

# BASIC MEDITATION INSTRUCTION

Shamatha meditation, known to Vajrayana Buddhists as '**Calm Abiding**', rests the mind by slowing down the rush of thoughts from one to the next. What follows is an increased awareness of our natural wakefulness and a fuller manifestation of our innate, primordial wisdom. We become kinder to ourselves and those around us as well as more firmly grounded in our own lives. This can be achieved by sustained attention to a meditation object and single pointed concentration on breath.



## The 7 Point Meditation Posture

**Legs** Sit in a lotus, half lotus, or cross legged position on the floor. You can also sit in a chair with your legs resting naturally.

**Back** Proper positioning of the back and spine is a very important part of the meditation posture. The spine contains the central wind or energetic channel of the body. Your back should be straight, erect, and relaxed, while not rigid, to ensure that this channel is open. Tibetans often say, "Straight body, straight channels, straight winds, straight mind."

**Hands** Rest both hands on your knees or place your hands in equanimity mudra; right hand in the left, held at the navel with thumbs together.



**Arms** Hold your elbows slightly away from the body forming a rounded appearance when viewed from the front.

**Neck** The neck should be straight and in line with the spine. Your chin should be slightly tucked in; this straightens the spine and opens the central channel.

**Eyes** Focus on the space a foot beyond the tip of your nose with your eyelids half closed.

## The Meditation

While in the seven point meditation posture, bring your attention to your breathing. Touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth and breath in through your nose, out through your mouth. Lightly focus on the sensation of your breath passing at the nostrils and lips. Be aware of how your breathing changes as your state of mind does.

As thoughts arise be aware that you are thinking. Following the thought, feeding it, or suppressing it will keep you from resting in your natural, wakeful wisdom state of mind. Instead, recognize that you are thinking and bring your attention back to your breath while allowing the thought to pass. The practice part of this mind training is coming back to the breath or meditation object. Discouragement is another distraction that will inhibit your meditation. Allow yourself to practice turning your mind away from distraction over and over without the burden frustration.

If you are having trouble maintaining focus in the beginning you can count your out-breaths from one to ten, start over and count again. Once you have stabilized your thoughts you can stop the counting and focus on the breath. As thoughts arise return your mind to breath, focusing on your inhalations and exhalations.

At some point, as you continue to practice, your mind will grower calmer and awareness will start to arise. You may find that your thoughts have slowed down or that your thoughts are still coming, but you will be consistently aware of them and able to bring your focus back to breath. This, too, is awareness. You may find that gaps open up between thoughts and when this happens relax in that gap. With practice, you will be able to make this pause even longer. You will be less compelled by your thoughts and emotions and though they may still arise you will not cling to them as strongly as before.

At this point, one can drop all focus of meditation, when you're ready, and let your mind merge with space. In other words, relax into the spaciousness of your true nature and allow the natural clarity to come forth.

“There are many stages in mental development, but as soon as we are able to maintain the mind in a calm state, at that very moment there is joy and peace. This is reflected in the body becoming relaxed, and then the mind becomes more relaxed. As the mind calms down, the hidden enlightened qualities emerge more and more.” – Ven. Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche

## Shrineroom Protocol

- Please remove your shoes before entering the dharma room.
- Enter early and sit quietly before the teachings or practices begin.
- Please do not lie down or point the soles of your feet to the shrine.
- Please keep all dharma texts off the floor. You may use a small cloth, small table, or any object distinct from the floor to place dharma texts on.
- Please do not sit on, step on, or walk over any dharma texts. This includes any books on Buddhism as well as practice books.

**Tashi Delek and Thank You, The Chicago Padmasambhava Buddhist Center**