



A Guided Meditation Shamatha Meditation

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SHAMATHA MEDITATION

Shamatha means a calm abiding state without hindrances. The mind and the body are in this state, and the body is restful.

Most of you have probably experienced this state, so when you practice shamatha, you know you're not just searching through an ocean for some jewel that doesn't exist. That's important. The point of this guided meditation is to get to the shamatha state. Of course, this meditation has to be practiced over and over again, but from the beginning, based on your experience, you will know roughly how to get there.

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. You can join your hands on your lap, or, as in the Dzogchen lineage, put your palms on your knees. Keep your shoulders balanced and relaxed—not pulled back too far, and not too crunched in.

For the gaze, with eyes partly closed, look downward about two meters in front of you. You can breathe through your nostrils or your mouth. Your head is a little bit down, with your chin closer to your neck. 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.

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.

That is the physical posture. Every detail of the posture is significant. They all help clear the energy in the body and calm the mind. So let's first get the posture right.

If there is tension anywhere in your body, instead of trying to fix it, bring your mind there. Relax and let go of the tension with your out-breath. All tensions in the body are created by wind moving through. Bring your mind there, bring your awareness there, and let go of the tension when you exhale. Soon, you'll realize the tension is gone, unless it's a big tension. But even a big tension can be resolved, if you work this way, over and over.

Once you are comfortable in your body and feel that you are settling, start to count your breaths. Count up to 21, counting each out-breath and in-breath together as one. You can count with your fingers on each knee: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Do two rounds of ten, and for the final number use your pinkie again.

Now don't move. Just be there. Check your mind. Is it calmer? Is it in the calm abiding state? Check your body. Is it in the calm abiding posture? If it's still not fully there, you can go back to counting.