

Meditation instructions by Jaya Julienne Ashmore

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Introduction to deep rest meditation

Another way to meditation

Meditation is not a competitive sport. Our beings ask for another way of living.

We already know how to over-activate body and mind and then to shut off completely to try to get some rest.

What we can learn to do is to rest and refresh our energy.

Then we are more likely to have a visit from deep meditation.

Have you ever woken up from a nap and enjoyed a moment of breezy friendliness before remembering your list of things to do?

That moment—restful, agile, receptive, alive—is much closer to meditation than hours of trying to sit still.

Years of experience have shown us that many people need to rest, to lie down for meditation, and allow their natural awakening gradually to take over.



Introduction to deep rest meditation

Effort and relaxation

Most of us know how to make effort based on tension. On retreat, each person can experiment with making 'reversed effort', or effort based on relaxation.

At the beginning with meditation, and periodically later on, a struggle with strong habits of mind is unavoidable. But don't assume that this same quality of exhausting effort must continue. At first, our effort is choppy because all we have to work with is the on-and-off thinking mind to pay attention.

But the kind of effort most often needed is like the effort to hold a rose petal in the palm of your hand: not force, but rather a continuity of remembrance like a river. This continuity comes naturally as we access self-motivation and restfulness.

Self-motivation

Remember when you did something just because you wanted to --not because you thought you had to, and not because you wanted to get money, prestige, or acceptance. You will remember how good it felt.



On retreat, we have a chance to find self-motivation and to experience its joy. You don't need an exciting pastime, with which you to "fill up" this "empty" time. We can "do nothing" and let life emerge. We can enact love towards ourselves in small, concrete ways, even if it seems silly. Each evening we can write down five joyful moments of the day, and gradually learn to let the joy lead. We can also remember what we love to do most, and immerse ourselves in that in some way without disturbing the group silence.

Restfulness

Resting is an art. We try to relax, but don't know how. We often think we should do "more important" things first, so that we can later deserve to rest. But somehow the time for rest never comes. Bringing freshness, energy, health, radiance, and friendliness, rest benefits meditation tremendously. Start with an attitude of ease or with lying down for meditation.

Even if you fall asleep, that refreshing rest may be more beneficial than holding yourself in a rigid sitting posture, as if you are working at an office (and practicing aversion). In fact, the meditation that happens after you awaken is likely to be fresh and bright, closer to genuine meditation than trying too hard.



Introduction to deep rest meditation

Postures

The Buddha said meditation flows through all “four postures” of walking, sitting, lying down and standing. posture as the position in which you can happily stay still and steady. Notice how striving to find an imaginary perfect posture is just a nagging, unpleasant, mind-game. Experiment with different positions, especially if you struggle with pain during much of the session, or if pain persists after you move out of your chosen posture. It is not necessary to use the same position in every session. With acceptance of the body and mind as they are in the moment, an ease and stillness can begin to develop.

Reclining Posture

For many people, lying down is the position most suitable for being relaxed, open and still. This relaxed stillness makes it harder for the controlling mind to dominate and therefore leaves space for a deeper and more fluid awareness to come through.

You will need a soft, flat surface to lie on. Usually a yoga mat is too thin if you want to be able to stay still long enough for a deep meditation. Use a mattress, folded blanket, soft carpet, or a combination of two or more things. You may also need extra cushions or some improvised substitute, such as a folded sweater or blanket. It is really worthwhile to experiment



with different degrees of softness and different heights of cushions and surfaces. A centimeter of difference can make all the difference.

Lying on your back

Make sure you are lying on a soft enough surface and preferably with no extra pillow under your head. Put pillows under your knees to protect your back. Even better for many people is to place pillows under the whole length of your legs, with the feet higher than the knees and the knees higher than the hips. Be careful with your knees: if the legs roll out to the sides too much, you may feel strain in your knees after a while.

Lying on your side

With your hips and knees bent and your arms comfortable, lie on your side with pillows under your head and between your knees/legs. You might notice a difference between lying on your left or your right side. See hand suggestions for hand positions.

Lying turned 3/4ths of the way towards the floor or bed

If you start by lying on your side, you can shift towards the floor or bed, and straighten one leg. Usually a very small, soft pillow under your ear is enough, but be caring about your neck. Some people prefer this position without a pillow under the head, and others prefer to put a larger pillow under the whole upper body. You may also like to put one hand under the hip of your straight leg, and the other near your forehead, face, throat or upper chest.

Lying on the belly Lie face down with both legs straight, and perhaps both hands palm face up under the hips. Your head will need to tilt slightly to one side, and a soft pillow under the ear may suffice.



Hands

Where you place your hands is up to you. It can make a big difference where your hands are, and what they are touching. Some people need to have the hands not touching the body; others find certain hand positions helpful for meditation. In many postures, we can let the hands find their place and even let them help harmonize body, heart, mind and spirit.

If lying on your back:

you can place your hands on your hips
or on the base of your ribcage.

If you support your bent elbows with soft pillows, you can also place the hands on the upper chest, although the arms may tend to fall asleep after 20 minutes or so.

If lying on your side:

you can place your lower hand between your knees and the upper hand on top of the upper outer knee.

~Or with the lower arm bent, place your fingers on the middle of your neck. At the same time, you can place your upper arm along your hip and buttock, so that the fingers are near the coccyx.

Or invent a comfortable way for you to place one hand on one cheek and the other hand on the collar bone of the same side of the body as the cheek.

Sitting Posture

Hands rest comfortably on knees or lap. Chest is open, with shoulders relaxed down and back. Chin is slightly tucked in, allowing the neck to be straighter than usual. Top of hips is slightly rolled forward, so that



abdomen opens and spine is supported and straight. Angling the cushion or the seat of the chair can help hips to tilt forward. If sitting on cushions, experiment to find the best height. Some people need to sit directly on the floor without a cushion, and some people need several cushions stacked up.

Sitting in a chair:

With feet resting firmly on floor or cushions, sit upright and without leaning on the back of the chair if possible. Propping the back two legs of the chair up on small supports helps hips roll forward, and keeps the front edge of the chair from cutting off circulation through the backs of the legs.

Sitting on the floor:

'Japanese style' Kneel with the buttocks resting on a cushion or bench. Make sure not to put too much weight on the knees.

'Thai' or 'Sri Lankan style'

Sit on cushion or floor, and bend one leg across the front with the knee pointing out to the side. Bend the other leg to one side so that the knee points to the front and the foot points behind you. As with other cross-legged positions, please alternate legs in alternate sittings: if the left leg is in front in one sitting, then have the right leg in front in the next sitting.

'Burmese style'



Bend both legs, with knees pointing out to the sides, and with both lower legs and feet resting on the floor, one in front of the other. Alternate which leg is in front, if possible.

'Lotus style'

Same as 'Burmese' but with one or both feet and lower legs crossed on top of the opposite calf or thigh.

Introduction to deep rest meditation

Resting and energy

In rest we relax and let go, but we also feel energized—a good field for growing our meditation.

Lying down

The atmosphere that comes with lying down to meditate is distinct.

Instead of “me paying attention,” we notice that “there is awareness.”

Instead of working to hold the mind still, we find freshness and quietude in the mind after resting. Even when the thinking mind is active or dreamy, we notice a deeper awakesness and wisdom.

Experienced sitters may miss what seemed like a clarity in sitting. But is clarity or control? If it is “me controlling my experience,” then where can our meditation go? Expert mind control can leave us untransformed.

Our usual fears about lying down to meditate are:



(1) “What if I fall asleep?” and (2) “What if I’m wasting my time?”

Sleeping

Experience shows that, yes, it is very likely that we will sometimes fall asleep and perhaps even snore! Sleeping is not a sin, and snoring is just one more sound of nature. In the meditation hall, we can welcome sleep as well as waking and the many, often fertile, states of mind between sleep and waking. If you know you snore loudly, lie on your side or belly.

Our daily lives are often so fast that we do not even feel how deeply tired we are. Therefore, as we connect and tune in, we often seem to feel more tired the more we rest. We need to “rest through” our accumulated exhaustion to start to uncover another way of living and moving.

And sometimes deep meditation starts to happen when our “small self” is asleep.

What is fruitful?

Have you ever woken up and—before your list of things to do and your small mind came in—have you felt for a moment a breezy, cheerful ease? These moments are closer to genuine meditation than our usual attempts to train the mind. Can we unplug from the should, from pressure and negativity and counting, from the mind that is deeply anxious about ideas of right and wrong? Shall we tune into the richness of our own experience, and learn to let the aliveness of our own experience teach us our genuine human qualities and values and directions? We start to accept that we will only truly understand after we



experience, and that the experience is much more important—more fruitful—than the description.

Then an inner ease and flow can freshly guide and empower our lives, rather than wasting our lives being dominated by ideas and the past.

Foundation practices

Relaxed seeing meditation

To know what is beyond the many distorting thoughts, habits and reactions in our mind we practice gathering attention on something simple like seeing. We can let seeing happen and know it is happening.

Choose a small object that you like or love: a photograph; a stone, dried flower, or leaf; a candle; a piece of jewelry. Use the same object in each meditation. Place your object far enough away so that your neck is not strained — usually 2-3 meters.

Notice how little effort is needed for vision to happen. Rest the eyes while seeing: relax whenever tension in the body-mind becomes noticeable. Pressure on the eyes can cause unusual visual effects, such as seeing colors or losing focus. Blinking the eyes helps.

Neither fight with nor entertain any images that seem to appear in the object. But if you see disturbing images from the past, then stop and



focus on something else, like sound, instead. Sometimes you may pinpoint the vision on a detail of the object.

In the first few days, you may notice that the energy to keep returning to "just seeing" runs out after 10-20 minutes. Just take a mental break, while staying physically still and relaxed for a few minutes, and begin again the practice of continually returning the attention to simple seeing.

Once the mind can gather and rest just for a couple of minutes, then we are much better equipped to continue our inner journey.

Foundation practices

Resting back with sounds and aliveness - foundation I

To begin with, invite your body to be as comfortable and relaxed as possible, lying down or sitting on a cushion, bench, or chair. To help yourself fully arrive here, breathe out two or three times as deeply as possible. Let the in-breath happen by itself. Then just let the breath be: short, long, shallow, deep. Notice that the experience of the breath and body are not separate.

Enjoy the luxury of simply being: perhaps it is enough to be a human on the earth, with no need to compete, to "get it right," to do or add or remove anything.



Relax into the back of the body as if it is a comfortable sofa. In an atmosphere of gentleness, tune into hearing. Allow sounds near and far to be received by a fluid attention. Notice the brilliant precision of attention, how clearly and immediately each sound is known and released. Notice if any image comes to match a sound—a mental picture of a bird for a birdsong, for example. Is it possible to know the difference between the image of a bird and the simple sound? Notice if any other reactions come in response to the sounds—the body tightening or the mind judging and commenting. These reactions are interesting in their own right, but for now open yourself again and again to the naked sounds themselves.

Whenever you remember, relax into the back of the body and allow attention to receive direct experience.

With the sounds more in the background, let this same receptive attention open to the body: its weight and posture, movements and textures, warmth and coolness. Let the experience we call “body” just float in relaxed attention.

Bring softness into first the head, then the chest, then the belly. Soften and receive direct experience. Where can you connect most easily? Let about 25% of your attention rest in that place, while also staying open to sounds, thoughts, and the whole body. All else being equal, the lower



belly is preferable. Every time you notice that the attention has wandered, gently rest back "home" in your chosen place.

As you relax, you may start to feel joy, lightness, or spaciousness. Enjoy. Then rest into the aliveness "behind" or within the joy.



Foundation practices

Resting into the body - foundation II

Just rest for a while.

Is it possible to rest, just now, for a while?

What happens when we allow rest to come over us?

Is there a relaxing down, and back? Or coming into the center or front of the body? What happens for you?

Just rest for a while and enjoy being alive, if possible. What is it to be alive?

Not the thinking about life, but just the being. Let the thinking come out of the center and to the sides or away. How do I know I am alive without thinking about it?



Just to rest for a while and to feel aliveness.

Let your interest go to the contact with the ground, and allow the contact to be friendly. Let what is heavy fall to the ground—physical weight, mental, emotional heaviness can just drop. Enjoy the support for a while, Sometimes we may feel a sweetness where we touch the ground, and we can welcome that sweetness like a liquid to pour throughout the body. We could even let it expand beyond the body into the room.

Now feel the back of the body, and let it fill with life—let it spread long and wide. Just resting in or as the back of the body for a while.

Then we can move our focus to the front of the body—let the back stay full and alive and wide and long, but now enter the front of the body with consciousness. Let the front of the body release its defenses and soften. Let the front of the body drop pretense and presentation and armor, and be soft. The back can stay alive and full, while the front drops into a new place.

Then what about the middle of the body, between the front and the back? Can we slide our interest in and rest there for a while? Just in the interest of experiment and discovery. What happens here?

Where do we feel more at home or deep?



Finally, drop into the lower body—the lower belly and pelvic bowl. Just resting here and letting thoughts go on way up in the head, but feeling the warmth and aliveness and perhaps movements here in the lower body.

Deepening

5 signs of breakthrough

Whenever human beings start to deepen in meditation, certain uncomfortable mind-states come up, often just before a shift towards insight. Usually called “obstacles,” these 5 states call for meditation, gentleness, courage and clarity to ride us through the storms.

Wanting – a feeling of lack or “not enough”-- a “wanting to get”

Aversion, literally “turning away”--aggression, fear, judgment, irritation, boredom, blame—a “wanting to get away” or negativity can take over.



Dullness, lack of energy or spaciness--different from simple tiredness, this shutting down or escape is another form of “getting away.”

Restlessness, remorse – “too much energy” in body or mind, circling around the past.

Doubt in yourself, in meditation, in teachers, in life is different from the “great doubt” of a wide mind that asks in wonder, “What is this? Who am I?” This small doubt feels poor, holds back and gets tangled, disconnects from confidence in our own resources and the preciousness of life.

Recognize; accept; be curious; don't take it personally. Sometimes more than one of these energy-states comes up, usually just when we are on our way “in” to a deeper place.

Deepening

Thought games

Continually relaxing into the back or core of the body, we may find openness to explore the slippery, potent world of thought. Sometimes the busyness of the mind is interesting in itself.

We may wonder how weightless thoughts that seem to come out of nowhere can be heavy enough to move people in ways we regret.



Relax, receiving experience as it comes through.

Opening to sound, body sensation and the sense of space around us, we can also allow spaciousness to include thoughts as just one more kind of movement.

Sometimes just say very simply in the mind, “thought” or even “movie,” when you notice that thinking has taken over.

Then connect with a more direct experience for a while—contact with the ground or the movement of the breath—or just return to a sense of spaciousness and playfulness.

Letting thoughts pass through, notice how often they are habitual reactions. We can start to sense that they are not “ours,” not important, not a problem.

Helpful and inspired thoughts do bubble up every once in a while with a very different quality from the usual—receive them as gifts.

Occasionally, we can experiment playfully with thought to learn to live wisely with it as a tool. Some questioning games:

Investigating: What is a thought? What is it made of? Is image a thought? Numbers? What about the memory of smell?



Counting: In 60 seconds, how many thoughts pass through the mind?
(Sometimes playing this game makes thoughts stop; sometimes we find that there are too many layers of thought to capture....)

Tracing back: When we catch ourselves in the midst of a train of thought, we can attempt to trace it back to its starting point. Even when we space out, there is something that records the sequence of thoughts, and we can sometimes access that recording. What we often find is that a sound or unpleasant sensation may have knocked us out of the present moment into reverie. Other times, it is just the openness at the end of the out-breath.

Emotional tone: When particular thoughts recur again and again, we may need to notice what emotion (or charged belief, interpretation, or energy knot) is fueling them. Then we can be with the emotion more directly.

Fantasy: Sometimes when a cycle of thinking repeats many times, we could try doing the opposite of what we think we are supposed to do: we could let the fantasy happen fully, without guilt. Our very resistance (often in the form of shame, guilt, or judgment) is what keeps the fantasy alive.

"Feeling" the thoughts: When the mind is relatively loving and quiet, we could try to sense thoughts in a different way. We could try to "feel" them, in a way that is more subtle than emotional feeling. If thoughts are



ducks swimming on the water of the mind, then we try to feel how the legs are moving underneath the water.

Aha!: Notice and feel the quality of the many moments when we suddenly realize we have been lost in thinking. Every once in a while, we can let ourselves drop down into that deeper awareness that is already going on, already at ease with the fact that the thinking mind is busy and the “I” spaced out. Who or what else is here?

Deepening

Working with mind-states, moods and emotions

Like colored glasses, mind-states or emotions affect our experience. The world feels very different when we are angry or at ease.

Mind-states can be either wholesome, like generosity and kindness, or unwholesome, like fear and cruelty. All unwholesome mind-states can be traced back to greed, hatred, and delusion, which come up out of a sense of lack.



Mind-states are like weather passing through the "sky" of our minds. Some appear stormy; others are light. They are all visitors to our awareness. We do not invite them. They come and go by themselves. Whether the mind-states are pleasant or unpleasant, our practice is the same: being aware of them as passing experiences—here and gone, not solid, not able to be grasped. A wonder, a human experience.

Notice how body sensations, feeling-tones, and mind-states interact in your experience.

Our entire task in meditation is not to "identify" with mind-states or anything else that is changing. This means not claiming mind-states as "me" or "mine," not "owning" them or thinking they are special.

Deepening

Working with subtle filters and impulses (vedana)

Vedana is one of the most subtle, quick and tricky aspects of the human mind. It is the way we personally take in our experience--the way sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations, and thoughts get immediately filtered as pleasant, unpleasant, or neither.

We don't just see color as it is, we automatically see a color we like, or don't like, or don't care about—a color that is good, bad or unimportant.



We may even be surprised if another person experiences the same color differently.

This filtering is a deep “survival strategy” based on our blind sense of separateness or smallness. We unconsciously try to protect ourselves “in here” by treating the outside world with aggression, seduction, and shutting down or ignoring.

With echoes of the story of Eden, Gautam Buddha said that vedana--the way we “know” our experience as right or wrong—is the “weak link” in our chain of suffering.

How can we help open the chain into freedom?

Practice more often in ways that let joy arise from out of nowhere—this ~ meditative joy is not just “pleasant vedana.”

Notice when a sense of lack, smallness or poverty stops us from ~ experiencing things as they are. A sense of humor helps take the “small mind” less seriously.

Notice the normal responses: wanting more of the “good” and less of ~ “bad,” and getting bored and restless in the face of the neutral.



Notice how vedana interacts with experiences, thoughts, and moods. A ~ few minutes of an “unpleasant” sound may lead into an hour of bad mood if we do not notice the “unpleasant” filter going on.

Don't take this personal reaction personally—we have all got vedana. ~ Let vedana come and go by themselves and simply stay aware without getting caught up in them.

Heart meditations

'Sending and receiving' widely and deeply (Tonglen) instructions

Tonglen meditation

sending and receiving in Tibetan

I. Resting back.



Relaxing into the back of the body, connect with the natural generosity of the out-breath, and the natural receptivity of the in-breath.

With the out-breath, feel how the body--by itself--simply lets go of what is not needed. Thoughts and beliefs about what we are can also be allowed to fall out with the out-breath. Tensions and plans and memories can just flow out.

With the in-breath, notice how aliveness pours in.

Notice that the breath happens by itself, and let yourself rest “back” and enjoy.

II. Expansive presence.

We can start to feel for a more spacious sense of presence by tuning into the space at the end of the out-breath, or by feeling the space around the body as we let the body breathe.

Enjoying the softness of the breathing can also help us begin to erase our strong sense that our skin is our boundary, that we are contained within the skin.

We can feel or imagine that we are as vast as the night sky. The breath, the mind, and the body are just some of the sparkling things happening within gentle spaciousness.

There is enough room for everything, even those secret corners of the heart.

There is enough room for us to be ourselves.

The night sky is the background for the next steps of the meditation and we can come back to it whenever we like.

III. Feeling what is important.

We are allowed to ask ourselves, “What is important? What are these cells here for? What makes life worth living?”



We can throw the question into the gap after the out-breath, and just wait for a natural response, as the in-breath answers the out-breath. Or we can just ask the deepest place we know in ourselves.

We do not need an answer in words, although sometimes our own genuine words may help us connect with what is important in this life.

If we cannot feel very vividly the texture and flavor of what is important, then we may remember a time we experienced clarity, freedom, joy, feeling at home or loved, or a deep happiness for no reason. Let the memory be as vivid as possible, as we remember sounds, temperature, posture, etc.

Once we can feel what Pema Chodron calls the “texture” of the experience, we can let go of the images and details of memory, and just stay with the vivid texture.

Getting to know the texture, notice if it is grounded or uplifting; fluid or still; embracing or expansive, or all of that.

Then let yourself swim in that texture—let the cells say “yes” to it and drink it into every corner of your being.

Breathing in, connect to the texture in a very alive way. Breathing out, fill and (eventually) overflow with that texture.

IV. Feeling what is difficult.

Resting back again into the “night sky,” drop the previous exercise for a while. Then think of a moment of difficulty in your own or someone else’s life—not an overwhelming difficulty but something that moves your heart, something you can feel. Again, choose something specific and clear, and tune into the texture: burning? spiky? accelerated? stuck? heavy? sharp? dense? dark?

Normally we resist feeling the fever of self-doubt or the weight of loneliness, and we can include the resistance with the difficulty.



Then we simply welcome the “texture of the difficult” into night sky on the in-breath. Finally, no need to fix or explain or hide or fight. There just happens to be enough room in night sky for this pain to be.

V. Sending and receiving.

Remembering night sky, we continue to let the inhalation bring us into intimacy with the texture of the difficult. On the out-breath, we can now also re-connect with the texture of what we love in life, the texture of what is important.

And we can let the out-breath fill us and overflow. If we are focusing on a specific person other than ourselves, we can direct the silkiness (or whatever texture) towards that person.

VI. Playing with questions.

We can question whether there is enough silkiness to go around. Where does it come from? To whom does it belong? Is it my secret? Is this what everyone and everything else is also living or looking for?

We can also question the deep, dark secrets we human beings think we live with. Is anyone alone in feeling loneliness or any other difficulty? Is there anyone else in the room (or country) who may have felt that same difficulty? Is there anyone who has never felt it? How many thousands of people may be feeling rage or panic or shame just now on the planet?

Is it mine or hers or his, this desperation or anxiety? To whom does it belong?

Where does it get its energy from?

VII. Widening the flow.

Why not?



We can expand our view. We can let the in-breath welcome the difficult texture we all share. There is enough space in spaciousness. And we can let the out-breath share what is most precious to us. The more we give the more we find.

VIII. Uncovering the treasure.

It can take some days or weeks to get into a rhythm with this practice. As we get more familiar with this technique of reversal—of stopping our usual running away from the difficult and burying the light--we may find that it helps us uncover a natural, uncontrived circle of transforming generosity.

Heart meditations

Gentleness

Metta (maitri in Sanskrit) can be translated from Pali as gentle, friend, or lovingkindness. Cultivating lovingkindness is a crucial counterpart to other spiritual practices such as concentration, awareness, equanimity, and investigation. Traditionally prescribed to relieve fear for those who walked through jungles and slept in caves, metta practice is an antidote for negativity, whether self-hatred, anger, insecurity or resistance to change. Diligent metta practice brings easy sleep, pleasant dreams, protection from danger, a radiant face, a serene mind, and an unconfused death.

The formal practice



Formal metta practice taps into the power of intention, the ability of the mind to set itself moving in a particular direction. The metta practices mentioned below use the silent repetition of words expressing love to self and others. It is not important to feel anything special, but rather to connect again and again to the meaning of the words. Once the following methods are familiar to you, you may experiment with a focus other than words, such as visualization or the simple sense of love.

Start by making yourself comfortable. If you normally sit on the floor, try sitting in a chair or leaning against the wall. With the first few breaths, receive a sense of your body, heart, and mind as they are right now. Some people find it helpful to bring attention to the chest and breathe "through" the heart area.

Forgiveness

Sometimes it is helpful to clear space for metta with a short forgiveness offering. Silently reflect on and then repeat these or other similar words: If I have caused any living being harm, intentionally or unintentionally, I ask forgiveness.

If any living being has caused me harm, intentionally or unintentionally, I offer forgiveness. (Some people feel more comfortable saying, "I offer peace.") If I have caused myself harm, intentionally or unintentionally, I forgive myself.

Loving oneself



The traditional ways to cultivate metta start with oneself. The Buddha said, "You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself, and that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."

To begin the metta practice, dig deeply to find your deepest wishes. Take your time to find your own words in your own language to express two or three or four of these deep wishes. Some of the traditional phrases are: "May I be safe. May I be free from suffering. May I be happy." You can also use single words such as "peace," "love," or "liberation."

Connecting to the meaning, repeat the words slowly, perhaps in rhythm with your breath, for at least 5-10 minutes. Feel as if you have all the time in the world. Once you find the right words, remain with the same words throughout the meditation.

Note that at times it might be helpful to focus lovingkindness on oneself throughout the entire meditation period. However, for some people, it is easier to offer self-acceptance rather than love: "May I accept myself completely. May I accept that I am okay as I am." Or visualize someone who has helped you, but with whom you don't feel tension, and imagine that person sending lovingkindness to you.

Three ways to expand the focus

After focusing metta on yourself, you can continue with one of three formats.



1. Expanding circles

Feel the life in the space just around and including you. Direct the wishes you had for yourself towards these living beings. Mosquitoes, pigeons, trees, human beings, ants, and you. Visualize and/or get a sense of the whole space or of individuals in the space one at a time. For several minutes or more, offer lovingkindness to all the beings in the hall, room, garden, or landscape. For example: "Just as I wish to be liberated, may all beings in this hall be liberated." "May all beings in this hall be happy." Or: "May we all be liberated...." After several minutes, again expand your sense of the moment to include a broader area, offering lovingkindness to the surrounding ashram or neighborhood or ecosystem. Then expand your awareness periodically to embrace the town, the state or province, the country, the planet and the universe. If you prefer, instead of referring to political boundaries such as states and countries, visualize natural "boundaries"--the forest, the river system, the mountain range, the plains, and then the continent or island you happen to be sitting on.

2. In each direction

A second way to practice metta is mentioned frequently in the ancient texts. Once you have spent some time directing lovingkindness towards yourself, you can send it out to all beings in each of the directions one by one: north, south, east, west, above, and below. Visualize and/or get a sense of all beings to the north receiving your friendship as you repeat,



"May all beings to the north, be liberated." Lastly, allow the loving intention to spread out in all directions.

3. Individuals

A third way to practice metta is to focus on specific individuals, as usual starting with yourself. The second person to send metta to is called the benefactor, someone who has helped you, and whom you love and respect--preferably someone who is presently alive, and with whom you are not sexually involved. It may be a facilitator,

friend, or even someone like the Dalai Lama whom you may not know well. The third individual to receive your well-wishing is a person about whom you feel neutral. It can be difficult to think of such a person, since we usually jump to conclusions about others as soon as we meet them. Think of a bus driver, someone you have seen walking down the street, or a bank teller. The fourth person is someone with whom you feel some tension. If it is too difficult to send well wishing to this fourth person, then return to one of the previous steps for a while. With each person, visualize and/or get a sense of her or him, as you connect to the meaning of your chosen words.

Creativity

Once you have become familiar with the suggested forms of metta cultivation, you can be creative and find your own forms. You may find it more effective to start with what is easier and move towards what is



more difficult. For example, if sending love to yourself is excruciating, you can break from the usual pattern and begin with a benefactor or friend. If while sending love to a large group you become distracted, then return to a smaller group for a while. However, metta has a healing power that may be beyond your expectations. Each time you practice, go to the edge of what is comfortable for you and see what happens.

Complementary meditation practices

Deepening into silence and stillness

As silence and stillness begin to fill the hall and the atmosphere in general, it is up to every one of us to take care of them.

More often we may fall “accidentally” into a deep, enjoyable stillness where we would not want to move a little finger.

Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras says this delicious stillness is a way into deep meditation and deep, transformative ease on the planet. Even a single sound, word or look can make unnecessary waves.

Not interacting helps each of us enjoy and be interested in our own “space”- to let joy sink into our bones, and to let fresh, restful energy pull us inward more towards “home.”

Also, as we enter and leave the hall, we can bring tenderness to how we move and what we touch – let the feet love the ground, let the cushions and waterbottles and zippers join the quiet!



At the same time, when we try too hard to be quiet, we tend to get uptight and make more noise accidentally. We are not practicing tightness—just awareness.

Let the words and opinions fall away...

It's as if the silkiness of quiet comes with us when we move and touch, arrive and leave, and with whatever sounds and silence happen.

Complementary meditation practices

Jin Shin Jyutsu overview

The art of being human in a heartfelt and grounded way.

Improvising human openness in flow.

"Through Jin Shin Jyutsu our awareness is awakened to the simple fact that we are endowed with the ability to harmonize and balance ourselves (in rhythm with the universe) physically, mentally and spiritually."

From www.jsjinc.com

Jin means human; Shin means god, heart or spirit; and Jyutsu means tricks, games, art or, as I like to say, improvisation.

This healing art from Japan is not just a technique. The hands and deep heart know or remember how to discover harmony, and help align the whole human on all levels.



By allowing the hands to find their place on the body, a wider harmony that can embrace all our experience comes available.

Many people have been amazed at how much quietness and clarity comes from just holding one of their fingers while they meditate.

Mary Burmeister, a student of Jiro Murai, brought the art of Jin Shin Jyutsu from Japan to America in the 1950's, and courses are now held around the world. Until her death in January of 2008, Mary offered rich teachings often in short, potent sentences:

"What you think of me is none of my business."

"Exhale and be the smile."

"Energy is enthusiasm in motion."

With connections to the whole family of Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine, Jin Shin is accessible and safe for anyone to practice.

For information about official Jin Shin Jyutsu courses:

Email: info@jsjinc.com www.jsjinc.net

www.jinshinjyutsu.com www.jinshinjyutsu.de

Phone: +(1) 80-998-9331

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Complementary meditation practices

Meditative movement

In the optional meditative movement with Jaya, we "go inside" specific parts of the body. Then from that connection, we simply allow movement anywhere in the body. This improvisation practice can feel weird or freeing, but either way is very relevant for daily life.

Meditative movement frees our experience of awareness--and gets us in touch with other ways of knowing:

Being in the body develops direct nonverbal knowing.

We leave room for what is already aware.

Not thinking about what movement comes next, we can feel for the edge of the unknown, and discover what emerges experientially in the flow of movement.

We can notice and let go of the feeling that we are being "watched" and judged by someone separate, whether outside or within us. We notice and put aside right-and-wrong control. Realizing that embarrassment and showing off "are not friends", we contact unshakable dignity.



Tremendous freedom is available as we realize that this separation-- watching, judgment and control--happen in our own minds. And that there is another, undivided way of living.

Resting into relaxed awareness and moving on the edge of the unknown help free us from the control that often infects meditation practice. Playful, simple, deep movement gives access to release and insight.

Inspired by the “embodied anatomy” of Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Jaya's meditative movement also sometimes integrates Jin Shin Jyutsu, deep ecology, and constellation work.

Complementary meditation practices

Silence

To find out what is really going on in our experience, we need to turn off our “personas” and be quiet for a while: no need to please, defend, confirm, get confirmation, seduce, flee, or attack.

Retreats provide an opportunity to relax into deep silence--to rest into the vastness of being, without the need to be somebody.

Enter the silence by:

- * Speaking only with teachers (during interviews and teachings), or with managers (if a practical need arises).
- * Turning off and packing away all cameras and cell phones.



- * Being especially aware of the sounds we make in and near the meditation hall - shoes, doors, cushions, water bottles, etc., can be handled with awareness and quietness.
- * Letting go of reading and writing. Rather we can read this moment, and let life write in this heart.
- * Eliminating physical contact with others during the retreat.
- * Experimenting, if one wishes, with reducing eye contact with others (except during teacher interviews).
- * Enjoying the freshness of moments of relative inner silence.
- * Appreciating how silence allows us to experience the beauty of simple things, as well as an intimacy with oneself and others that is often inaccessible when we speak.

Complementary meditation practices

Simply walking

Simplicity ~ just a human being

walking on the earth

slowly, quickly, or

as you wish

Attention ~ as fluid as the movements



- * not anticipating, expecting, or fixating, holding onto sensations
- * not fighting against thoughts, images, feelings
- * curious about what is called “walking” ~ all the many muscles, movements, textures...

Rhythm ~ one step at a time,
as if you have all the time
in the world
as if being moved by the earth

Centred ~ delicately connected to
feet, legs, belly, or whole body
while also open, spacious,
allowing sounds, sights, mind
to happen in and around

Transparent ~ nature happening
“inside” as well as “outside”



Complementary meditation practices

Stretches to support meditation

These stretches, when done regularly for several months, can help the body sit more comfortably for a longer time. The most important thing to bear in mind while stretching is that each person's body is unique. The challenge is to stay in touch with your own body, and make sure that you don't overdo it. It is especially important that you give the highest authority to your own body's wisdom since I am not an expert. I am just sharing, as a friend, these stretches that I have gathered from various yoga facilitators and physical therapists over the last few years.

Hips

Lie on your back; lift right leg so that foot points to ceiling; bend left knee out to the left. Place left foot on right thigh (bending right leg if you wish). Reach left hand through the angle of left leg and clasp hands behind right thigh; pull right thigh towards abdomen; hold. Reverse.

"Cradle the Baby": sitting with right leg straight out in front, bend left leg with left knee out to side. Place left foot in right elbow or hand, and left knee in left elbow. For more stretch, lift left leg higher and then pull it in closer. Reverse.



Gaumukhasana ("Cow's face position!"): Sit up on sitting bones with the help of a blanket. Cross right leg in front of you, with knee pointing towards the front, and right foot close to, but not under, left buttock. Cross left leg over right, so that eventually left knee will be over right and left foot will be next to right buttock. Gently lean forward if you need more stretch. (To stretch the chest at the same time: bend left arm behind back with elbow down. Bend right arm behind head with elbow up. Clasp hands if you can. If you cannot reach, use a cloth between your hands. Then bend forward with sitting bones still in contact with floor.) Reverse. Hold each side for at least 2-3 minutes. These are tough muscles.

"The Box": Sitting on sit-bones, cross right leg in front with knee pointing diagonally to the front/right. Cross left leg on top. Left outer foot is along the outside of right knee. Left knee would drop into right foot's arch if the hip were flexible. Reverse. (Each side 2-5 minutes.)

"Anton's Pigeon": Go into a lunge with right leg straight behind you and top of right foot and toes on the floor, and right knee off the floor. With sole of left foot flat on floor and not far in front of left hip, turn left foot and bent left knee out towards left. Look back over right shoulder then return to face front. Gently lower right knee, left hip, and torso towards floor until you find a good stretch. If you want more stretch, try turning left knee and foot fully 90° to the left. Use pillows or other supports under torso to relax into the stretch longer. Reverse to stretch right hip.

"Pigeon": Similar to Anton's pigeon with right leg extended behind you, and left knee bent out to left, but now with left knee, lower leg, outer



ankle and foot lying along ground perpendicular to torso and straight right leg. Keep center of gravity over straight leg. Again, supporting torso with pillows may help relax into the stretch.

Hips and legs

Sit with both legs out in front. Use a blanket under the back edge of your buttocks to help you sit up on your sitting bones.

a) Let the in-breath help you pull your toes toward you; the out-breath helps you point your toes away from you. Then the same with the whole foot. Next, keeping in tune with the breath, circle the ankles: first together in each direction, then in opposite directions. Clasp hands under one knee, bend your knee and pull thigh in towards trunk with the in-breath; on the out-breath straighten your leg and point toe. Reverse.

b) Cross left foot up on right thigh, as close to the trunk as you comfortably can. Support left foot with right hand, and let left knee point out to your left. Use left arm to pull left leg towards you on in-breath; down towards floor—gently—on out-breath. Then other side.

c) Starting in same position as in (b) above, circle knee in each direction in tune with the breath. Reverse.

(From the Bihar School of Yoga)

Backs of legs Lie on your back with tailbone (coccyx) on the floor and sacrum off the floor slightly. Bend both knees slightly and rest soles of



feet on floor. Lift left leg (bent is fine) and "point" the ball of the foot towards ceiling. Clasp hands (or wrap a cloth) over ball of foot and gently pull leg down towards trunk. Right leg can be straight if your back is strong. Reverse. Lifting both legs together is the next step.

Standing near a step or low table, put left foot up on the step-table. Lean belly towards thigh with back straight. Reach with your belly not with your shoulders. Reverse.

Complementary meditation practices

Walking in nature

Continually relaxing into the back or core of the body, we may find openness to explore the slippery, potent world of thought. Sometimes the busyness of the mind is interesting in itself.

We may wonder how weightless thoughts that seem to come out of nowhere can be heavy enough to move people in ways we regret.

Relax, receiving experience as it comes through.

Opening to sound, body sensation and the sense of space around us, we can also allow spaciousness to include thoughts as just one more kind of movement.

Sometimes just say very simply in the mind, "thought" or even "movie" when you notice that thinking has taken over.



Then connect with a more direct experience for a while—contact with the ground or the movement of the breath—or just return to a sense of spaciousness and playfulness.

Letting thoughts pass through, notice how often they are habitual reactions. We can start to sense that they are not “ours,” not important, not a problem.

Helpful and inspired thoughts do bubble up every once in a while with a very different quality from the usual—receive them as gifts.

Occasionally, we can experiment playfully with thought to learn to live wisely with it as a tool. Some questioning games:

Investigating: What is a thought? What is it made of? Is image a thought? Numbers? What about the memory of smell?

Counting: In 60 seconds, how many thoughts pass through the mind? (Sometimes playing this game makes thoughts stop; sometimes we find that there are too many layers of thought to capture....)

Tracing back: When we catch ourselves in the midst of a train of thought, we can attempt to trace it back to its starting point. Even when we space out, there is something that records the sequence of thoughts, and we can sometimes access that recording. What we often find is that a sound or unpleasant sensation may have knocked us out of the present moment



into reverie. Other times, it is just the openness at the end of the out-breath.

Emotional tone: When particular thoughts recur again and again, we may need to notice what emotion (or charged belief, interpretation, or energy knot) is fueling them. Then we can be with the emotion more directly.

Fantasy: Sometimes when a cycle of thinking repeats many times, we could try doing the opposite of what we think we are supposed to do: we could let the fantasy happen fully, without guilt. Our very resistance (often in the form of shame, guilt, or judgment) is what keeps the fantasy alive.

"Feeling" the thoughts: When the mind is relatively loving and quiet, we could try to sense thoughts in a different way. We could try to "feel" them, in a way that is more subtle than emotional feeling. If thoughts are ducks swimming on the water of the mind, then we try to feel how the legs are moving underneath the water.

Aha!: Notice and feel the quality of the many moments when we suddenly realize we have been lost in thinking. Every once in a while, we can let ourselves drop down into that deeper awareness that is already going on, already at ease with the fact that the thinking mind is busy and the "I" spaced out. Who or what else is here?



Complementary meditation practices

Walking meditation instructions in depth

Simplicity ~ just a human being walking on the earth

Let wide mind receive the flow of sensations from your feet, or belly, or whole body.

Step into now, leaving behind the past.

Funny how challenging it can be just to walk, without adding anything.

If you walk in a circle or back and forth about 15-30 meters, you won't need to think about where to go. And every once in a while it is a good experiment to wander.

Feel free to walk slowly or quickly. Retreat is a good time to play with slow walking sometimes.

If you like you can play with walking as if you have all the time in the world, as if being moved by the earth, and as if you were a child or a wild animal.



When you feel tense or disconnected, you can change our speed, breathe out deeply, or pause and look at something natural like a leaf or the sky or our hand. Or close your eyes for a moment. And then just walk. It does not need to be perfect.

No need to “watch” yourself walk—dive more inside the body and the movement.

Let there be room for thoughts and feelings, but also room for the beauty of movement, and room for just sensation, for walking happening as if by itself.

Learn the difference between sensation and mind, like when the mind anticipates the next step, or fixates on an image or memory of walking.

Maybe there is room for feeling grateful towards our feet or the ground.

And we can have room to be curious about what we call “walking” ~ all the many connections, movements, textures ~ and curious about how “walking” is ungraspable.

With eyes open, we can leave room for the world and be transparent, with life happening inside and outside.



