

Finding Ease through Meditation, parts 1 and 2 summary

Workshop led by Lama Linda via Palpung-Richmond PST Zoom summer 2024

Some basic reminders about meditation:

- In meditation, awareness and relaxation are equally important.
- In meditation, we're not trying to control our experience, just observe it.
- Meditation is as easy and effortless as watching TV or a sunset.
- The only work of meditation is the 3 solitudes: of body, speech, and mind.
- Solitude of mind, aka the process of meditation, simply means disengaging from thinking about whatever perceptions, thoughts and emotions are freely and naturally arising in our mindstream, by nonjudgmentally letting go whenever we find we are distracted, and returning to simple awareness.
- Slightly more effort is required to focus on an object, but not much.

Some ways to connect with relaxation and ease before meditation:

- Feel the support of the ground and the vastness of space all around.
- Body scan (whole body or a step-by-step survey, fast or slow)
- The Cycle* from the Alexander Technique (see next page)
- Drop thinking, and let the knowing mind drop into the body;** this can be supported by vigorous movement and/or a deep, sudden exhalation

Some techniques to reconnect with ease during meditation:

- Break your meditation! Literally take a break. While staying seated, stretch or move a little bit, think some thoughts, then lightly renew your intention.
- Drop the judging mind that is trying to "do it right": drop all intention, effort, and judgment and just be with your stream of experience however it unfolds, whatever comes up in your mind: there's even a mantra from Tsoknyi Rinpoche: "om, who cares, so what, so ha!" **
- Rather than try to block or change whatever is holding your attention, zoom out from it; expand your awareness into panoramic or all-inclusive awareness; or let your focus be space itself (physical and mental).
- Switch it up, change the channel to a different focus than the one you've been using (open awareness, the breath, sounds, a visualized Buddha or other visual object, whatever feels fresh and inviting in the moment).
- Body scan
- The Cycle,* or just connect with ease a few times by noticing a place of relative ease anywhere in your body (just noticing, not trying to prolong it)

***Instructions for the Cycle**, formally known as the CyCle™, a practice or “etude” developed by Alexander Technique teacher Mio Morales for using our mind to connect with embodied ease. Sitting comfortably with hands in lap, lightly wrap the fingers of your right hand around your left thumb. Count to four, and on each number do some “constructive thinking,” either “Where else do I seem to be easing a bit?” or “I’m free to notice ease.” Sometimes you can let go of the words and just connect with ease directly. The numbers help us remember to do it again and again rather than try to hold onto it. Trying to hold on, as in meditation, is just more tension.

Constructive thinking consists simply of noticing any part of your body where there is relative ease, i.e., more ease than in another part of your body that may have tension or pain. We just ask ourselves, is there any place in my body where I feel more ease? We don’t try to let go of tension or pain, we just notice where there’s more ease – and there is always relative ease somewhere! The place of relative ease will likely be different each time we look.

After each count of 4, we shift to the next finger, through all 10 fingers. This takes just a few minutes, and each repetition connects us with a greater overall sense of ease. If you don’t have time for the full Cycle, it’s fine to do 3 repetitions for each finger (TriCycle) or two (BiCycle) or even just one (UniCycle).

The Cycle can be done before meditation, during a “break” from meditation if you’ve lost the sense of ease and relaxation, or any time during the day. It’s recommended to do the Cycle a couple of times a day a few hours apart, such as morning and evening, if you have time, to build up a habit of constructive thinking and connecting with ease. I find that the Cycle or a little constructive thinking is an easy and effortless transition into meditation, whether I’m on the cushion or going about my daily life.

In the recording of the workshop part 2, **the Cycle can be found at 58:40.**

**** “Dropping” is a practice Tsoknyi Rinpoche teaches** for keeping our meditation relaxed and light-hearted. He learned it from one of his root teachers, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. He has a lot of videos on YouTube and an online curriculum, “Fully Being,” to help meditators connect with a healthy and relaxed sense of well-being, an important foundation for dharma practice. Tsoknyi Rinpoche is Mingyur Rinpoche’s older brother.

There are a few videos here: <https://tsoknyirinpoche.org/guided-meditations>

The one called “Finding the Body” is a good place to start; it includes both dropping and “om who cares so what so ha.”

More resources:

In the recording of “**Finding Ease through Meditation, Part 2**,” the first 50 minutes are a review of why relaxation is just as important as awareness in meditation, and why meditation doesn’t need to feel like work. Specific **techniques for connecting with ease begin at 50:00 minutes**.

In the recording, you can hear Marilyn ring **Palpung-DC’s amazing gong** in its full glory at 40 seconds and again, slightly shorter, at 1:33:15.

Mingyur Rinpoche “Transforming Anxiety into Awareness” (44 minutes)

This advice applies not only to anxiety but to any emotion or mental state that makes meditation difficult. He talks a lot about panic, which he has a lot of personal experience with, and also touches on depression and other emotional states. I highly recommend this teaching to everyone, and encourage watching it again from time to time.

The 4-step process begins at 22:40 minutes; the first 20 minutes establish the groundwork

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTw5XQqBT8o&list=PLphAG0_XIPIEYLyXfhVYF6tfUW9PZF3f&index=5

Mingyur Rinpoche, “Meditating with Pain” (5 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7NEiKkdwq8>

For more on the three solitudes, see *Ornament of Precious Liberation* by Gampopa (also known as *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*), in the chapter on meditation; or *Path to Buddhahood* by Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, a guide to Gampopa’s text for Western students, in the chapter “Fifth Paramita: Meditation,” which begins on p99. I recommend this book (or any book by Ringu Tulku) to all practitioners; they are very straightforward and friendly.