

# Morning Meditation: Vipassanā – 1. Developing a steady attention

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

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Why is it so important to sit in the morning before we start 'doing'? It is simply because when we sit in vipassana we enter into more sensitive level of awareness, which means we find ourselves in a different relationship to the world than the relationship that a non-vipassana awareness has with the world. You know from your own practice that different principles and attitudes come into play when we develop this level of consciousness. And just in case we then feel superior, it is good to remind ourselves that even when we are sitting we rarely keep this up, never mind during daily life. More often than not we slip back down into greed, hatred and delusion. In fact, only a fully liberated person could maintain an unbroken vipassana awareness. That said, we should begin our sit with a firm resolute determination to establish right awareness. Using the noting, a deliberate noting, to keep the intellect tethered to the object, we place the attention on the feelings caused by the rise and fall of the abdomen. (Should you be feeling the breath at another point, please adjust these directions accordingly.) The easiest way to establish a steady attention is to the pleasant and subtle feelings of these neutral sensations. To taste their gentleness and to notice how the calm rhythm also calms the mind. To acknowledge this soft breath and calm mind as a resting place, a peaceful place. It sometimes helps to bring to mind a time or place where you feel such calm restfulness – perhaps while sitting in a park or in your garden or indeed in your armchair. Now, just because we have made a resolute determination to stay on the breath, it very rarely happens. The day-to-come impinges on us. Our worries, aversions and excitements don't seem to obey our will! Then we may feel tired or restless. Yet we keep noting these states and gently turning away from them back to breath. And – most important – when we go back to the breath, to repeat that resolution. This resolution is not hard or harsh as if we are going into battle, but more an encouragement, a cajoling, as we might tempt a child away from some obstinate rebellion. For the monkey mind (the Buddha's description), is, alas, beyond our control such are its unwholesome conditionings. But it does offer us an opportunity to develop gentle patience and calm persistence! We keep doing this until we feel 'somewhat concentrated' – a favourite phrase of main Mahasi teacher, Sayadaw U Janaka. What that means in practice is left entirely up to the mediator. And how long it takes depends on the frame of mind we are in. The more restless or the more sleepy, the longer it may take. But hopefully the preparatory practices of some small ritual and the 'default position' of abiding in calm attentiveness will have helped. But as soon as we know ourselves to be sort of steady, then we can bring in the quality of investigation.

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