to the mantra.

Here is a traditional mantra for compassion, the tune (some mantras have traditional tunes) can be learned from the link below:

*Om Mani Padme Hum*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILfj63q5B-k>

### *Silent Illumination*

*This Ch'an Meditation Method description is by Master Sheng-yen, one of the great Ch'an Masters of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. (All of the other descriptions are by DeepDharma's Carl Jerome with various students helping with edits.)*

When you first practice the Ch'an method of silent illumination, it is very simple. You just sit with the awareness that you are sitting. However, as your practice deepens, the method changes to where there is no method to speak of, even as you continue in the state of silent illumination. The silent aspect is achieved when wandering thoughts no longer trouble you. Illumination comes with being acutely aware of what is happening, even as your mind is silent. As your

practice deepens you no longer need to remind yourself to stay on the method. You are just constantly in the state of silent illumination. In this sense, silent illumination becomes a method of no-method.

When you first take up the practice, you still have wandering thoughts, but you are clearly aware of them. The way to deal with them is simply to keep your focus on your awareness that you are sitting. Just stay with that awareness that you are sitting. But isn't this thought that you are sitting itself a wandering thought? Yes, it is. The difference is that this particular wandering thought, "I am sitting," goes in one direction only, has continuity and is constant and consistent in nature. Other wandering thoughts scatter in all sorts of directions, change all the time and have no consistency. They vary widely in nature, content and quality. At first glance they seem to have something to do with you, but on closer examination they are unrelated stuff thrown together like garbage.

On the other hand, when used correctly, silent illumination goes consistently and continuously in the same direction, and effectively lessens and reduces other scattered thoughts. Over time, your mind becomes quieter and clearer. This is certainly not enlightenment, but at least one does not suffer as much from mental burdens, and there is stillness and clarity. The stillness is silence and the clarity is illumination. Yes, this method is still a wandering thought but it is a wandering thought that unifies instead of scatters our mind.

We all want to make progress in our practice. For example, when you set out to journey to a faraway place on foot, every day, you know you are getting closer to your destination. When it comes to practice, it is not always clear from day to day whether you are making progress. Then there is the question of obstacles. Is it possible to make progress in your practice without encountering obstacles? When you climb a stairway, each step up is like an obstacle. You just take the steps one at a time. When you come to a landing, you can look back down and see the progress you have made. Eventually you reach the top. In a similar way, some people may think that every time they go on another retreat, they are attaining a higher level in their practice. Some may even see each day of retreat as progress over the previous day. Then you get to the level of thinking every sitting is progress over the previous one. But making progress in practice is not like climbing stairs.

We practice to lessen vexation and gradually illuminate the mind. But the road to that end, where the environment no longer gives rise to vexation, is marked with obstacles. When you scale a mountain, there is rarely a straight path to the top. More likely, you will encounter twists and turns, rises and dips, objects to get around and over. As you overcome these obstacles, you may get closer, but it is not a straight walk to the summit. As practitioners, we have an ordinary being's body and mind. We can tire mentally and physically. When this happens, it is very difficult to make progress even if you want to keep going forward, making breakthrough after breakthrough.

Therefore, if you are constantly motivated to accumulate positive experiences, the opposite—negative experiences—is likely to happen. Under these conditions, one is likely to feel

frustration. This leads to negative feelings and thoughts like, “This is not for me. I’m not the kind of person who can practice well.” When you try to move forward you meet an obstacle, or find yourself going in circles, or even going backwards. There comes a temptation to give up and leave practice to others.

We need to remind ourselves that the purpose of practice is gradually to leave behind self-clinging and to illuminate one’s mind. Its aim is to slow down and eventually end our struggles to satisfy our cravings and to find complete security. Craving happiness, we make sacrifices to attain it, and this sacrificing causes suffering. The quest for happiness causes our suffering, and to escape suffering we seek happiness. This cycle of happiness and suffering constitutes the ego-centered self.

As for security, we build a wall around ourselves to protect our possessions and our happiness. Over time, this wall gets thicker and thicker, and we lose touch with the self inside the wall, as well as the world outside the wall. This is egocentric. The purpose of practice is to gradually eliminate self-craving and self-protection, so that the ego, the protective wall, slowly fades away until it is eliminated.

The thought of having no self may seem frightening and dangerous, but in fact when you begin practicing you need the self that is already there. Otherwise, you are either in a vegetative state or you just don’t know who you are. In the latter case, you would be a fool. So you start practicing by relying on the vexed self. With practice, the vexed self will become a self of compassion and wisdom. It is not that the self disappears, but that it has been transformed.

One practitioner told me that as a result of practice he felt that his self was beginning to disappear, and that scared him. “Everything else can disappear, but I don’t want my self to disappear! If I disappear I won’t have a girlfriend anymore. I don’t think I want to practice anymore.” I told him that as he practiced, his mind of vexation would transform into a mind of wisdom and compassion. When that happened, he would be more capable of bringing love to others, to his family and friends. Not a possessive love, but rather a love that comes with offering yourself to others out of compassion. As one loves others in this compassionate, selfless way, what one gets back will make one’s life more fulfilling and happier.

So looking at it this way, how do you measure progress in practice? You cannot quantify progress. It’s not like getting paid for work by the day, and every day you work, you put the money in the bank and watch your account go up and up. Progress cannot be accumulated and quantified like this. As you practice, concern about your progress is just another wandering thought, like any other wandering thought. As ever, when you become aware of wandering thoughts, just return your focus to the method and they will leave of their own accord. As you eliminate wandering thoughts, you are at the same time letting go of attachment and vexation. As I said, the method itself is a wandering thought, but one that goes in the same direction and is orderly and consistent. So it is different from the scattered thoughts that bring us suffering and vexation.

Using the method, some may sit well in one period and not be bothered by wandering thoughts. It will be a pleasant experience, and right away they will feel better. After this they will say, "Hmmm, I really like this; I'd like to have one more pleasant sitting." So during the next period he or she is waiting for the pleasant experience to return. In fact, the next sitting may not be as good, or may be much worse. This person became attached to the positive experience and, as you remember, attachment is a wandering thought. As a result of anticipation, this person was not focused on the method of practice. When you attach to pleasant experiences, you are setting yourself up for disappointment.

Think of practice as climbing a glass mountain, very slippery and very steep. To make things worse, before climbing that glass mountain, you cover yourself with body lotion, so you are very slippery as well. Now as you try to climb the glass mountain, you go a couple of steps and slip backward. Nevertheless, every time you slip you try again. This is the attitude you should have towards practice. Every time you go forward, you may fall backward, yet you must keep climbing onto the road of practice. Yes, it is really exhausting, but you keep climbing the glass mountain until the mind that has been climbing eventually disappears. When you no longer cling to the thought of climbing the mountain, your mission has been accomplished. Have you reached the summit? No, but that is not important, because the mission has been accomplished. You may think, "If that is the case, I won't even make the effort to climb the mountain at all, since it's so much work." But that is not a correct view, because before trying to climb the glass mountain you have this self-centered ego. Only through the process of climbing can you gradually eliminate self-centered ego.

Of course, climbing the glass mountain is just an analogy. In actual Ch'an practice, there are two approaches we use to dissolve the self-center. The first is the sudden approach, which is an intense, explosive approach where one keeps pounding at the self-center until it breaks apart. This approach uses a huatou (Japanese, koan), such as continuously asking yourself, "What is my original face?" The purpose of huatou practice is to give rise to a sense of doubt which grows bigger and bigger until, when it finally explodes, one realizes sudden enlightenment.

The second method is silent illumination, which slowly calms the mind until it is completely settled. This is a gradual method where one allows wandering thoughts and vexations to slowly dissipate. You can liken this method to a pool of very muddy water. If there is no wind or activity to disturb the pool, the mud will gradually settle to the bottom, allowing the water to become clear. Like the clearing of the pond, silent illumination seeks stillness and clarity. One keeps letting the mind-dust settle until all of it has reached the bottom. Ultimately, there is no mud, no water, and no bottom. This will be when one realizes enlightenment.

In silent illumination you start with being aware that you are sitting. As you focus on being aware of yourself sitting, and the body sensation itself disappears, you should still maintain the thought that you are sitting. While you maintain this thought, be clearly aware of the environment around you. Be aware that the environment is also sitting with you. After that, you even put down the thought of "I am sitting" so that there is no "I" who is sitting. There is just a clarity that you maintain, but the "I" is not there.

If there comes a moment when you ask, where am I? Is my “self” still there? you have let your method and are involved with wandering thoughts. Just go back to the method, being acutely aware of yourself sitting.

### *Red Ball Visualization Meditation*



*Some people can do this visualization, others cannot. I can `t. Many of my students can. It`s a visual imagery weakness in those, like me, who can `t. It`s not a problem, it is just something some of us, for many different reasons, can or can `t do. If the image of the ball is not crystal clear when you first try, this is not a meditation for you. If you are one of those for who it is, this is a fun meditation—have fun moving the ball around.*

Here’s how to visualize the ball. Sit in a traditional posture, upright but relaxed, and imagine a bright red (vermillion) ball, about the size of a golf ball, suspended in the air roughly 18 to 24 inches in front of your face. In a matter of seconds, you will know if you can do this. If so, make the red ball the single-pointed object of your meditation. If not, just do another meditation.

Focus all your attention on seeing the ball suspended in front of you. Move the ball to the right then left; up then down; spin it clockwise then counterclockwise. “Play” with moving it around to focus your attention on the ball. If it disappears or you get distracted, just return to the ball. Do this for the allotted time.

### *Body Scans*

#### *Full Body Scan Meditation*

A body scan is a form of *Vipassana* meditation that is physically restorative and develops a mindful awareness, which releases tension and quiets the mind. It can be practiced as a guided meditation led by a meditation teacher (live or recorded, see link below), or performed solo by imagining your way through the process.

A thorough body-scan meditation takes from 30 to 45 minutes; a short body scan takes 15 to 20 minutes.

During the scan you systematically move from one body part to the next, with mind-body awareness, noticing the feelings and sensations that arise in each body part as just that, momentary sensations. This is non-judgmental awareness, simply noticing and saying "hello" to

mental and physical sensations you observe, observing them as simply sensations. Then you breathe into the body part until the feelings or sensations dissolve.

To breathe into a body part, inhale normally and imagine exhaling through the body part; visualize the exhalation coming out through the surface pores of the body part. Focus your exhales on the point of your attention, until the feelings and sensation dissolve.

If you are scanning the back of your head, for example, you might observe any feelings or sensation on the back of your head: pressure against a pillow or the floor if you are lying down, tension, hair pulling against the scalp, warmth or cold, pressure, tingling—whatever feelings and sensations you can observe on the back of your head. Just notice the sensations as sensations. Once you have scanned, take a few breaths, inhaling normally but imagining that you are exhaling through the back of your head, through the sensation on the back of your head. As you do this, you will notice that the feelings and sensation dissolve and melt away. After 3 or 4 breaths, scan the back of your head again, shifting your focus to the next strongest sensation, and continue with a few more breaths exhaled through the that sensation until most of the sensations have dissolved. If there is a particularly strong sensation, you may need to repeat this several times until it disappears. Then move to the next body part.

It can be difficult at first to identify feelings and sensations; it is not something we normally do, so you might find that reading through this list of sensations and feelings will help. Also note that the mind will wander; when it does, nonjudgmentally return to the scan and pick up where you were last. Some of the typical wandering-mind patterns are listed below:

### Physical Sensation

Tingly	Burning	Pounding	Airy/breezy	Trembling	Warm/cold
Tight/loose	Shooting	Stinging	Burning	Cutting	Clammy/dry
Soft/rough	Prickly	Pulling	Achy	Vibrating	Dull/sharp
Stiff/flexible	Numb	Pressing	Tense	Soft/hard	None/nothing
Airy/dense	Itchy	Heavy/light	Painful	Relaxed	
Sticky/tacky	Dry/moist	Throbbing	Pulsing	Limp	

### Feelings

Impatience	Irritation	Frustration	Annoyance	Anger	Fear
Worry	Pride	Arrogance	Conceit	Anticipation	Surprise
Wanting to stop	Wanting to continue	Joy	Elevation	Ease	Satisfaction

### Typical Recurring Thought Patterns

To-do lists	Future planning	Worrying about upcoming events	Wishing, hoping, comparing	Evaluating/ Analyzing: over-analyzing	Labeling/ cataloging
Circular thinking	Amping up/ ramping up	Judging/ Self-judging	Recrimination	Imagining past hurts	Rewriting past events

## *The Traditional Body Scan*

Lie on your back, head on a pillow, with your legs uncrossed, your arms at your sides, hands open, and eyes closed.

Start the scan with the head, next move to the torso and arms, then core and legs, and finally the whole body.

Begin by taking a few long, slow, deep but gentle breaths. Just observe that the breath is entering the body when you inhale and is leaving the body when you exhale; then allow the breath to return to normal.

Scanning the head: Draw your attention to the back of your head. Observe any feelings or sensations or tension on the back of your head. Breathe into them until they dissolve. (If you aren't able to observe any tension or feelings or sensations, observe what it is like not to have any feelings or sensation in that body part.) Then do the same with the right side of the head, the left side of the head, and the top of the head. Next, move to the face. Observe the feelings and sensations or tension in the forehead and breathe into the forehead until those feelings and sensations dissolve. Next scan the temples, the brow, and eyebrows. Next, scan the right eye for feelings, sensations, and tension in the eye socket and then the eye lids; do the same with the left eye. Continue the scan with the right cheek, the left cheek, the nose, the tips of the nostrils, the upper lip, the inside of the mouth and tongue, the lower lips and jaw, and then the cheek and neck. Finish scanning the head by observing any strong feelings or sensations anywhere in or on the head and breathe into it until it dissolves. Then take 6 to 8 deep breaths, exhaling through a visualization of the whole head.

Scanning the torso: Scan the upper middle back, right shoulder, left shoulder, mid back, the spine and muscles that run along it, the mid back, the lower back, and waist. Next, scan the chest and breast, the rib and ribcage, the abdomen, belly, navel area, and waist. Then scan the whole torso, from neck to navel, observing any remaining strong feelings, sensations, or tension anywhere in and on the torso, and breathe into them. Finally, take 6 to 8 deep breaths exhaling through a visualization of whole torso.

Scanning the arms: Scan the arms in the same way, first the right, then the left, in this sequence: upper arms: biceps and triceps, elbow, forearms, wrist, hand: palm, top of hand, fingers. Finally, take 6 to 8 deep breaths exhaling through a visualization of the arm.

Scanning the hip: Scan the base, core and hips in the same way, in this sequence: buttocks, right side then left side, pelvis, core, genitals, and perineum. Finally, take 6 to 8 deep breaths, exhaling through a visualization of the waist, hips and core of the body.

Scanning the legs: Scan the legs in the same way, first the right then the left, in this sequence: thighs—quads and hamstrings, knee, calf and lower leg, ankle, top of foot, sole, and toes. Finally, take 6 to 8 deep breaths exhaling through a visualization of the leg, from the waist to the soles.

Finally, scan the whole body: Visualize the entire body, from the crown to the soles of the feet. Take 10 long, slow, deep breaths and exhale through the whole body. Take 3 or 4 more deep, gentle breaths and allow the body and the breath to merge as you exhale. Take another 3 or 4 breaths observing the unity of breath-body. Take 3 or 4 more breaths and allow your body to become one with the earth.

When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to the room where you are meditating – first by listening to the sounds of the room, then by slowly opening your eyes. Give yourself a minute or two to enjoy the peacefulness of simple presence, then bring yourself to a seated or standing position.

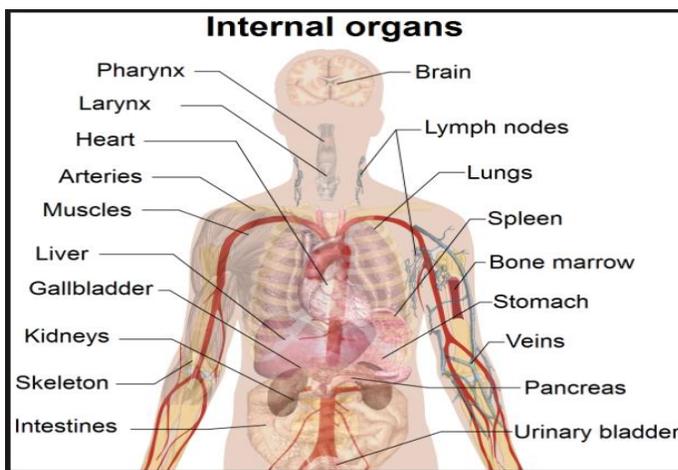
*Jon Kabat Full Body Scan Meditation, (45 minutes) Online Link*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4gZgnCy5ew>

### *The Miracle of Embodiment*

Paraphrasing James Joyce from one of his short stories in *The Dubliners*, “Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body.” That is the address too many of us share. As mindfulness expert Jon Kabat-Zinn says, “Taking the miracle of embodiment for granted is a horrific loss. It would be a profound healing of our lives to get back in touch with it.” This scan is ideal for healing, both you and an internal organ that is misbehaving. It’s not “a cure” for cancer, for example, but it can help you in how you deal with the condition, both mentally and physically. And it is an immune booster. It certainly helps Carl by lightening the burden of his cancer, by turning a perceived threat into a simple, non-threatening condition. The technique was first explained to Carl by Master Jiru at the Mid-American Buddhist Association, a small Chinese monastery near St. Louis.

### *Internal Body Scan*



In this scan, you visualize or imagine five specific internal organs, one at a time, and take six breaths into it. The scan releases tension and stress, restorative in that it boosts the immune system, as well as being relaxing. The five organs to focus upon are the lungs, the heart, the liver, the pancreas, and the kidneys. It may be helpful to locate them on the chart here if your human anatomy is a bit rusty.

Ideally this scan should be done for just 15 to 20 minutes, so you may wish set a timer.

*Alternatively, if there is a medical condition, this can be especially beneficial. Instead of visualizing five different organs, focus for the full 15 to 20 minutes on the organ in question, say the heart if you have atrial fibrillations (afib).*

Lie on your back, head on a pillow, with your legs uncrossed, your arms at your sides, hands open, and eyes closed. Allow your shoulders to soften and your chest to open up.

Begin by taking a few long, slow, deep but gentle breaths. Just observe that the breath is entering the body when you inhale and is leaving the body when you exhale; then allow the breath to return to normal.

Visualize or imagine the lungs. Take six long, slow, but gentle breaths. As you inhale, imagine the breath entering the body through the lungs, then, as you exhale, visualize it leaving the body through all the pores of the lungs. Next, breathe into the heart, then the liver, pancreas, and kidneys. Always use six breaths in this sequence: lungs, heart, liver, pancreas, and kidneys.

Repeat for the allotted 15 to 20 minutes, then gently rest, quietly observing the lightness in your breath and body. When you are ready, slowly bring your attention back to the room where you are meditating – first by listening to the sounds of the room, then by slowly opening your eyes. Give yourself a minute or two to enjoy the peacefulness of simple presence; then bring yourself to a seated or standing position.

#### *Traditional Walking Meditation*

*In traditional walking meditation, we walk slower than normal, either by walking at about half our normal walking pace, but with somewhat more deliberate step taking, or by moving dramatically slower, at about a quarter of our normal pace. In this very slow walking, each step is only about six inches, or half a foot length. The kids I have taught this to call it “Ninja walking.”*

Any slower than normal pace, at which you can walk comfortably, with an alert mind, is alright. Experiment with some different paces until you find one best suited to you. Beware, however, that the pace is slow enough for the walking not to become automatic, but is deliberate and you are fully aware of each step.

Regardless of the pace, you should be standing upright—spine erect but with shoulder and back muscles soft not tense. Let your arms hang naturally, and gently cup your hands in front of your lower belly or navel. The head should be comfortable seating on the neck; your face forward and just very slightly tilted forward so you can be softly gazing down at the floor.

Begin walking. Notice the sensations of the walking. Start by noticing heel and the ball (or toes) of one foot and then the other—especially noticing when the foot is in contact with the ground. This will anchor you help keep you focused on the feet as the meditation object.

Whenever you notice that the mind has become distracted, simply return to the sensations of the walking, observing the feet and reestablishing the awareness of the feet against the ground. Or, breath a little more strongly so the breath is audible and anchor there until you regain awareness of the walking sensations. We all become distracted, often very distracted, so do not judge or evaluate your meditation based on that; just return to the sensation and breath, over and over.

Walking meditation is a good way to train yourself to walk mindfully all the time. We do a lot of walking during the day—down hallways, to and from cars, in stores—and so resetting ourselves to walk mindfully rather than haphazardly immersed in extraneous thoughts, can be a powerful tool in settling us into a more peaceful day and life.

*Thich Nhat Hahn Mindful Walking Meditation, (5 minute) Online Link*

A gently guided, peace and joy Pureland walking meditation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdO1vZJgUu0>

### *Seeing Mindfully*

Here are some general seeing practices: here the object of the meditation is the seeing of a characteristic, like seeing the color green in a spring-time garden.

Seeing color – mindfully looking at color as color, noting different hues and tones

Seeing texture – mindfully looking at textures as textures

Curvilinear seeing – mindfully looking only at curved surfaces and shapes

Rectilinear seeing – mindfully looking only at right angles and the straight lines that form them

Seeing positive space – mindfully looking only at the objects in sight (a tree for example)

Seeing negative space – mindfully looking only at the space between objects (the sky forms the negative space behind a tree)

Seeing borders and boundaries – mindfully looking at edges that form boundaries (water and bank or shore line; tree trunk and soil)

### *Mindful Listening Meditation*

Once you are comfortable with mindful seeing, you can mindfully listen in the same way. Start by just listening to the ambient sounds, then focus on one particular set of sounds: leaves or grasses moving, birds, water lapping or splashing, and finally learning to separate the hearing from the sound being heard. Just allow yourself to focus on the natural ambient sounds of the environment: rustling leaves, birds, water lapping or cascading, etc. Listening meditation can be done indoors, though the quieter the space the more difficult, so find the noisiest room in your house for this practice. It can be done walking or sitting. Avoid practicing in a place where people are speaking, where people are talking. Hearing conversations without attaching to their meaning is very difficult and usually defeats the aim of this meditation. It is just too great a distraction.

Remember to mindfully be with your breath as you listen, if you are sitting, or with your breath and body if you are walking. In a short time, the listening and the breathing will align. Start with 15 to 20 minutes (use a timer), and gradually increase to 30 minutes if your schedule allows.

### *Mindfulness with Driving*

When you are comfortable with your meditating, try applying it to an everyday events, like driving:

Start with short drives, then occasionally and gradually add more frequent and longer drives.

Driving mindfully is about being present with the driving. If we are going to drive when we drive, then there is no eating or drinking in the car, no radio or music, and no talking on the phone—not even hands-free blue-toothing. Mindful driving is just driving when we drive.

When you remove all the other activities, you will notice you are constantly drifting off in thought. It takes considerable practice to drive mindfully, so be patient with yourself. Think of mindful driving as a safe place for learning to be present, in the moment. Do not imagine that it will happen instantly. Whenever you notice you have drifted off, simply return to the act of driving, without judgment or recrimination.

Start by stopping at the car door and taken a long slow deep breath. Look at the door you are about to open; open it deliberately and slowly. Be aware of the sensations you experience as you enter the car. Feel the seat against your body, you feel on the petal and floor. Feel your hands securely holding the wheel. Adjust your posture so that you are upright and alert. Take a deep breath and then start the car. Listen to the sounds of the car starting. When you shift into gear, feel your foot on the brake and your hand on the gearstick.

Maintain an awareness of the bodily sensations that you are feeling as your drive—touching the wheel, the car turning, the seat, the gas pedal and brake. When you have that in place, develop an awareness of the environment as a whole, become aware of the traffic and roadway pattern on your right and left, and in front and behind you. Finally, anchor yourself with an awareness of your breath.

There will be lots of distracting thoughts. *Remember* to remember to let go of them nonjudgmentally, simply returning to the sensations and awareness of driving.

### *Being Mindful with Everything Else*

*Mutatis mutandis* is the Latin phrase meaning that, “with the necessary changes” in wording, this would work the same for any activity—as it does for driving. Substitute showering for driving and be attentive to observing the details of showering—holding the soap or the pressure of the water, etc., and mindful driving becomes mindful showering. In this way, every daily activity or mundane task can be made into a mindful practice. Mindful showering is profoundly difficult! Much harder than driving for most people. And mindful driving is challenging enough.

## Contemplative Meditation

In Buddhism, this type of meditation is the path to non-self, the path to emptiness, the path to liberation. Contemplation is analysis and observation, of a concept, question or condition and simultaneously of Self. Analysis of a phenomenon so that we can see it's true nature clearly. Practice topics are listed below.

Consider the thought you wish to contemplate. Explore it from every angle possible, starting with the broadest and working to the smallest detail. This is a deconstruction process.

Move gently from broadest to more detailed. Go as far as possible in 10 minutes. Allow yourself to roam wherever the subject (here patience is suggested as a starting point) takes you. Gradually working through every possible aspect of the concept or question over several days or weeks (5 to 10 minutes every day or two is enough) until all details have been explored and the issue has dissolved, evaporated, or just disappeared as a result of the deconstruction.

Notice with each contemplation the insights you have developed into your Self, into No-Self, and into your understanding of the ultimate nature of all phenomena.

Here are some key words and phrases to contemplate:

1. Patience
2. Compassion
3. Generosity
4. Permanence
5. Seek nothing
6. There is nothing to attain
7. All difficulties are just *perceived injustices*
8. This human life is most precious.
9. The time of death is uncertain, but death comes to everyone.
10. Everything I say and do and think leaves a karmic imprint.
11. Getting what I want, and getting rid of what I don't want, will not make me happy.
12. Don't make impermanence into a static personal problem.
13. No complaining.
14. All difficulties are just perceived injustices.

## Metta Chant

Chanting can be a form of meditation, when we are focused on the chant, not letting our minds wander, and when the chant leads to insight into the nature of phenomena. Reciting this daily is beneficial in realigning our intentions so we move to a calmer, more peaceful perspective on life. If you have a daily meditation practice, consider reciting this at the end of your meditation. You can recite it to yourself but reciting it out loud has a stronger impact.

Or, you can make reciting this your meditation practice. Just recite it, verbatim, five or six times. With time, you will have memorized the chant and it will arise in you throughout the day. Just look at it then, consider how it would help you be more peaceful, and gently put it down.

May I be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May I be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.

May those whom I love, those whom I like, those who have angered or done harm to me be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May those whom I love, those whom I like, those who have angered or done harm to me be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May those whom I love, those whom I like, those who have angered or done harm to me be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May those whom I love, those whom I like, those who have angered or done harm to me be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May those whom I love, those whom I like, those who have angered or done harm to me be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.

May all beings be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May all beings be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May all beings be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May all beings be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.  
May all beings be safe, well, peaceful, and happy.