

Why Do You Meditate?

Meditation:

BELL BELL BELL

Body like a mountain. Breath like the wind. Mind like the sky.**

BELL...stop.

Body like a mountain.*

Allow your body to *adjust itself* to a *natural* alert sitting position— straight, stable, relaxed and present.**

Natural sitting is not tense or strained. Let your body sit like a mountain, effortlessly still.**

Sitting naturally—present, alert, strong, not leaning against anything— reflects your confidence in your intention and ability to rely on your own Buddha nature.**

Return again and again to the natural straightness and stability and ease of the body.**

Body like a mountain.**

BELL.....stop

Breath like the wind.*

Don't try to control the breath.*

Breathe free like the wind, open, unfettered**

Let your *body* do the breathing; it knows what to do.**

Return again and again to the natural easy flow and rhythm of the breath**

Breath like the wind.**

BELL.....stop

Mind like the sky.*

Feel the natural straightness in your body and the natural flow and rhythm of your breath.*

And sit, intentionally, just experiencing the breath coming in and going out.**

When you realize (after a few seconds or minutes) that you have become involved in a feeling, a thought, memory, or an image or you're feeling dull or sleepy, breathe out and bring your attention back to your breath.* No drama. No judgement.*

You might notice that as soon as you recognize your distraction it disappears. All that remains is to return to awareness of the breath.**

Mind like the sky, open and clear, including but not *disturbed* by thoughts, feelings and sensations.*

Our aspiration is to cultivate *awareness* so that it becomes a natural and uncontrived aspect of the very way we live our lives.**

Mind like the sky. **

BELL.....stop

The essence of meditation is returning to what is naturally already there— and *resting*.*

We return our attention to the natural straightness and stability and presence and ease of the *body*— and rest.***

We return our attention to the natural *flow and rhythm* of the breath— and rest.***

We return our attention to the natural *awareness* of the breath — and rest.***

Meditation is not *holding* attention on the breath; it is placing attention on the breath and *resting*.

Over and over again. ***

BELL.....stop

Sit like a mountain.* Breathe like the wind.* Mind like the sky.*

BELL BELL

Small bell to stretch

Walking Meditation

BELL to stand, bow to each other

Thay offers us instruction for our walking meditation

He says, "...you may like to practice slow walking meditation. You breathe in, and you make one step. Bring attention to the sole of your foot. Become aware of the contact between your foot and the ground. And say silently, *I have arrived*.

Invest 100% of your body and your mind into the step. Stay in that first step until you have fully arrived in the moment.

Running has become a habit in our body, our mind, and our consciousness. We can create *another* habit, of arriving and stopping, to counter that habit of running.

This practice of slow walking meditation is one of the methods to form a new habit."

BELLS

Silent Sitting Meditation

Thay offers us instruction for our silent sitting meditation. He says,

There is nowhere to arrive except in the present moment.

Why Do You Meditate?

BELL BELL BELL

Homage to Thay: We offer gratitude to our beloved teacher TNH who teaches that meditation is an opportunity for us to be still so that we can look deeply into the nature of reality... and see a way out of suffering.

We bow in gratitude to our teacher.

TALK

We know that we suffer. And we believe that if we try hard enough and long enough, we can figure out how to *change* the people and the things that make us unhappy, uncomfortable and pissed off.

So what we usually do is try again and again and again to solve our suffering by

getting rid of it or
running away from it or
trying to improve the character of the folks and the situations
which we think are the cause of our unhappiness.

It's goofy. It doesn't work. But that's what we do.

Most of us don't buy it, but the Buddha teaches that the only way to put an end to your pain and your dissatisfactions is to work with your mind. Your own mind. Not somebody else's. When some one is bugging you, some thing is irritating you, or you have a physical pain—the Buddha said, don't try to change him, her, them, it...because the only thing you can do to relieve your suffering is— to work with your mind.

Studying doesn't fix things. Dharma talks don't fix things. Having temper tantrums... Using logic... Sitting quietly on your cushion planning what you're going to do for the rest of the day doesn't fix things. Fussing at yourself, criticizing yourself doesn't fix things.

Working with your mind is the only way you can begin to release your unhappiness and feel content.

That's not what we want to hear, but, according to the Buddha, it is the Reality.

Grouchy people will come knockin at your door.

Stupid politicians will enact laws that you disagree with.

There will be days when your sweetheart does not smile.

Potatoes rot. Children cry. Backs ache. Hair turns grey or falls out.

You will never reach the point where, if someone you love dies, you won't feel grief.

Even Thay has moods. And...The Buddha's Number 1 Noble Truth is "You will suffer."

So according to the Buddha, to *prevent* or *transform* suffering, you must "Work with your mind."

And the best way to work with your mind is in meditation.

It is in meditation that we train ourselves in the qualities we need to be successful in our relationships and in the situations that arise in our lives.

We actually *rehearse* these qualities—*practice* them— on the cushion. Then when we go to wash the dishes or have a conversation with someone we're in conflict with, or sit with a dying parent, or write a difficult email, or enjoy a meal, or play with a child—we've already practiced, in meditation, the skills we need to do those things well.

So meditation is **a preparation** for life. For me, meditation is like a safe, private **school** where I can learn and experiment, practice with the **life qualities** I want to cultivate.

How do we work with our minds? Let's look at 5 ways. We can say that these are 5 of the reasons we meditate.

1. We meditate to **Interrupt the momentum** of our habitual busyness and cultural conditioning and other un-useful habits.

*So as I sit in meditation, I'm training myself to notice when my mind starts spinning off to the past or the future or to the projects I'm working on in the present. Without analyzing, without judging, or labeling good or bad, I'm training myself to just **stay** with honest, compassionate attention to whatever arises in my meditation and this prepares me to **stay** for whatever arises in my my daily life.*

2. We meditate in order to practice identifying and removing the **obstacles** to our being truly present for the people and experiences in our lives. In other words, to **Cultivate mindfulness**. And that means being aware of what's happening in the **body, feelings, mind** and in the external environment.

Staying with my honest, compassionate attention, I discover the tricks I use to manipulate others or fool myself. I get familiar with my defense mechanisms. I notice how I try to weasel out of discomfort.

3. We meditate to cultivate **equanimity**. Which means figuring out a way to live as Non-self, in emptiness; living not as a *Human Being* but as an **Interbeing**.

Sitting on my cushion with honest, compassionate attention I begin to understand myself better. I notice which thoughts and emotions and stories arise over and over and over in my mind.

4. Meditation is an opportunity for us to practice recognizing and learning how to drop the **Drama** that we add to our lives that cause us and others to suffer. To explore the ways we perpetuate our suffering.

In meditation as I sit with honesty and compassion, I train to catch myself when my heart starts hardening, to notice when I am armoring up or closing down to people or situations.

How I make a mountain from the mole hill. I ask myself

Thay's question: Will this be important in 100 years?

5. Meditation is an opportunity for us to chill out, to Rest. To Pause. Be still. Quiet. Do Nothing.

I practice just resting my attention on my breath or resting my awareness on awareness itself.

So... 5 ways to work with our minds.

We use meditation to

1. interrupt the momentum
2. identify and remove the obstacles to our happiness
3. cultivate equanimity
4. drop the drama
5. rest

—(). May the fruit of our meditation practice benefit ourselves which includes all beings.