

The background of the entire cover is a close-up photograph of water ripples. The light reflects off the surface, creating a complex, organic pattern of dark and light brown/gold tones. The ripples are irregular and flow across the frame.

urban Meditation Skills  
HOW TO BE A HAPPY MEDITATOR

FEDOR STRACKE HAPPY MONKS PUBLICATION





## **Happy Monks Publication**

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When you meditate, don't squeeze yourself. Just sit comfortably and let your breath energy flow naturally; be just as you are. Don't think, "I'm a meditator"; don't think, "I'm humble"; don't think, "I'm an egotist." Don't think anything; just be.

Lama Yeshe

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Success in meditation is often elusive, even for those of us that have meditated for a long time. It depends a great deal upon the fact that we actually practice meditation, and with a regularity and continuity that cannot be attained through mere discipline alone. We need to have the *comfort factor* in our practice, and take care that we are a happy meditator.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some ideas about how one can have greater success in one's meditation practice by adapting a few simple principles concerning place, time, posture, object, and mind, and an analysis of some common traps one could fall into.

One's feeling for meditation should be such that one is happy just remembering one's meditation cushion. If one just pushes, following a concept of how one's practice should look like, without experiencing any joy, and without considering what kind of meditation one needs, then eventually one will simply feel nauseous just at the sight of one's meditation cushion.

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Progress in meditation depends on many factors and cannot be forced. Even high-level bodhisattvas who have already realized emptiness directly and have gone over to the other side, who have unbelievable qualities, can only progress along the path proportionally to their merits. Why should it be any different for us?

One can only meditate according to one's merits, and to try to go beyond creates inner tension, which then often causes one to break the continuity of one's practice. It is therefore important to be a happy meditator, doing happily what one can, and just let one's meditation practice evolve naturally over time. Grasping becomes counterproductive.

To be a happy meditator, it is important that over time the meditation becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts, because only a lessening of disturbing thoughts can produce the inner happiness that one is looking for. The meditation needs to hit the spot. Otherwise our meditation will drive on one side of the highway, and our delusions happily on the other side of the highway in the opposite direction, leaning out of the windows, waving and jeering at us.

### **Some Thoughts Regarding Some Things**

#### **Place**

If possible it is best to have a separate meditation place, exclusively used for that purpose, in one's flat or house. Ideally it is a place where one already feels calmer just by sitting down, and it can be decorated to this end. It is crucial that one's seat is comfortable and that one does not force oneself into an idea of how one should sit: hard or soft cushion, square or round cushion, thick or thin cushion, ground, bed or chair; it does not matter. What matters is that one can sit comfortably upright reasonably well. It is good to experiment with different options and different cushions to find the optimal setup for oneself.

An uncomfortable seat leads to dislike toward meditation, which in turn means one's enlightenment will be greatly postponed, as one will never meditate. Being comfortable is also important so that there are fewer obstacles to the physical wellbeing induced by meditation. It is recommended to have the back of one's seat higher than the front, as this will push one's hips automatically forward and straighten the spine, making it easier to sit straight.

### Posture

- 1 Sitting with the legs in the full or half vajra position.
- 2 Hands are placed in one's lap, with one's right hand in the left.
- 3 Eyes are partially open, neither completely open nor completely closed, gazing at the tip of one's nose.
- 4 Sitting up straight.
- 5 Shoulders are level, not one higher than the other.
- 6 Head is inclined slightly forward, with a straight line between the tip of the nose and one's navel.
- 7 Mouth is closed comfortably in a natural way, not clenched shut, and the tip of the tongue is placed on the upper palate behind the upper front teeth.

While sitting in the full or half vajra posture is recommended, it is not essential, and one can sit in any cross legged posture one finds comfortable, or even sit on a chair.

If one is sitting on a chair it is better not to lean back. The hands can be placed in one's lap regardless of

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whether one sits in a chair or on the ground. The head is slightly leaned forward to discourage mental excitement, but not too much so as to encourage mental sinking.

The eyes are kept open to let light in and discourage mental sinking, but are directed downward to discourage mental excitement. If, in the beginning, one is more comfortable with the eyes closed, then this is fine, but it is good to work toward having them slightly open.

It is important to be comfortable while sitting in the seven-point posture, because eventually one's meditation is supposed to generate the bliss of physical pliancy, and how could this happen if one is not comfortable?

While the physical posture is important, the actual meditation is done with the mind. The internal posture with which we commence the meditation is much more important. To adopt an attitude of compassion and altruism ensures the meditation is going into the right direction.

### **Object**

One of the most important conditions for a successful meditation practice is the selection of a proper object, and then to keep the mind on this object with proper mindfulness.

The object should be a virtuous inner object. Even if the example is an outer object, such as the form body of a buddha, the actual meditation object is the reflection of that object in the mind. Just by focusing the mind on an inner object one has an inner focus.

To attain proper calm abiding one needs to let go of the external world for a while and focus the mind on an internal object. This may be very difficult to do for a Westerner who is obsessed with external objects, but even we often wish for a respite and the ability to let go and to withdraw.

The aim of the withdrawal is of course to return refreshed to the external world so we may better help others. In such a way the meditation becomes a holiday from the external world and disturbing thoughts. Once one is able to do this the need to go on external holidays falls away and one can save much money.

### **Mind of Placement**

The mind needs to be placed on the internal positive object in a complete manner. To achieve the subsiding of disturbing thoughts it is important to have a complete internal focus, not partial - with an underlying part of the mind thinking about work and breakfast - but a 100 percent focus on the internal object.

At the same time it is crucial to achieve this focus in a gentle manner, with the mind in a relaxed space. Forcing the mind is counterproductive and focusing on the object does not equal grasping at the object as if one were squeezing it with pliers. Rather, by keeping the object gently in mind with mindfulness the mind abides single-pointedly on the object.

- View the object as a vessel in which one places one's mind.
- Let the mind become one with the object, without duality.

When the mind has been placed on the object it needs to be kept there with mindfulness, because once the mind has wandered off one has lost mindfulness of the object.

Basically, the human mind is mostly unconscious, ignorant, and gets so preoccupied with new experiences that it forgets the old ones. Review the past month: exactly what happened, precisely what feelings did you have, every day? You can't remember, can you? ... But if you practice this slowly, slowly, continuously checking within your mind, eventually, you'll be able to remember more and more of your previous experiences.

Lama Yeshe

### **Some Principles to Grow a Meditation Practice**

#### **Mind Is a Creature of Habit**

The first principle is that mind is a creature of habit. Therefore, it is important to train it in meditation correctly from the start. The longer one meditates in the wrong way the more difficult it is to recover later and correct the mistakes.

#### **Quality over Quantity**

That is why as a beginner it is important to adopt the second principle of quality over quantity. From the very beginning one should take care that the mind is focused with clarity in a complete yet gentle manner on an internal virtuous object and not worry too much about the length of the session.

As a beginner one cannot keep such a good focus for a long time as the mind becomes tired and wanders off. To then finish the session after a few minutes would be somewhat embarrassing, and the question arises: “If I can meditate in this perfect manner only for a few minutes, what do I do for the rest of the half hour?”

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One thing that one can do is take a mental rest after a few minutes, without getting up, and then have another short period of good concentration, then again a rest, and so on. One could also move on to reciting one's mantras, prayers, etc. These are important because they bring the blessings to one's mind that one needs to transform one's mind.

One can also build the few minutes of good single-pointed meditation into one's sadhana, for instance on emptiness during the dharmakaya meditation. It is important that at least once a day the mind has a rest from disturbing thoughts, which will subside if the mind is focused correctly.

Meditate on Quality, Do Not Meditate for Time

As a beginner it is generally very difficult to keep the mind focused on one single meditation object beyond a few minutes. The common notion is that if one meditates for half an hour one will spend much of that time bringing the mind back to the object. This, however, is not meditation, as a mind away from its object is not a mind meditating. The body may be sitting there, but the mind is not meditating.

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By remembering that quality is more important than quantity, one does not need to be ashamed of meditating even only a few minutes a day, as long as that meditation is done well and on a regular basis. The mind is a creature of habit and sooner or later it will abide on the object for longer periods of time naturally. It is important to meditate regularly as we will not get the results of a meditation that we do not do.

### **Being Gentle**

Pabongka Rinpoche says that if the mind gets distracted by an external object then one gently returns the mind to the meditation object with introspection. One does not wade in there aggressively and push the mind back to the object, but rather one merely recognizes with introspection that one has lost mindfulness of the object and then gently returns the mind to the object of meditation. This approach differs very much from the grasping attitude with which one often approaches one's daily life, thinking the more one grasps and pushes, the more successful one will be. Our mind is a very subtle and receptive medium that has to be treated gently, similar to the way a mother treats her baby.

### **The Mind Is Not a Machine**

We often approach meditation with a materialistic attitude and think of the mind as a kind of machine that one can just switch on and off: “I will press this button and this will happen.” What one forgets is that the mind is a creature of habit, and while neutral in nature, will take on habits, regardless of whether they are good or bad.

One common trap to fall into is thinking along the lines of, “If I meditate it has to be at least a 45-minute session every day,” but then not being able to sustain this on a daily basis and ending up never meditating. Since one will not get the result of a meditation that is never done, no matter how lofty one’s intentions, it is better to meditate daily even just for five or ten minutes. This brief daily meditation will definitely yield a result over time if it is done properly.

### **Secret Instruction**

The secret instruction for meditation is to have a well-tuned mind that is neither too tight nor too loose. If the mind is too tight it produces inner obstacles and disturbances. If the mind is too loose one falls asleep.

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If one focuses with a well-tuned mind completely on an inner object then the disturbing thoughts can subside and from this one can experience inner peace. As long as the mind still engages outer objects it will be distracted and meditation bliss elusive.

### **To Hit the Spot**

One part of the definition of a good meditation is that it hits the spot, i.e., it becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts. Only a meditation that becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts will produce inner happiness.



### **Notes on Groundwork for Meditation<sup>2</sup>**

#### **Holistic, Not Selective, Approach**

The different meditations need conditions and time to ripen in the mind, so that they are not just intellectual knowledge, but are generated in the mind. In the same way as one cannot just throw some seeds in a field and then expect to reap a perfect crop, we cannot just sit down, do these meditations, and expect them to have an immediate effect. There are various things that need to be done to prepare the mind, so that it becomes a receptive and fertile field in which we can grow the crop of these meditations.

Pabongka Rinpoche explains that in order for this to happen, four factors are needed:

- We need to purify our karma.
- We need to build up our positive potential.
- We need to make requests to the guru deity.
- We need to do the actual meditations.

If we implement these four factors inclusively, then we can achieve massive mental transformation in a short period of time, but if we neglect even one of them then our mental development will at best be impaired.

### **Purifying Karma**

The essence of purifying karma is to generate the power of thorough repudiation<sup>3</sup>. This is likened to a person who discovers that they have ingested a deadly poison. This person will not feel guilty about having ingested the poison; rather, their foremost emotion will be to ingest the antidote to counteract the poison. Subsequently they will generate a strong sense of awareness to avoid a similar situation in the future.

The essence here is to repudiate the action internally, to mentally turn away from it. Through this one avoids the “guilty action” syndrome, where guilt is used as inner justification to repeat the action anyway.

If some measure of guilt is useful to turn away from the action, then it is beneficial guilt, and with some actions it would be a sign of mental sickness such as moral deficiency, if there were no guilt. The essence is to turn away from the action, and not to feel bad. To internally repudiate the action one strongly contemplates the disadvantages of the action, especially the four karmic results of the action.

### **Building Up One's Positive Potential<sup>4</sup>**

Rejoicing is one of the most powerful and at the same time easiest methods to accumulate merits.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

One's positive potential is for the mind what oil and gas are for an engine. One may have a very powerful engine, but without gas it will not run, and even if one has gas, without oil the parts will not work smoothly and easily. The instructions we receive from our teachers are the same instructions that the great yogis such as Naropa and Marpa received from their teachers. Reading the life stories of the great yogis it often seems one has already received many more instructions than them, but, while having a wealth of instructions on the one hand, one experiences a drought of realizations on the other. One major difference lies in the amount of positive potential.

A person with strong merits generates strong insights and realizations from few instructions, while a person devoid of merits will not internalize even one dharma despite a lifetime of instructions.

This is why the practice of rejoicing is so important.

### **Requests to the Guru Deity**

Requests to the guru deity, or at least to the Buddha, are important because we need blessings to generate new mental states, formerly not present in our mind, which can act as the antidote to our afflictions.

The buddhas cannot wash away our problems like dirt with water, and how they help is primarily through teaching us the path and guiding us along it. While the buddhas cannot wash away our obscurations, what they can definitely do if we ask for it is bless our mental continuum so that realizations can grow there.

A person dangling above an abyss on a single thread of rope puts all their hope into this rope, as it is the single thing standing between them and death. Similarly, our teacher is the single thread that is keeping us from falling into the abyss of unfortunate rebirths.

Making requests with this intensity and faith is very powerful. We visualize our guru as indivisible from our meditational deity, or vice versa, and then make one-pointed requests, remembering that our requests are really heard and that blessing our mind is something the buddhas can do.

### **Meditations**<sup>5</sup>

#### **Meditating on Breathing**

Sitting comfortably upright place the mind internally.

Allow your breathing to come and go in a natural manner, without interfering.

Gently place the mind on the breath itself, not the movement of the abdomen or the sensation of air at the nostrils.

Gently let go of all thoughts, and let the mind become one with your breathing, in a state of clarity and calmness.

Calmly count the out-breath from 1 - 7, 1 - 10, or 1 - 21.

Variations:

Identify and concentrate on the reflection of the breath in your mind.

With the in-breath the air fills your whole body from bottom to top, and with the out-breath it spreads in all directions—in and out, in and out.

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Combining It with the Visualization of Light

Visualize that you are breathing out the disturbing thoughts, tension, etc. as black light, which dissolves into emptiness at the edge of the universe, and that you are breathing in white light that contains the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and which is slowly filling your whole body.

Guide the light down all the way through your legs to your feet, then let it fill the whole body up to the shoulders, down the arms and also the head, in the process dissolving tension, disturbing thoughts, and obscurations.

Do not worry whether or not it is perfectly done. Just do it as well as you can while being comfortable. This is more important.

One can meditate that the white light contains the different aspects of the enlightened mind, such as the three principals of the path, omniscient consciousness and the like.

### **Brief Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha**

Sit down comfortably in an upright position and let the breathing come and go naturally.

Visualize in the space in front of you, about at the height of the eyebrows and one body length away, a lotus, and on top of that a sun and moon disc, upon which Shakyamuni Buddha sitting.

He has a golden body made out of light, is sitting upright in the full lotus position wearing the three robes of a monk, and he is smiling. His right hand is in the earth touching mudra, and his left is in the mudra of meditative equipoise.

Mentally go through the major details of your visualization three or four times sequentially. Then gently focus on whatever appears to the mind. Just the outlines, or a partial appearance is good enough. Do not get caught up in correcting all the details. Combine the mind as well as possible with the object without straining it. You can view the object as a vessel into which you place your mind. Let the mind merge with the object so that there is no duality of subject and object.

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Hold the object gently and single-pointedly for a few minutes. When the mind starts to wander again, reflect on the reasons why the Buddha is the sole refuge and place your whole trust in him as the perfect teacher.

Letting the elephant mind wander  
Creates harm beyond pain.  
The unsubdued crazy elephant  
Does not do as much damage here.

If, through all, with the rope of mindfulness,  
One tightly fastens the elephant of the mind,  
All threats become completely non-existent,  
And all virtues will come into one's hand.

Shantideva

### **Meditation on Rejoicing**

Rejoicing in the Qualities of Special Beings to Accumulate Merit

All ten direction conquerors and their children,  
Self-liberators, trainees and non-trainees,  
And all migrators, in any of their merits  
I fully rejoice.

*King of Prayers*

If possible rejoice in the merits of tens of millions of stream enterers, returners, non-returners, hearer arhats, self-liberator arhats, ordinary bodhisattvas on the paths of accumulation and preparation, transcendental bodhisattvas on the paths of seeing and meditations, and buddhas.

Rejoice in their qualities of method, wisdom and activities. From the *Ornament of Clear Realization*:

Rejoicing in the roots of virtue  
Of method and non-object.

How wonderful that stream enterers have the qualities of liberation and realization they possess. How wonderful the returners have the qualities of libera-

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tion and realization they possess; ... how wonderful are the qualities of the ordinary bodhisattvas, absolutely incomparable to those of the hearers and self-liberators; how extraordinary are the yet again infinitely greater qualities of bodhisattvas on the paths of seeing and meditation, which diminish the qualities of the lower bodhisattvas; how wonderful are the infinite qualities of a buddha. I wish I had those qualities.

Rejoicing in the Qualities of Others to Counteract Jealousy

“How wonderful that person has this job, this partner, health, car, etc.”

“How wonderful this person can do retreat, can do study programs, can meditate often, etc.”

Rejoicing in One’s Own Qualities<sup>6</sup>

### **Meditation for Boosting Self-Confidence and Creating a Positive Self-Image**

Sit down comfortably in an upright position.

Pick a time span such as today, last week, last year, etc.

Remember consciously with a clear and relaxed mind, without judging, all the actions of body, speech, and mind carried out in that period from the start up to the present moment.

Rejoice in all the positive actions. It is most likely one finds more to rejoice in than one initially thinks.

Now focus inward and identify your qualities; finding at least one.

Rejoice in your qualities, ideally until the thought “I am good” is generated.

Repeat this method until the thought “I am good” is generated naturally.

To counteract self-absorption, rejoice regularly in the fortune of others.

### **Equanimity<sup>7</sup>**

Usually others start out as strangers, and then, if we find them attractive and beneficial, we view them as friends and with attachment; if we find them unattractive and harmful, then we view them as enemies and with anger. These appearances can change very frequently, and in this way the mind is never at rest and always switching between attachment and anger.

Visualize a friend, a stranger, and an enemy.

Spend a few minutes investigating why you view these three people in this way.

Despite appearing very concrete, the situation of friend, enemy, and stranger is very fluid:

Reflect on how friend and enemy started out as strangers.

Reflect with examples from experience on how quickly a friend can become an enemy, and how quickly an enemy can become a friend.

Reflect on how everybody - friend, enemy and stranger - are the same in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering.

### **Mental Spring Cleaning**

Most of us carry around a multitude of resentments and old attachments, like so many dusty objects in the attic. These are a great burden for the mind, and cleaning them out is true spiritual practice, regardless of what else one does.

Applying the method of patience in retrospect, also called *forgiveness*

Meditate a little while on the mental consciousness, observing it, and then identify one of your resentments and its object.

Look at and analyze the nature of the resentment. Look at how it views its object. It sees the object as dark, being at fault and having harmed us volitionally.

Contemplate which harm is bigger by now, the original harm given by the other person, or the harm given to us by our resentment.

Resolve that it is now time to give up the resentment, for the sake of your own wellbeing, and to now meditate on love and compassion for the other person.

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Although it seems as if the other person acted volitionally, in reality they were under the control of their mental afflictions.

Their mental afflictions arise through cause and effect, and not under their own volition, and the person under their control also does not act volitionally.

Looking at the other person in this way makes them an object of compassion, and we think, “What can I do to help this sentient being?”

Focus your love and good will on the other person for some time<sup>8</sup>.

Applying methods against attachment

Identify an old attachment.

Reflect on the uselessness of holding onto the object.

Let go of the object.

Breath out deeply (which may come as a natural reaction of relief), and enjoy the resulting peace of mind.

### **Faulty Mindfulness and Falling into the Same Hole Over and Over**

I am aware of how the object triggers the mental pattern.

I am aware of how the mental affliction gains strength.

I am aware of how the mental affliction takes over my mind.

I am aware of how I am again acting in the same destructive manner.

After the action I resolve to not repeat the action, like some many hundreds and thousands of times before.

The truth is, I do not have the means to stop my afflictions.

This is the situation where one is only aware of one's destructive actions, but does not practice mindfulness on the antidote. In such a case one is unable to

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change or stop one's actions. The reason is that one's meditation did not hit the spot, i.e., it did not become an antidote to the harmful mental patterns.

As a human being we always come with a body and a mind. It is a set, and once the mind is taken over by the mental afflictions, then our actions of body and speech are controlled by these afflictions.

The afflictions arise as part of a cause-effect chain reaction, and do not have from their side the thought "I shall arise" or "I shall not arise." They also do not wonder, "Shall I arise or shall I not arise?" Once the three conditions of misleading thought, proximity of the object, and the seed of the affliction in the mind come together, it is definite that the affliction will arise. It is simple cause and effect.

In a mind that is devoid of any antidote, or counterforce, it is inevitable that the affliction will then take over the control of one's mind, and as it is our mind that controls our actions, i.e., our actions come about relative to what is present in our mind, our actions will inevitably be controlled by the affliction.

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Once it has reached this stage, and lacking strong self-control, where one can first implement the practice of being immovable like a tree, and then, on the basis of this, mentally apply an antidote, one will eventually be compelled to act upon the affliction. The affliction will induce and force one to act, like a dominant willful person controlling the actions of a weaker submissive person.

Just being mindful of this process is usually not enough to stop it, even if there is a strong wish not to carry out the action.

If the will not to act upon the affliction is strong and sincere enough, it is enough to simply be mindful of the strong intent and to distance oneself from it, being aware that the self is not the actions of body, speech, and mind. But often or perhaps most of the time one lacks this strong wish and sincerity. This is something one needs to confirm and investigate through one's own experience. If one finds that one is repeating the same destructive pattern over and over again, then simple mindfulness of the process alone is not enough.

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In fact, simple mindfulness of the process alone will mostly never be enough. To be able to see the affliction as just a mental state, and to then simply let it go, or to engage in other similar practices, one would need the presence of strong positive antidotal mental states, and a strong mindfulness on them.

One interesting aspect here is that although at the start one may not want the affliction and its action, once the afflictions take over the mind, a change occurs in the mind, and it is as if one now does want the action.

Here one can see how the wants and not-wants of the self are conditioned by the accompanying mental state, and do not exist from their own side.

### **Urban Dharma**

#### **Urban Meditations**

##### On the Train

While riding on the train, sitting in a cafe or restaurant, talking with employees in shops or simply while walking in the streets, one can meditate like this:

By seeing me, talking to me, observing me smile:

- May their tiredness be relieved.
- May their energies be recharged
- May positive thoughts be generated in their mind.
- May their sicknesses and ailments be cured.

Combine this with the quiet recitation of a mantra.

Send out white light which alleviates the suffering of the other person and fills them with pure happiness.

##### In the Restaurant

When giving a tip in a restaurant, give a little extra than required. It does not cost much, but the karmic benefits are incalculable.

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“By establishing this karmic relationship with the other person may I be able to teach them the dharma in future lives, when I myself am enlightened, or even before. May I be able to pass on to them all the teachings, and may they become my main disciples.”

When going out for coffee and such, where it is easily affordable, get away from the “split the bill exactly down the middle” mentality and treat the other person.

### **Coffee Nectar Offering**

Transform the coffee with 3x OM AH HUM.

Mentally offer the nectar to the Buddha.

Meditate that the offering generates bliss in the Buddha’s consciousness.

Light rays go out from the Buddha into you, purifying and blessing you.

While drinking the coffee:

Offer it to the Buddha residing in your heart.

Offer it to the millions of sentient beings in your body.

### **Offering to the Buddha in the Morning**

Before going to work make a small offering, such as a piece of fruit, a cup of tea or coffee, light or incense offering to the Buddha.

Visualize the image as the actual Buddha.

Contemplate briefly the qualities of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Bless the offering with OM AH HUM 3x.

Bow before the Buddha and make the offering.

Visualize the offering multiplied to equal the extent of space.

Meditate that the offering has been received and that the contact generated bliss in the Buddha's mind.

Through the condition of bliss, white light emanates forth, enters into you, and completely purifies you of all obstacles, disturbing thoughts, etc., and your whole body is completely filled with light.

Now you are ready to go to work.

### **How to Deal with Criticism**

Reflect on how the words of the other person are just sound waves, traveling from their mouth to one's ears, before the meaning is then recognized in one's mind.

Do this meditation during the criticism, or after the dust has settled a little bit. Check whether any qualities that one possesses are missing, or whether the words have given one new faults.

Once the dust has settled one will find that no qualities are missing and that one also did not acquire new faults. After all, the criticism is only words, which cannot take away qualities or add faults.

Since there is no damage there is also no reason for anger. Of course the ego could be damaged, but this then is not a reasonable reason for anger according to the Dharma, and one needs to work it out oneself.

Through this meditation one will become more aware of one's qualities and faults, and generate confidence in one's qualities.

### How to Protect Oneself if There Are Others Who Sap One's Energy

#### Mental Independence

Your consciousness is your own.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

There are few things in life we can control, and the minds and actions of others certainly do not belong in this category, but we can learn to control our own mind. It is our spiritual practice to regain control of the mind from the mental afflictions and attain mental happiness in the process. This will be mental happiness developed in the mind through the power of the mind, and will not depend on the presence of external pleasant objects. In the process of “retaking control of the mind” one often realizes that one had one's own reasons to let the other person into one's own mind, and that this mental dependence is not desirable, unless it produces virtue.

The best internal advisor is dharma wisdom, derived through listening, contemplating and meditating.

### **Loving Compassion**

Loving compassion is essential at the start, in the middle, and at the end of the spiritual path. We need it to get started on the path, to continue on the path in the middle, and to work for others once enlightenment is achieved.

There is nothing more healing for the mind than the sincere wish for another to be happy and to be free from suffering. Out of this love and compassion one can then decide what course of action is best for the other person.

### **Inner Joy and a Strong Personality**

It is essential to explore the concept of mental happiness, to identify it and to develop it. A person with strong inner happiness feels much less negatively influenced by others. The development of a healthy, strong personality based on compassion and combined with the wisdom realizing emptiness is also essential.

### **Random Acts of Generosity and Other Kindnesses**

*Random* means out of the ordinary, and not necessarily unplanned. One can first decide within one's mind that one will engage into at least one random act of generosity per week.

Examples of what this generosity could be, are:

- An extra big tip at the restaurant.
- Do not insist on splitting the bill down to the penny, and perhaps even offer to pay for both if the expense is manageable.
- An out-of-the-ordinary present for one's spouse.
- Giving something to a beggar.
- Making a donation to a charitable cause.
- Cultivating a mental state of wanting to be beneficial to others and then being spontaneously helpful to others if one perceives they need help.

A requirement is that it is an action for others. Extra large presents to oneself, while occasionally not a bad idea, do not count as generosity. We already are very self-focused, and the limit for expenses for ourselves is usually the limit on the credit card, while the generosity for others is often not even 1% of this.

### **Affirmative Patience**

Patience, being defined as a well-balanced mind undisturbed in the face of adversity, is a purely mental state free from ill will, despite receiving harm, or imagining one is receiving harm.

View the other person to be under the control of their afflictions. In this way they become an object of your compassion rather than anger.

Remember that anger always clouds your judgment.

Remember that our anger harms us more than the harm of the other person ever could.

A flaring temper is often just compensating a feeling of weakness or inadequacy. Practicing patience does not mean that one cannot stand up for oneself, or convey one's feelings to the other person, but means to learn to do so in a calm and sincere manner, without anger. This is a necessary skill in relationships and many other daily life situations, and requires a greater strength than the strength anger seems to give.

### **Alternative Urban Dharma Vocabulary**

#### **Being cool:**

Being without eight worldly dharmas;  
Being without anger;  
Being without attachment.

**We are cool:** I hold no resentment in my mind

#### **To chill out:**

Having a rest day and trying to be virtuous.  
To spend time at the Dharma center.  
To calm down, to relax.

#### **Dial down:**

Reducing harmful actions of body, speech, or mind.

#### **To relax:**

To relax one's self-cherishing. Stop being so tense and tightly wound up in your self-concerns, and relax by expanding your heart and mind towards others.

Relax by letting go of your self-importance, which is like a black hole sucking up the happiness from the air around and inside you.

### **Multitasking**

This can be engaging in dharma practice while doing worldly actions, e.g., verbally reciting mantras or mentally meditating on impermanence while physically washing dishes. It can also mean to combine different dharma practices, such as verbally reciting a mantra, while mentally meditating on some dharma topic.

May any merit attained from the book become the cause for the attainment of the omniscient state.

Sarva Mangalam

## URBAN MEDITATION SKILLS

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<sup>1</sup>If we are not a happy meditator, then we should at least be happy.

<sup>2</sup>These points have been explained exhaustively in Lama Zopa Rinpoche's collective works, and in the Stages of the Path teachings.

<sup>3</sup>Generally known as the power of regret.

<sup>4</sup>Building up merits.

<sup>5</sup>These are only some sample meditations, and do not represent a comprehensive training in the path. For a comprehensive training in the path, please consult *Graduated Stages of the Path* instructions.

<sup>6</sup>See meditation for boosting self-confidence and generating a positive self-image.

<sup>7</sup>The purpose of this meditation is to reduce attachment for friends and anger for enemies. In this way the mind is less torn between attachment and anger, and becomes more balanced.

<sup>8</sup>For more elaborate meditations on patience, refer to the *Graduated Stages of the Path* or the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.



## Urban Meditation Skills

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### HOW TO BE A HAPPY MEDITATOR

Success in meditation is often elusive, even for those of us that have meditated for a long time. It depends a great deal upon the fact that we actually practice meditation, and with a regularity and continuity that cannot be attained through mere discipline alone. We need to have the comfort factor in our practice, and take care that we are a happy meditator.

To be a happy meditator, it is important that over time the meditation becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts, because only a lessening of disturbing thoughts can produce the inner happiness that one is looking for. **The meditation needs to hit the spot.** Otherwise our meditation will drive on one side of the highway, and our delusions happily on the other side of the highway in the opposite direction, leaning out of the windows, waving and jeering at us.

