

# Principles of Meditation Class 2

## Concentration Practices

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### Introduction

“The higher goal is *Awakening*. Other commonly-used terms include *Enlightenment*, *Liberation*, or *Self-Realization*. Each of these refers to a complete and lasting freedom from suffering unaffected by aging, disease, or circumstance. True happiness, the bliss of perfect contentment, follows upon liberation from suffering. Awakening isn’t some transient experience of unity and temporary dissolution of ego. It’s the attainment of genuine wisdom; an enlightened understanding that comes from a profound realization and awakening to ultimate truth. This is a *cognitive event* that dispels ignorance through direct experience. Direct knowledge of the true nature of reality and the permanent liberation from suffering describes the only genuinely satisfactory goal of the spiritual path. A mind with this type of Insight experiences life, and death, as a great adventure, with the clear purpose of manifesting love and compassion toward all beings.” — Culadasa, *The Mind Illuminated*.

“We could define *access concentration* as concentration strong enough that no hindrances arise. More practically, we can define *access concentration* as being fully with the meditation object, and if there are thoughts, they are wispy and in the background and don’t pull you away into distraction. The general method for generating access concentration is to put your attention on a suitable meditation object, and when your attention wanders off, gently bring it back. Keep doing this until the distractions fade away and your attention on the object is unwavering.

This recognition that you’ve become distracted and the returning your attention to the meditation object should be done without becoming upset that your mind has wandered off yet again....What we are trying to do goes against millions of years of evolution. Having a wandering mind is just how we are constructed. So it’s no big deal when your mind wanders off; you should actually consider it a victory that you noticed it wandered, rather than a defeat that it did its natural thing of wandering. In fact, it is extremely helpful if you intentionally relax when you notice you’ve become distracted, and then gently re-establish attention on your meditation object. The mind state you are aiming to create could well be called *relaxed diligence*. —Leigh Brasington, *Right Concentration: A Practical Guide to the Jnanas*.

5 Things to do at the start of meditation (from Brasington:

1. Generate gratitude
2. Get in touch with your motivation
3. Work up some determination to do your very best to use this time as wisely as possible
4. Do some metta practice—for yourself and additionally for others
5. If meditation on breathing, think: “Breathing, I calm body and mind. Breathing out, I smile.” (from Thich Nhat Hanh)

## Visual images

Mandala

Mirror

## physical objects

flower

candle flame

any object that you select

figure/statue

## Sound

toning: "ah"

## Mantra

Mantra at end of heart sutra

Jizo mantra

om ka ka kabi san ma e sowa ka

"hearing" + body sensations + connection

## "being with"

pairs

## Metta Practice

Traditional

May I be happy.

May I be well.

May I be safe.

May I be peaceful and at ease.

May you be happy.

May you be well.

May you be safe.

May you be peaceful and at ease.

## Sujiva (Buddhanet)

May I be free from enmity

*(Avero homi)*

May I be free from mental suffering

*(abyapajjho homi)*

May I be free from physical suffering

*(anigho homi)*

May I take care of myself happily

*(sukhiattanam pariharami)*

1. May he/she be free from enmity/danger
2. May he/she be free from mental suffering
3. May he/she be free from physical suffering
4. May he/she take care of himself/herself happily

## Explanation:

## 1. MAY HE/SHE BE FREE FROM ENMITY/DANGER.

Enmity may refer to enmity within (e.g. defilement) and without us. A more positive aspect will be "May he have a lot of loving kindness". Therefore we may also use the wish "May he be safe". Enmity may also mean any dangerous and harmful elements

within (e.g. defilements, bad kammic results ripening) or without (e.g. catastrophes, accident etc.)

## 2. MAY HE/SHE BE FREE FROM MENTAL SUFFERING.

Mental suffering refers to mental anguish, sorrow, frustrations, fears, despair, irritation and all types of defilements that are present to no end, as well as the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned existence. "May he/she be peaceful and happy" is a positive wish for this second aspiration.

## 3. MAY HE/SHE BE FREE FROM PHYSICAL SUFFERING.

Physical suffering will include all forms of physical discomfort, illness, ailments and incompleteness. It is possible that the wish can be put as "May he/she be healthy and strong".

## 4. MAY HE/SHE TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF/HERSELF HAPPILY.

This means that we wish him (or her) to be able to carry out all the activities in his life or maintenance of life such as waking up, eating, caring for his livelihood, looking after his children, wife, house, while resting, carrying out his spiritual activities and even having peaceful sleep.

My phrases

May this body be at ease  
 May this heart be open  
 May this mind be boundless  
 May this being awaken

May your body be at ease  
 May your heart be open  
 May your mind be boundless  
 May you be awakened

May our bodies be at ease  
 May our hearts be open  
 May our minds be boundless  
 May we awaken together

Koan

Huineng and Huirang  
 Wudeng Huiyuan [Transmission of the Lamps]  
 Huineng said to Huairang, "Where did you come from?" Huairang said, "From Mt. Song."  
 Huineng said, "What is it that thus comes?"  
 Huairang couldn't answer.  
 After eight years, Huairang awoke and returned to the Sixth Ancestor and said, "I have an understanding."  
 Huineng said, "What is it?"  
 Huairang said, "To say it is a thing misses the mark."  
 Huineng said, "Then can it be made evident or not?"  
 Huairang said, "I don't say it can't be made evident, but it can't be defiled."  
 Huineng said, "Just this that is undefiled is what is upheld and sustained by all buddhas. You are thus. I am also thus."

koan

Huiké, the Second Patriarch, said to Bodhidharma, "My mind is not yet at rest. Master, I implore you, set my mind to rest."

The master replied, "Bring your mind here and I'll set it to rest for you." Huike said, "I've searched for my mind, but am unable to find it." "There," said the master, "I've set your mind to rest."  
capping words