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INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION – WEEK 1

MEDITATION OVERVIEW

1. The two components of Buddhist meditation are:

- a. Tranquility meditation – for concentration and calmness
- b. Insight meditation – for understanding and wisdom

These two components work together like the two wings of a bird.

2. In this course we will use a basic method of meditation. The stages are called: *Present-moment awareness, Silent present-moment awareness, Silent present-moment awareness of the breath and Full sustained attention on the breath.*

Without expecting instant results one is willing to patiently train the mind. One is ready to invest some time and be prepared to learn from whatever difficulties one encounters.

METHOD

For **tranquility meditation** our primary aim is to calm the mind by learning to sustain our concentration on one thing. Here we use the natural flow of the breath as the object to focus our attention.

- a. Set a definite time for the duration of the period of meditation, e.g. 20 minutes
- b. Sit with correct posture
- c. Close your eyes and resolve to sit still for the duration of the period of meditation, letting go all other concerns.
- d. Then direct your attention to what is going on right now, in the present moment. This is the *Present-moment awareness*.
- e. Let go of everything around you and allow a feeling of solitude and silence to arise, just as if you are alone surrounded by empty space. This is *Silent present-moment awareness*.
- f. Now focus the attention on the natural flow of the breath, experiencing the sensations of the breath, taking interest in each inhalation and exhalation, from the beginning to the end, knowing the quality of breath, whether it is short or long, coarse or fine, regular or irregular but do not control the breath. Fully experience one breath at a time. This is *Silent present-moment awareness of the breath*.

g. Next we experience the *Silent present-moment awareness of just the breath*. We are there in the present moment with the breath throughout the entire breathing cycle, from the very first moment of the in-breath to the very last moment of the out-breath.

This is *Full sustained attention on the breath*.

h. One way to help the mind to stay with the breath may be to count at the end of each inhalation and exhalation. When the mind becomes calm and is staying with the flow of the breath then one can dispense with the counting.

i. Whenever the mind forgets the breath and becomes preoccupied with some other activity or object (such as remember the past, planning the future, day dreaming) then just know what the mind is being distracted by stop and gently re-establish attention on the breath. Continue to do this with patience and alertness whenever distracted.

j. When the time for the period of meditation is over, sit still for a while and reflect on what you did during the meditation and what you experienced so that you can learn how to bring the mind to peace more easily and quickly next time.

The mind is indeed difficult to restrain, restless and clings to objects of pleasure but it is good to restrain it. The restrained mind is the source of joy. The mind is extremely subtle and its nature is hidden. A wise person should govern the mind for a mind thus governed is a source of joy.