

Quick Meditations for Quieting the Mind

By Kathy Wesley; taken from the book “Taming the Tiger” by Ven. Akong Rinpoche. Last revised 3.9.16

These meditations can be done anytime, and just about anywhere. They are helpful for introducing people (Buddhist or non-Buddhist) to a meditation that is simple and yet effective. They also are good “first aid” practices when we are feeling upset or overwhelmed.

Step One: Sitting

Sit quietly in an environment conducive to peacefulness—in nature or in your home. Sit in a manner that is harmonious and balanced—preferably with a straight back, or lying (supported or unsupported) on your back on the floor.

Step Two: Relaxing

Breathe in deeply to the count of five (or four or six, whatever comes naturally).

Hold the breath for a count of five (or four or six)

Breathe out for the count of five—through the mouth, as this gives a more complete release of tension. Do not hold after the out-breath, but continue naturally to the next in-breath.

With each out-breath, visualize all tension flowing out, like emptying a pot of stale water, and let the mind go free.

Repeat at least three or four times.

Once you have done Steps One and Two, you may do either of the following two meditations (or both) for the bulk of your session.

Step Three: Feeling

First, we “establish the situation” by feeling our body’s contact with the floor, noting where there is the most pressure, and sensing the slight movement that comes with breathing.

Second, we feel the sensations of the body in more detail, beginning with the feet. Feel any sensations in the toes and the feet (notice left side and right side together). Then move up through the feet, feeling sensations (cold, warm, heavy, tingling, dull, sharp,

throbbing, floating, etc.)—just noticing—not getting involved in telling stories about the feelings, but rather just feeling them.

Then we continue up the legs to the hips. Then, starting with the fingers, move up the hands and arms to the shoulders. Then, go from the base of the spine and gradually upward, vertebra by vertebra, not telling stories, simply feeling without labeling or analyzing.

Continue up the neck and throat, feeling inside and outside. Then up into the mouth. Travel with awareness through the various parts of the face and head, inside and outside, letting the attention come to rest at the very top of the head in the center.

Then reverse the flow of attention but let the mind move quite a bit more quickly. Imagine the body hollow and filled with water. The plug is pulled at your feet and the water drains out—follow the line where the water would be from top to bottom, feeling the fields of sensation at each level rather than taking the body part by part. When you reach your toes again, bring your attention to the natural movement of the breath in the body as a whole; simply watch the movement of the breath, in a relaxed unfocused way for the rest of the session. At the end of the exercise, stretch the body very completely.

It is important that after each sequence of moving attention from feet to the head, the flow is reversed moving from the head to the feet.

Step Four: Openness

Focus only on the outbreath.

As you breathe out, imagine a gate opening, out into space. See all of your thoughts and feelings flow through it. Feel that this continuous flow of thoughts, emotions and sensations, whatever its original form, changes into universal compassion in the form of golden light as it passes through the gate. Think that this universal compassion flows to all who live. Feel that this light of compassion fulfills the needs and wishes of everyone.