

Meditation Foundation - Week 1 – Manual of practice

In order to meditate, you will need to learn:

- How to prepare your body?
- How to relax the body?
- How to sit in comfortable, steady position
- How to come in Serene breathing
- How to calmly witnessing the object traveling in the train of your mind
- How to remain centered and undisturbed in any situation, whether you judge it to be bad or good.

Preparing the body

Cleansing

Take a shower or wash your hands, face will make your body feel fresh, comfortable, relaxed and clean. Empty your bladder and bowels, blow your nostrils.

Knee preparation for sitting Asana

1. Rubbing and warming the knee – releasing the natural oil that allow us better movement, more courage and happy sitting.
2. Strengthen the upper Knee muscle, holding your upper leg, toes in flex, lift your leg up and down * 10-15 time. If you have knee problem do it 3 times a day.

Katas that improve the sitting posture

Every class we will do Kata that reduce the effort from our posture and our life movement, it is gentle movement which directed attention that releasing our body patens and supporting the return of the body to its potential flow.

Asana

One can start the practice with one Asana like baby pose with hands to the front, or any other one that give a good opening of the energy flow to the body.

Body Relaxation

Tense & relax

Slightly tense and relax each part of the body in a systematic way. Can be done in sitting or lying down, also in more yoga asana.

Shavyatra - 31 or 61-points relaxation

Sit or lie down in Shavasana, or corpse posture. Breath deeply diaphragmatically, and just relax all tensions.

Then bring your awareness to each of the following special points. One could feel some kind of physical sensations there, or some kind of energy, all is fine.

1) Space between the eye-browse 2) Pit of the Throat 3) Right shoulder 4) Right elbow 5) Right wrist 6) Tip of the right thumb 7) Tip of the right index finger 8) Tip of the right middle finger 9) Tip of the right ring finger 10) Tip of the right little finger 11) Right wrist 12) Right elbow 13) Right shoulder 14) Pit of the Throat 15) Left shoulder 16) Left elbow 17) Left wrist 18) Tip of the left thumb 19) Tip of the left index finger 20) Tip of the left middle finger 21) Tip of the left ring finger 22) Tip of the left little finger 23) Left wrist 24) Left elbow 25) Left shoulder 26) Pit of the Throat 27) Space between the breasts 28) Right breast 29) Space between the breasts 30) Left breast 31) Space between the breasts

At this point, one can just relax. This is the 31 points of relaxation. If we want to

continue, then:

32) Navel 33) Lower abdomen 34) Right hip 35) Right knee 36) Right ankle 37) Tip of the right big toe 38) Tip of the right 2nd toe 39) Tip of the right 3rd toe 40) Tip of the right 4th toe 41) Tip of the right 5th toe 42) Right ankle 43) Right knee 44) Right hip 45) Lower abdomen 46) Left hip 47) Left knee 48) Left ankle 49) Tip of the left big toe 50) Tip of the left 2nd toe 51) Tip of the left 3rd toe 52) Tip of the left 4th toe 53) Tip of the left 5th toe 54) Left ankle 55) Left knee 56) Left hip 57) Lower abdomen 58) Navel 59) Space between the breasts 60) Pit of the Throat 61) Space between the eye-browse

Then relax there a little bit, feel your entire body as one unit

Serene Breathing Practice

Belly diaphragmic breathing

There are 3 ways to breath, depending on which muscles are activated, the lungs will expand differently in each case:

- Diaphragmatic - Chest - Clavicle

Diaphragmatic is the most efficient, but most of us are not used to it anymore, and we are breathing mostly from the chest.

Two techniques to retrain to breath using mainly the diaphragm muscle (below the rib cage):

- Lying down, one hand on the belly, the other on the chest. Trying to breath only using the belly, and the chest being completely still. This can be done twice a day for 5 minutes each.

- Using Makarasana or the crocodile pose. This forces to breath from the belly, and is like body-building for the belly which has to lift the body.

- Diaphragmic massage in sitting/baby pose/lying down on the belly, we make a fist and locate it in the belly, inhale pushing the fist by expending the belly, exhale allowing the

fist to gently come deeper and support the exhalation to come to the end.

It takes about one month to retrain this behavior. Now once this is done, it is important to have a few other things as well

- Even breathing: One should breathe more or less the same time for the inhalation as well as the exhalations

- No jerkiness: The breath should be as smooth as possible, no multiple inhalations for just one big inhalation, and similarly for exhalations.

- No noise: As silently as possible - No retention of any kind at the top of the inhalation, or the bottom of the exhalation. Initially, just removing the extended pauses is already good.

Nadi Shodhana

One of the most important pranayama practice. It is said that we have 72.000 nadis or energy channels in the body.

Of those, 3 are considered as most important, situated on the energetic body that is juxtaposed to our physical one.

- **Sushumna** is on the spinal column itself, going from the base of the spine to the top in the medulla oblongata

- **Ida** also originates at the base of the spine, and runs on the left of Sushumna

- **Pingala** also originates at the base of the spine, and runs on the right of Sushumna

Ida is the creative, feminine, cooling side, linked to the parasympathetic nervous system (calming), while Pingala is the active, sun side, linked to the sympathetic nervous system (stress related, fight or flight).

An important thing to notice is that we do not breathe the same from both nostrils, but alternate during the day between left and right.

Thus at one time we are more active on the right, and the left barely let air pass, and at other times it is the opposite.

The transition happens about every 90 to 120 minutes in healthy persons.

Now, when we breathe from the left, it is Ida that is active, and when we breathe from the right, it is Pingala. When we breathe from both sides at the same time, then it is Sushumna that is active. But this happens for a very short time.

What we are trying to do through Pranayama is to consciously be able to direct the air in both nostrils, so that we can awaken Sushumna. When we can do that for 5 minutes, we have achieved a great step.

That is harder than it sounds, and takes some time and preparation. To achieve that one needs to first retrain to breathe diaphragmatically, then practice some variations of Nadi Shodhana, then the meditation practices.

There are several variations of Nadi Shodhana. We did 3 of them

Please note that what was said about belly breathing above, still holds true here. Thus it should be diaphragmatic, noiseless, no jerkiness, even breathing, and no retention of any kind.

Put your right hand in Vishnu Mudra. Bend the index and middle finger. We are going to block alternatively the right and left side of the nostrils with the thumb and ring fingers.

Variation 1 find your active nostril, inhale through both, Exhale through Active nostril,

Inhale through active, Exhale through the other nostril x 3 and change direction

Variation 2 Inhale Active Exhale other, Inhale other, Exhale active x 3

Variation 3 – inhale & Exhale through the active x3, inhale & Exhale through other x3

This should be practiced for a few months using the Vishnu Mudra.

One is to do just each one of the above variation on the exact same order. One can take break in between.

Another way it to choose one of the variations, and repeat it 3 times, again with a short break in between. The 2nd time can start with exhaling from the opposite nostril.

After that, one can try the advanced version, which is exactly the same, but without the hands. In this case one needs to focus the attention on the entrance of each nostril. There is no imagination involved though, just awareness of the flow of the air.

Meditation

Sit Still

with no any physical movement for 1-3 minute. When you have uncomfortably, itch, hard breathing, body sensation – try not to react with outside movement, focus on the new experience – that impulse want to react & move and you observe it with no reaction.

Breath awareness

Notice your breath, that is diaphragmatic, noiseless, without retention, without jerkiness and even. Keep your attention in the novel center. Observing the expanding and contracting movement of the belly. Inhale Life Energy. Exhale let go toxin. Keep the attention in your cycling rhythm breathing.

Variation: add a mantra So-hum. That means, “I am that”. That is the Atman, or the soul, it is a mantra that support connection with our core.

One pointed mind

the idea of that we directing our attention & intention, where the attention go the energy flow. It can be a out side point/candle, it can be inside point like mid point of breast, eyebrows, nostril, tip of through, tip of the middle fingers, etc. It can be, as well an task to follow.

Count

Sit still, count from 0 to your age and back to 0, the focus is on the count and not on the breathing in this practice, if you lose it come back to the last point you where there. You can also bring the intention to light each cycle in your time line.

Sushumana Awakening Meditation

- Concentrate on the point between the nostrils. This is called the Nasagre point. Try to feel the air going there.
- You should feel if the air comes from the right or left nostril. When it blocked or less air comes from one particular side, try to subtly change the flow to breath more to that one so that it opens up, when it opens up, go back to breathing from both nostrils simultaneously and even as much as possible.
- It's like the stirring wheel of a car, if the wheel turns to one side but we want to drive straight, we turn to the opposite direction.
- After some practice, this should become easier.
- Try to feel the air inside the nostrils canals also, putting your attention to breath evenly from both sides.

Remain centered in daily day

Entering an event

Bring your intention to any action and interaction during your day, focusing on the purpose, on why you do so. Example: cleaning the house: I am making love possible. Bringing attention to your breath, to your body posture, to your body sensation, acknowledge any phenomena that is there. Like: pain, fear, thought, weakness

Focus on the experience

When you feel trigger or uncomfortable in any reason in an event. Recognize it, observe your body reaction, What you want to do (fight, flight, freeze, friend..)
Move your attention from the object, the matter, to your experience. Acknowledge your experience. Example: from "my friend is blind" to "I want to be seen".
That will bring you back your field and keep you centered.