

Sitting Meditation

For Newcomers: You may want to sit in a chair or a cushion with your back straight. Your knees should not be higher than your hips. Place your hands naturally on your lap. You can close your eyes or gently leave them open.

Our teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, says "Sitting meditation is very healing. It is like returning home to give ourselves full attention and care".

Sitting meditation is an opportunity to calm our body and mind and to notice what is going on within and around you right here and right now. We use our breath as an anchor to the present moment. You can't breathe in the past or the future and the breath is always with you where ever you go.

Carefully follow your breath as it goes in and out of your body. Let your mind become spacious and more relaxed with each in- and out-breath. Let your body breathe you. If your mind strays from the breath, gently return to it. This coming home to our conscious breath in the present moment is what this practice is all about. As thoughts arise, observe them with an accepting and loving eye. Just allow any thoughts to float on your breath. Feel free to adjust your sitting posture should discomfort arise. Give the same mindful attention to your body as you do to your breath.

One way to help maintain awareness of breathing is to recite a gatha or mindfulness verse. As you breathe in, silently say, "In." As you breathe out, silently say, "Out."

You may wish to use this simple gatha:

Breathing in, I calm my body. *(Silently say calm)*

Breathing out, I smile. *(Silently say smile)*

Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment. *(Silently say present moment)*

Breathing out, I know it is a wonderful moment. *(Silently say wonderful moment)*

Enjoy your breathing.