

Meditation Basics

This is a VERY short primer on meditation for those who have never meditated before or are still new to meditation.

Meditation is one of the three basic trainings in Buddhism (along with morality and wisdom practice). Meditation in Buddhism has many purposes, but at its most basic it is a tool and practice to help one get insight into how the mind works and also some basic practice in controlling the mind. A well controlled mind is key to success in Buddhism but also of great benefit in accomplishing all that one wished to do.

Buddhism is about becoming awake. So meditating should be done in an awake or alert state. When you are drowsy or tired, it is a poor time to meditate. If you feel that you are falling asleep while meditating, it is okay to slightly open your eyes and concentrate on a spot about 3 feet (one meter) in front of you.

If you are new to meditation, simply focus on counting your breath from 1 to 10 and repeat. If any thoughts arise, just let them pass and refocus on counting the breath. If you lose track of the numbers, just start again – no problem. The point is to focus your mind and notice how thoughts arise even if you do not wish it. It's not the time to think about your day or what you need to do later, just try to focus the mind and try not to let it get distracted. If you have further questions and there isn't a good time during the class, we be happy to spend time afterward to answer any questions that you may have.

We may also use walking meditations, during a walking meditation just follow the other practitioners if you are new. There is usually not much involved in walking meditation except following the leader. The walking in these meditations can be fast or slow. Just try to match the pace of the leader. Usually during walking you want to focus the mind either chanting to yourself (unless it is an out loud chanting meditation) or some people like to focus on the middle bottom part of their foot as they walk.

We may also do chanting meditations. If we do this, there will be some liturgy handed out so that you can follow along. The exceptions to this might be a simple chant like Om Mani Padme Hum or Amitaba where the few words are simply repeated. If you are not sure of the words or pronunciation, feel free to join in anyway. No one will mind if you don't say it perfectly. It is the effort in meditating that counts, not whether you got the words exact.

If you have any other questions, most everyone else will be happy to assist, just ask!