

SIX MINDFULNESS MEDITATIONS

Geshe Thubten Sherab "Four Close Placements of Mindfulness (Teaching #1) Tuesday 30 Jan. 2018
From notes taken off the recording by Miffi Maxmillion

Meditation 1 - Counting

Observe our breath, as we breath in and out, naturally, normally, without trying to take it deep or slow it down, but just allow the normal natural breath. At the beginning when you inhale, simply being aware you are inhaling, and as you exhale, simply being aware you are exhaling.

With each in and out, then you count in your mind, one. Inhale, exhale, being aware, and then count two. Up to ten. Without your mind wandering, without distraction, your mind focussed. Then again start from one to ten. Especially at the beginning the counting helps. As we progress more we don't need to count. Counting helps our mind to be more engaged, if you don't engage there is more chance of our mind wandering. So this helps to focus the mind.

Doing the ten without less, more or mistakenly, and with total mindfulness. If you count more than ten, at the beginning we set our intention to observe up to ten, we've set up our motivation from the beginning, so we stop at the ten, we are training our mind, to have control over our mind. Then set new intention and count one to ten. If you count more than ten then is danger of distraction. Less than ten is danger of laxity dullness. To be free from these, just keep to the number as it is, ten.

As we do inhaling, exhaling is one, but if we count this as two it is an obstacle. If we get mixed up and think we are inhaling but we are exhaling, then that is mistaken. So being free from these three faults. In this way we train from the very beginning.

This is the first step, like everything else, training your mind, let it follow as you intended. Slowly try to get a grip on your mind, control it. Then after a time you can direct where you want to, when you want, in whatever manner you decide. At the moment we are unable to do this because we don't have control over our mind.

This is training to have a grip on the mind, and also to be able to focus more, to have deep attention without distraction or dullness. Also when we can just keep our awareness attention onto the breath, then all other thoughts start to dissolve, so in this way we start to quiet our mind. At the moment our mind is running everywhere, but when we bring all our attention to one object, our thoughts start to dissolve, our mind becomes quieter, and we are able to find more peace.

Meditation 2 – Scanning up and down

While you breath in and out, observing inhaling and exhaling, observing mindfully without distraction or laxity. Noticing the breath going through your nostril to your throat. From throat to chest, heart. From that slowly down towards your navel, then towards your hip, then your thigh, then leg and down to the toe. Like scanning the body, as we breath in and out, slowly the breath going in and down.

Then after the toes, your breath goes into the ground. Visualise the breath as big at first, then as the size of one foot is small, then very small one. When you dissolve, coming from the ground then toe to the leg, leg to the thigh, thigh to the hips, hip to the navel, then to the chest heart, the throat, and the nostril. While you are breathing in and out, scanning your body downwards and then upwards. Slowly, slowly. Feeling the breath going down step by step, then coming up slowly.

Meditation 3 – Scanning physical sensations

Try to think that your body is stacked, and you are scanning from the top of your crown to the toes. While you are breathing in and out, keeping your mindfulness, and seeing your air or breath into your brain, skeleton, forehead, nose, inside. You are scanning each part of your body, around cheek, around mouth, the neck, the upper part, and going inside each part of your organs, muscles tissues, going very slowly, until you reach the bottom of your toes. Then slowly from the very toes, back upwards. Scanning your whole body, don't rush, but take time to scan clearly.

By doing this we learn to slow down our mind as well. When we scan very slowly, it's training. Our mind want to rush, that's our habitual mind, so taking time to slow down and scan well, and feel it slowly going, develops concentration, mindfulness, but also learn to slow down. Through control and training, then we can slow down when we chose. At the moment we don't have that control.

When we scan the body from the very top, try to feel the air going down, then feel whatever sensation that is happening. Observe or feel whatever sensation. Sometimes it might be pleasant , sometimes unpleasant, sometimes there might be a feeling of tightness in your body. Observe that, recognise it. Sometimes there is relaxation in certain part of your body, be mindful of that.

Sometimes there is warmth in our body, sometimes coolness. So whatever different sensation, we scan our body, at the same time whatever sensation we feel, being observant and mindful of that. Especially if you observe tightness in a part of the body, in the muscles, try to relax that part a little. Visualise breath and light going in that area, and relax that tightness. Also sometimes our position or posture is tight , so adjusting our position a little, making it a little more relaxed. If its needed to relax a bit, do whatever helps to relax. So basically you are scanning the body, and at the same time being aware of whatever sensations of happiness or pain are in the body.

Meditation 4 – Subtle elements

Even our breath, it's not just air, but it is also in the nature of very subtle matter, made out of the four elements. Being aware of that, it is going detailed and deeper, more subtle. Seeing that even the breath we are breathing in and out, is really a combination of the four elements. Observing and recognising that.

All the minds and mental factors that are supported by that. When they are present there is the five aggregates, so in our mind recognising that.

Meditation 5 – Loving kindness light

Then while you try to observe your breath as you inhale and exhale, try to transform your mind into virtue, and trying to keep that virtuous mind mindfully with single-pointed concentration.

Sometimes you could think that as you inhale you inhaling all loving kindness compassion from all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and when you are exhaling you are breathing or all your loving-kindness and compassion.

First you focus on the breath inhaling and exhaling, then with that you try to inhale positive thoughts such as loving-kindness and compassion, and as you exhale send that to others. When you have that feeling of loving-kindness and compassion, try to hold that feeling single pointedly, without distraction or laxity.

Meditation 6 – Continuity and rhythm of the breath

While we do the breathing meditation, not only being aware of the breath, sometimes our breath is longer, sometimes it is short. So being aware when it is long, that we are taking a long deep breath. And when it is quick, being aware of that. Being aware of the many different changes of the breath. Recognising whatever is happening.

Those are some of the practice in relation with the breath, which is a mindfulness practice in relation with our body that is described in the *abhidharma-kosha*.

Extra Meditation 1 – Dispelling negative emotions

And if we use visualisation, we can use that. If we Are dealing with negative emotions, anger for the instance, something has disturbed you. While keep mindfulness on the breath, at the same time as you breath in visualise you breath in the antidote of that anger, which is loving kindness and compassion, in the form of white light. You breath it in, the breath pervades your whole body, all inside is filled with loving kindness and bliss. And as you breath out, breath out your hatred, resentment, self-doubt, low self-esteem, whatever negative emotions you are dealing with. While you breath out, visualise that whatever is bothering you, you breath out in form of black smoke, something dark. Then breathe in the antidotes that counter those negative emotions. This is another way to use the breathing as a tool in dealing with negativity.

Extra Meditation 2 - Taking and giving

We can also use the breath for practice of tong-len, taking and giving. First concentrate on the breath for a while. Then contemplate the suffering of others, then as you breathe in you take their suffering, and when you breath out you visualise breathing out and sending your virtues, happiness and excellence and whatever the others need.

That is how we can use the mindfulness on the breath.