

What is Meditation?

Meditation is slowing down the activity of the mind and paying attention to what it is doing.

Random thoughts are constantly entering our mind, staying for a while and then passing.

Our senses receive input, which the mind translates into thoughts and emotions. Most of the time we are not aware that this is happening.

Meditation is training to become conscious of the activity of the mind, becoming mindful.

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MEDITATION:
What, Why, and How

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Why Meditate?

Vajrayana Buddhism does not tell us to renounce people and the pleasures of the world. But it does say that attachment, needing these, is the cause of our unhappiness and that which we create for others. From our attachments arise negative thoughts like anger, greed, jealousy and pride. These feelings might translate into negative words and actions.

When we meditate we observe our thoughts and feelings, seeing them arise and letting them go, not holding on to anything, and relaxing in their passing. We become observer-participants in our inner life.

We see that thoughts and feelings that arise from our attachments can pass without our becoming caught up in them. Then, the obscurations to our true nature of compassion, patience, generosity and ethical conduct dissipate. Our view of our self and the world and others begins to change. This has the remarkable benefit of making not only us happy, but creating positive feelings in others.

Through practice this awareness that we develop in meditation gradually becomes part of our daily life. We notice our thoughts and, understanding that they are our own creation, we can let them go. We have very little ability to affect external

matters, but we have unlimited power to control and change the way we think, what we say, and how we act.

We should have realistic expectations regarding what we can accomplish in our meditation, and understand that dramatic changes in our ability to observe and control our thoughts, words and actions are not likely to happen quickly. The skill will develop gradually, but even in the beginning we can start noticing small victories as we don't respond to difficult situations in a habitual negative way.

How to Meditate

RELAX! If you work at meditating you are going in the wrong direction. Just relax and observe your thoughts bouncing around like monkeys in a tree. It's helpful if you can find a quiet place, but it's not necessary.

-Relax your body. Check for areas of tightness. Body and mind are connected: when your body relaxes, you become calmer.

-Sit comfortably on a cushion or in a chair, with your back straight, your chin tucked in, and your head slightly forward.

-Place your hands cupped together, or on your thighs.

-Your eyes should be slightly open and looking down at the floor just in front of you, or lightly closed if you prefer.

-Touch the tip of your tongue lightly to the roof of your mouth.

-Focus your attention on your breath. Inhale through your nostrils to the count of three...hold it for a split second and s..l..o..w..l..y exhale through your nostrils or mouth.

-Do these in a relaxed way. It shouldn't be work!

-Your mind will wander. That's OK. It's not a failing on your part. Your mind is simply doing what it has done every waking minute of every day, all your life. But now you are noticing it. Now go back to focusing your attention to your breath. Meditation is about noticing, being mindful.

-You will hear sounds. Whether they are birds chirping or people yelling, they simply are just more input that you don't have to pay attention to. Don't think about where they come from, who's creating them. Go back to your breathing.

Meditation may be unfamiliar, and you may become bored and wish the session was over. Be kind to yourself! When you feel that you need to stop, then stop. If you meditate for short periods, even 5-10 minutes, you will gradually become used to it, and it will become part of your life. You will find that watching your mind is a calming experience for longer and longer periods.