

MEDITATION OUTLINE: FOCUS ON THE BREATH

When starting this practice, students are encouraged to practice along with the audio recording *Guided Shamatha Meditation Practice* from 2006 Nyingma Summer Seminar, Talk 11.

I. Preliminaries

1. Sit in the 7 point posture:
 - a. Sit up straight. If you can sit in a full lotus like the Buddha under the bodhi tree, or in a half lotus, that is good. But what's more important is keeping your spine very erect. Sitting on a cushion can be helpful.
 - b. You can join your hands on your lap, or, as in the Dzogchen lineage, put your palms on your knees.
 - c. Keep your shoulders balanced and relaxed—not pulled back too far, and not crunched in.
 - d. For the gaze, with eyes partly closed, look downward about two meters in front of you.
 - e. You can breathe through your nostrils or your mouth. Your head is tilted down a little bit, with your chin closer to your neck.
 - f. Curl your tongue and rest it against the back of your upper teeth. Or, if that's too difficult, just leave your tongue as it is.
 - g. Breathe very naturally. Don't breathe too hard, or too shallowly; and don't hold your breath. If your breath is not natural, it's important to make it so.

2. (Optional) Recite the following:

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA

In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly
I take refuge until enlightenment.
By the merit of generosity and so forth,
May I attain buddhahood for the welfare of all beings.
(*recite three times*)

FOUR IMMEASURABLES

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness.
May they be free from suffering and the root of suffering.
May they not be separated from the great happiness devoid of suffering.

May they dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression, and prejudice.
(*recite three times*)

II. Shamatha Meditation Focusing on the Breath

1. Count 21 cycles of the breath:
 - a. One inhalation/exhalation counts as one cycle.
 - b. When distracted, cultivate a sense of joy that your mind has the capacity to recognize distraction, and then bring your awareness back to the breath.

2. Count the breath another 21 times or simply focus your awareness on the breath.

V. Conclusion

1. (Optional) Recite the following:

DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit, may all attain omniscience.
May it defeat the enemy, wrongdoing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.
(*recite once*)

Emulating the hero Manjushri,
Samantabhadra and all those with knowledge,
I too make a perfect dedication
Of all actions that are positive.
(*recite three times*)