

Initial Meditation Instructions

1) Posture

- a. Sit in such a way that you can be reasonably comfortable with your back straight for the duration of the sit, whether you sit in a chair or on a cushion on the floor. If you choose the latter, you may want to experiment with different cushion configurations and/or meditation benches so that your knees, sit bones, and back will be properly supported and as comfortable as possible. When using cushions, many people find it helpful to have their knees positioned lower than their hips. Note: Sitting like a yogi in full lotus is not at all necessary for meditation!
- b. Get your back, neck, and head in alignment, front-to-back and side-to-side.
- c. Your eyes can be open or closed, though closed eyes are recommended at first.

2) Relax

- a. While maintaining a straight back, relax your shoulders, jaw, abdomen, face, and/or anywhere else that you tend to hold tension. Scan your body to see if you can find any other tension that you can release.
- b. As much as possible, relax your mind. Take some moments to appreciate the fact that you're gifting yourself the upcoming time away from all the usual tasks and worries of your life. Tasks and worries will almost certainly still arise in your mind, but these next moments are meant to be a time when you need not engage with those thoughts.

3) Intention and Breath

- a. Resolve to practice diligently for the entire meditation session, regardless of how it goes.
- b. Breathe through your nose as naturally as possible without trying to control your breath.
- c. Turn your attention to the sensations associated with breathing around your nostrils and upper lip. Another option is to center your attention on the sensations associated with breathing in the abdomen. See which of these is the easiest for you to focus on and then stick with that one, at least for the sit at hand. The set of sensations that you choose will be your meditation object.
- d. Rather than focusing on these breathing sensations by excluding any others,

allow your attention to stay centered on your meditation object while your peripheral awareness remains relaxed and open to anything that arises within it (e.g. sounds in the environment, physical sensations in the body, etc.)

- e. Try to keep your attention centered on the sensations of breathing at the nose or abdomen for as long as possible.
- f. *Inevitably*, your mind will get distracted and drift away from your intended meditation object. As soon as you recognize that this has happened, take a moment to appreciate the fact that you have remembered your intention to meditate, and give your mind an imaginary “pat on the back.” Though you may have a tendency to judge yourself and feel disappointed for having lost your focus, doing so is counterproductive. Mind wandering is natural, and the important act in this case is not the losing of focus but rather the remembering and returning to your focus. Thus, do your best to reward the mind for remembering its object and positively reinforce such behavior.
- g. Having done so, gently re-center your attention on the meditation object.
- h. Repeat step 3 until the bell sounds!

4) Length of sit

- a. Thursday night meditation sessions last for 45 minutes. For many beginners this can feel like an extremely long time. That’s okay—just do the best you can. If you feel like you need to readjust your position, open your eyes, or pause, that is perfectly fine: just do so as mindfully and quietly as possible. When at home, you can find a time that works best for you. Start small and keep increasing the length of your meditation sessions, as you are able.

5) Moving Forward

- a. Having tried this practice out several times, next turn to the “Preparation for Practice” handout (available at www.dharmatransure.org under “writings”) for further guidance.