



RECOVERY DHARMA

Impermanence Meditation

Sit in a comfortable but attentive posture, allowing your back to be straight but not rigid or stiff. Feel your head balanced on your shoulders, allow your face and jaw to relax, with arms and hands resting in a comfortable position.

Be attentive to what's happening within your own awareness, right here and right now, without judgment.

As you sit, begin to notice the sensations of breath. Pay attention for a moment to how your abdomen moves on each in-breath and out-breath, the movement of air through your nostrils, the slight movement of your chest and shoulders.

Find the spot in your body where the sensation of breathing is most vivid, whether it be your abdomen, your chest or your shoulders, or the movement of air through your nostrils. Try to keep your attention at that spot.

As you breathe in, be aware of the in-breath; as you breathe out, be aware of the out-breath. Simply observe the breath going in and the breath going out.

You will notice your attention shifting away from the breath from time to time. It's perfectly normal for thoughts to wander into fantasies, memories, worries, or things you need to do. When you notice your mind has wandered, try to meet it with a spirit of friendliness. You don't need to do anything about it. There is nothing to fix. Rather than forcing it, just try to allow yourself to become curious about what it's like to be breathing right now, and you'll find that the attention is naturally drawn back to the physical sensations of breath as it moves through your body.

[Three minutes of silence]

After building a foundation of calm attention to the breath, you may wish to expand your awareness to include a range of other arising and passing phenomena.

You may notice sounds arising; or smells, tastes, physical sensations or sights—even behind closed eyes.

[Pause]

Rather than engaging with the content of these sensations, try paying attention to the process of their arising and then of their passing. Notice that the sensations appear, disappear, or simply change. Notice how the flow of experience is constantly changing. Nothing stays quite the same; nothing is quite certain.

[Pause]

If, at any point, you find yourself being carried away by a particular experience—like the sound of traffic, or a smell or taste—try to take your focus back to the breath and then gently return your attention to the process of change.

[Three minutes of silence]

From moment to moment, everything in our experience is changing. Sensations come and go.

You may also notice the arising and passing of thoughts, feelings, and emotions .

[Pause]

Again, without engaging with the content of the thoughts, emotions, and sensations, try to pay attention to the process of their arising and passing. Notice the constant change in experience from moment to moment. A memory may be followed by an ache in the leg; the ache in the leg may be followed by a question; the question may be followed by a burst of anger, and so on. Notice how each of these experiences comes, goes, or changes.

Sensations, thoughts, and emotions are part of the flow of experience. Try not to be distracted by their content or how important they may seem; simply be aware instead that they come and go, that they are temporary, impermanent.

[Three minutes of silence]

Observing this constant changing of experience, noting one altering experience after another, you may consider how ultimately satisfying any of the sensations, thoughts or emotions could ever be.

Will this experience last? Is it changing?

Is it pleasant now? Will it always be pleasant?

[Pause]

Is this one pleasant now? Will it always be pleasant?

[Two minutes of silence]

Is this experience you? Is it personal? Is it certain in every moment? Do you truly identify with this experience, or is it something passing, changing, impermanent?

[Pause]

And this one?

[Two minutes of silence]

As this meditation comes to an end, recognize that you spent this time intentionally aware of your moment-to-moment experience, building the capacity for opening the senses to the vividness, to the changing, to the vitality of the present moment, expanding your skill to be curious about, and open to, whatever presents itself, without judgment.

Then, whenever you're ready, allow your eyes to open and gently bring your attention back to the space you're in.