

Satipatthana Sutta

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness: Mindfulness of Breath

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“And how, monks, does he in regard to the body abide contemplating the body? Here, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, he sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out. “Breathing in long, he knows ‘I breathe in long,’ breathing out long, he knows ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, he knows ‘I breathe in short,’ breathing out short, he knows ‘I breathe out short.’ He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body,’ he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.’ He trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation,’ he trains thus: ‘I shall breathe out calming the bodily formation.’

“Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, knows ‘I make a long turn,’ or when making a short turn knows ‘I make a short turn’ so too, breathing in long, he knows ‘I breathe in long,’ . . . (continue as above).

[REFRAIN] “In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally, or he abides contemplating the body externally, or he abides contemplating the body both internally and externally. Or, he abides contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of passing away in the body, or he abides contemplating the nature of both arising and passing away in the body. Or, mindfulness that ‘There is a body’ is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. From Sattipatthana translated by Analayo

Mindfulness of Breath Meditation

1. **Getting ready:** Sit in an erect position with eyes closed with awareness of breath directed to either the nostrils, chest or abdomen.
2. **Initial Concentration:** Start counting 1 in-breath 1 out-breath, 2 in-breath 2 out-breath, etc. Do not control your breath; observe only. Stop at 10 and observe any changes in the breath. Count down to 1 and observe any changes in the breath. Continue for three cycles or until the breath appears finer (shorter in duration, more shallow, less forceful).
3. **Experience the whole body:** Expand your awareness to the whole body including any sensations or thoughts. Take care not to get caught up in any specific sensation or thought, just be aware that you are experiencing the whole body.
4. **Calming the bodily formations:** Bodily formations are what we are experiencing at the moment (sensations and thoughts). We can calm our bodily formations by using mindfulness and stating the intention, “calm” on each in-breath and each out-breath. When our attention is on the breaths and “calm,” our thinking stops.
5. **Contemplating the nature of arising/passing away:** With each in-breath and each out-breath, observe the arising and falling away of sensations, thoughts, memories, and perceptions.

Observe and experience the true nature of all conditioned things, the three characteristics of impermanence, inability to have lasting satisfaction, and selfless nature.

6. **Loving Kindness:** End your meditation by giving loving kindness (metta) to yourself and all beings.

Additional instruction from the Buddha

Apply bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness

Bare knowledge is just being aware without consciously adding additional commentary, judgments or decisions.

Abide independent/not clinging

Continue to be mindful particularly if we notice any attachment such as getting caught up in a thought, memory, sensation, or perception.

Sources

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