

## EXERCISE ONE

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### *Joy of Meditation as Nourishment*

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| 1. Breathing in, I calm my body.<br>Breathing out, I smile.  | Calm<br>Smile                      |
| 2. Breathing in, I dwell in the present<br>moment.<br>Breathing out, I know it is a<br>wonderful moment. | Present moment<br>Wonderful moment |

Many people begin to practice sitting meditation with the help of this exercise. Even those who have meditated for many years continue to practice it, because the exercise is so effective.

Breathing in, give complete attention to the in-breath. Wherever in the body the breath may be, feel the calm it brings. Just like drinking cool water on a hot day, feel how the breath cools the inner organs of the body. When practicing meditation, if the body is calm then the mind is calm. Conscious breathing makes the body and mind one. In breathing out, smile to relax all the

facial muscles (the face has about three hundred small muscles in all). The nervous system will also be relaxed. The half smile can be seen as a sign of the calm brought by the in-breath, but it is itself also a means of attaining comfort and a clearer awareness of peace and joy. The conscious breathing and smile should be practiced during five, ten, or even fifteen in/out breaths before moving on to the second stage of the exercise.

Stage two of the exercise brings us back to the present moment. By dwelling in the present moment, we put an end to attachments to the past and anxieties about the future. Life is only available in the present. We need to return to *this* moment to be in touch with life as it really is. To know that we are alive, that we can be in contact with all the wonders within us and around us, this is truly a miracle. We need only to open our eyes and to listen carefully to enjoy life's richness. In using conscious breathing, we can transform the present moment into a moment full of wonder and beauty.

This exercise can be practiced anywhere at any time: in the meditation hall, in the kitchen, on the bank of a river, in a park; whether we are walking or standing still, lying down, or sitting; even when we are working.

## EXERCISE TWO

### *Joy of Meditation as Nourishment*

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|---|--------------------|
| 1. Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.        | In                 |
| Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.         | Out                |
| 2. Breathing in, my breath grows deep.            | Deep               |
| Breathing out, my breath goes slowly.             | Slow               |
| 3. Aware of my body, I breathe in.                | Aware of body      |
| Relaxing my body, I breathe out.                  | Relaxing body      |
| 4. Calming my body, I breathe in.                 | Calming body       |
| Caring for my body, I breathe out.                | Caring for body    |
| 5. Smiling to my body, I breathe in.              | Smiling to body    |
| Easing my body, I breathe out.                    | Easing body        |
| 6. Smiling to my body, I breathe in.              | Smiling to body    |
| Releasing the tensions in my body, I breathe out. | Releasing tensions |

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|---|------------------------------|
| 7. Feeling joy (to be alive), I breathe in.<br>Feeling happy, I breathe out.                          | Feeling joy<br>Feeling happy |
| 8. Dwelling in the present moment,<br>I breathe in.<br>Enjoying the present moment,<br>I breathe out. | Being present<br>Enjoying    |
| 9. Aware of my stable posture,<br>I breathe in.<br>Enjoying the stability, I breathe out.             | Stable posture<br>Enjoying   |

While this exercise is easy and pleasant to practice, it also brings about many good results. Through this exercise, many people who are just beginning to meditate can taste the pure joy that meditation brings. Moreover, those who have already been practicing for some years can use this exercise to nourish body and mind and to continue further on the path of meditation.

The first stage (in, out) is to identify the breath. If this is an in-breath, the practitioner must know that it is an in-breath. If this is an out-breath, the practitioner must know that it is an out-breath. In concentrating on the breath even a few times, the practitioner will naturally stop thinking about the past and the future, putting an end to dispersed thoughts. This happens because the mind of the meditator is wholly with the breathing in its work of identifying the in-breath and the out-breath. In this way, the meditator has become one with the breathing. The mind is no longer an anxious mind or a thinking mind; it is simply a breathing mind.

The second stage (deep, slow) is to see that the in-breath is already growing deeper and the out-breath has already slowed down. This process happens of itself and does not require any effort

on the part of the meditator. To breathe and to be aware that you are breathing (as in the first stage of the exercise) naturally makes the breathing deeper, slower, more even. In other words, the breathing has more quality. When the breathing has become even, calm, and rhythmical, the practitioner begins to feel peace and joy in body as well as in mind. The tranquillity of the breathing entails the tranquillity of the body and of the mind. At this point, the meditator begins to experience meditation as the food of joy.

The third stage (awareness of the whole body, relaxing the whole body) brings the mind home to the body with the in-breath, and mind becomes acquainted with the body. The breathing is the bridge that takes the meditator from the body to the mind and from the mind to the body. The function of the out-breath is to relax the whole body. While breathing out, the meditator allows the muscles in the shoulders, in the arms, and then in the whole body to relax, so that a feeling of comfort is apparent in the whole body. This stage should be practiced for at least ten in- and out-breaths.

The fourth stage (calming the body, caring for the body) calms the functions of the body with the in-breath. With the out-breath, the meditator expresses a heartfelt compassion for the needs of the body. If the meditator continues to practice the third stage, the breath will be utterly calming and help the meditator to treat the body with deep respect and care.

The fifth stage (smiling to the whole body, easing the body) brings relaxation to all the facial muscles. The meditator sends the half smile to the whole body, as if it were a fresh, cool stream of water. To ease the body is to feel light. This stage of the exercise nourishes the whole body through the compassion of the meditator.

The sixth stage (smiling to the body, releasing the tensions in

20 the body) is a continuation of the fifth stage. Here the breathing helps remove all the tensions which still remain in the body.

The seventh stage (feeling joy, feeling happy) brings awareness of the feeling of joy when the meditator breathes in. This is the joy of being alive, of being in good health (which is the same as living in awareness), of being able to nourish the body at the same time as the soul. The out-breath brings a feeling of happiness. To sit with nothing to do but breathe in awareness is a great happiness. Countless people bounce about like yo-yos in their busy lives and never have the chance to taste this meditator's joy.

The eighth stage (present moment, wonderful moment) brings the meditator back to the present moment with the in-breath. The Buddha taught that the past has already gone and the future has not yet come; that we find life in what is happening *now*. To dwell in the present is truly to return to life. Only in the present moment is the meditator really in touch with the wonders of life. Peace, joy, liberation, the buddha nature, and nirvana cannot be found anywhere else. Happiness lies in the present moment. The in-breath helps the meditator be in touch with this happiness. The out-breath also brings much happiness to the meditator, and that is why he says, "wonderful moment."

The ninth stage (stable posture, enjoying) steadies the meditator in the sitting position he has adopted. It will help a posture which is not yet straight, not yet beautiful, to become both straight and beautiful. A stable sitting posture brings about ease and enjoyment of that stability. The meditator becomes master of his body and mind and is not pulled hither and thither by the different actions of body, speech, and mind, in which he might otherwise drown.

## EXERCISE THREE

### *Joy of Meditation as Nourishment*

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|--|------------------|
| 1. Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. | In               |
| Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.  | Out              |
| 2. Breathing in, my breath grows deep.     | Deep             |
| Breathing out, my breath goes slowly.      | Slow             |
| 3. Breathing in, I feel calm.              | Calm             |
| Breathing out, I feel ease.                | Ease             |
| 4. Breathing in, I smile.                  | Smile            |
| Breathing out, I release.                  | Release          |
| 5. Dwelling in the present moment.         | Present moment   |
| I know it is a wonderful moment.           | Wonderful moment |

This exercise also can be practiced anywhere, in the meditation hall, in the living room, in the kitchen, or while on a train.

The first stage is designed to bring body and mind back into oneness and at the same time to help bring us back to the present moment, to connect us with the miracle of life now occurring. If we can breathe in this spirit for two or three minutes, our breathing will quite naturally become light, leisurely, gentler, slower, and deeper, and naturally we shall feel much more at ease in body as well as in mind. This is the second stage, "deep, slow." We can stay with this stage for just as long as we like. Next we come to "calm, ease." Here we can achieve deeper tranquillity (Sanskrit *prasarabhdhis*), a great calm of body and mind, and the joy of meditation will continue to nourish us. The final two stages have already been discussed in exercise two. We can learn by heart the gatha and we can also sing it.

*In Out, Deep Slow*



In, out. Deep, slow. Calm, ease. Smile, re-lease.



Pre-sent mo-ment. Won-der-ful mo-ment.

## EXERCISE FOUR

### *Joy of Meditation as Nourishment*

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|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Breathing in, I know I am<br>breathing in.   | In                        |
| Breathing out, I know I am<br>breathing out.  | Out                       |
| 2. Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.<br>Breathing out, I feel fresh.                | Flower<br>Fresh           |
| 3. Breathing in, I see myself as a<br>mountain.<br>Breathing out, I feel solid.           | Mountain<br>Solid         |
| 4. Breathing in, I see myself as still<br>water.<br>Breathing out, I reflect all that is. | Still water<br>Reflecting |
| 5. Breathing in, I see myself as space.<br>Breathing out, I feel free.                    | Space<br>Free             |

This exercise can be practiced in the first part of any period of sitting meditation, or for the whole of the meditation period,

2 4 to nourish and calm body and mind, to enable the meditator to let go and attain freedom.

The first stage should be practiced for as long as it takes the body and mind to become one. The second stage encourages a sense of freshness. A human being should be as fresh as a flower, for indeed we are one species of flower in the garden of all phenomena. We only need to look at the beauty of children to see that human beings are flowers. Two round eyes are flowers. The clear complexion of the face with its gentle forehead is a flower. The two hands are a flower. . . . It is only because we worry that our foreheads become wrinkled. It is only because we cry so much and pass so many sleepless nights that our eyes are clouded. We breathe in to restore the flower in us. This in-breath brings the flower in us back to life. The out-breath helps us be aware that we have the capacity to be, and are now, fresh as a flower. This awareness waters our flower; this is the practice of loving-kindness meditation toward ourselves.

The third stage, "mountain, solid," helps us to stand firmly when we are upset by vehement feelings. Whenever we feel despair, anxiety, fear, or anger, we are carried right into the heart of a whirlwind. We are like a tree standing in the gale. If we look up, we shall see our branches bending as if they are about to break and be carried away by the storm. But if we look down, we shall know that the roots of the tree are held firmly in the earth, and we shall feel more stable and at rest.

Body and mind are like that. When there is a hurricane of emotions in us, if we know how to withdraw from the storm—that is, if we know how to withdraw from the turmoil of the brain—we shall not be swept away. We must transfer our attention to a place

in the abdomen about two fingers' width below the navel and breathe deeply and slowly according to the formula "mountain, solid." In doing this, we shall see that we are not just our emotions. Emotions come and go, but we are always here. When we are oppressed by emotions, we feel very insecure and fragile; we may feel that we are in danger of losing life itself. Some people do not know how to deal with their strong emotions. When they are suffering greatly from despair, fear, or anger, they think the only way to put an end to their suffering is to put an end to their life. But those who know how to sit in a meditation position and practice breathing the exercise "mountain, solid," can weather such times of difficulty and suffering.

This exercise can be practiced lying down, resting easily on the back. Our entire attention should be directed to the rising and falling of the abdomen. This will enable us to leave the storm area and to know we need never go back there again. Nevertheless, we should not wait until we find ourselves in difficulty in order to practice. If we do not have the habit of practicing, we shall forget how to do the exercise, and our emotions may once again overwhelm and oppress us. To make a good habit, we should practice every day, in that way, whenever painful feelings arise we shall know quite naturally how to resolve and to transform them. In addition, we can explain the practice to young people to help them ride out their stormy periods.

"Still water, reflecting" is the fourth stage intended to calm the mind and body. In the Anapanasati sutta the Buddha taught: "Breathing in I make my mind calm . . ." This exercise is essentially the same, the image of the still lake water simply makes the practice easier. When our mind is not calm, our perceptions are

2 6 usually clouded; what we see, hear, and think does not reflect the truth of things, just as when the surface of a lake is troubled by waves, it cannot clearly reflect the clouds above.

Buddha is the cool moon,  
Crossing the sky of utter emptiness.  
The lake of the mind of beings quietens,  
The moon reflects beautifully in it.

Our sorrows, pains, and anger arise from our wrong perceptions. In order to avoid these wrong perceptions, we need to practice making the mind as still as the surface of a still lake. The breathing is what does that work.

"Space, free" is the fifth stage. If we have too many preoccupations and cares, we will not have clarity and peace and joy. Thus the purpose of this exercise is to create space for ourselves, space in our hearts and space around us. We must rid ourselves of the anxieties and projects that burden us. We should deal in the same way with sorrows and anger. We must practice letting go of the things we carry needlessly. This sort of baggage only makes life heavy, even if sometimes it seems we cannot be happy without it—without, for example, that a title, high position, fame, business, and people to run around after us). But if we look again, we shall see that this baggage is often nothing but an obstacle to our happiness. If we can just put it down, we shall have happiness. *"Buddha is the cool moon, / Crossing the sky of utter emptiness . . ."* Limitless space is the sky of utter emptiness. That is why the happiness of the Buddha is so great. One day the Buddha was sitting in the forest at Vaisali and saw a farmer going past. The farmer asked the Buddha if he had seen his herd of cows, which

had broken loose. He also said that earlier that year he had lost two acres of sesame fields when they were attacked by caterpillars and complained that he must be the most wretched person on earth. Perhaps, he said, he should put an end to his own life. The Buddha advised him to look in another direction. After the farmer had gone, the Buddha turned to the bhiksus who were sitting with him and smiled. He said: "Bhiksus, are you aware of your happiness and freedom? You do not have any cows you need be afraid of losing." Practicing this last exercise helps us to let go of our cows, the cows of our mind and cows we have gathered around us. It also can be sung:

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