

Meditation 2

General points about the course

In this course we shall be exploring together various ways of approaching meditating. You will gain most if you explore the ideas during the week, for example by using the meditation diaries.

If you miss a week, it is helpful if you can let me know beforehand, either by phoning the Buddhist Centre or by sending an email to sagaraghosa@ntlworld.com. If you give me your email address then I can send you the diary for the coming week, any handouts and let you know what we are exploring this week.

Meditation diary

The meditation diary is to help you track progress in your meditation in the coming weeks and to help you learn more about yourself. Try to fill it in every day. Notice that there are only six days on each sheet so you can have a day off if you want. If you don't practise, then cross off that day.

It is probably helpful to allow a few minutes after your practice to reflect on anything you have noticed or learnt and then make a note of it. We shall have some time reviewing each week and you may find this sheet useful for that as well.

It is worth taking the time to prepare well rather than rushing into a longer meditation session. You may find it helpful to spend 5 to 10 minutes preparing, 15 to 20 minutes meditating, and about 5 minutes afterwards reflecting on what you have noticed and learnt. If you want, you can use meditation CDs to help you, either following the led practices or using the tracks with just bells and silence.

Mindful moments

It can be helpful to increase your mindfulness throughout the day. Each week there is a suggestion for mindful moments. This is an idea for a mindfulness practice that can be taken into your everyday life. You may like to try out the ideas and see if they make a difference to your meditation practice, or indeed to the rest of your life.

Suggested reading

The breath Vessantara (a clear and practical guide to the mindfulness of breathing practice)

The heart Vessantara (a clear and practical guide to the metta bhavana meditation)

Wildmind: a step-by-step guide to meditation Bodhipaksa (based on a successful on-line teaching resource)

Change your mind Paramananda (a best selling introduction to meditation)

Meditation the Buddhist way of tranquillity and insight Kamalashila (a comprehensive guide to the theory and practice of Buddhist meditation)

Our acts of voluntary attending, as brief and fitful as they are, are nevertheless momentous and critical, determining us, as they do, to higher or lower destinies.

William James

Meditation 2 – Setting up

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. Seneca

This week we are focusing particularly on setting up the meditation. It is worth taking the time to prepare well rather than rushing into a longer meditation session. Try to find out what you can do when setting up that helps with the formal practice. Aim to spend 10 to 20 minutes on the formal practice.

	Practice	What I noticed or learnt
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Pay especial attention to your posture. What happens to your posture during the meditation?</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Spend some time at the start of the session bringing awareness to any sounds you can hear and focusing on the qualities of the sound.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>Work out an order in which to bring awareness to the sensations in different parts of your body in turn and end with awareness of your whole body.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>After becoming aware of your body, bring awareness to your mood or feeling tone.</i>	
Day: When and how long	Mindfulness of breathing <i>If you notice any tensions in your body, make them the object of your attention for a while. What happened?</i>	
Day: When and how long	Metta bhavana <i>Before you start meditating, bring to mind why you are meditating and how you are going to practice in this session.</i>	

Spend a few minutes reviewing the week and make a note of anything you have learnt.

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Mindful moments Every time you are waiting, for example, before a meeting, in a shop queue or for a computer to boot up, bring awareness to the sensations of breathing.