

## 2018\_01\_28\_am1\_Shamatha\_LMC.mp4

*recognizing and not taking refuge in our usual attachments, importance of and methods to deeply relax e.g. many short sessions*

[00:12:21] In our proper practice of the Buddhadharma... there are, in the meditation itself, many things which are of *practical* significance. And some things which may or may not be of practical significance, or at least not immediately, apparently so. In our lives as human beings, though I think most animals do this too, we become attached to various things which feel like they're a support for us. Such as getting food, having shelter and clothing and so on. These attachments are not so important and they have practical significance. But we also... align ourselves and become attached with... ideas. Attached to friends. Attached to our hatred of our enemies. And each one of us could make a long list of these things and personally, I would encourage you to do so. Kind of like painting a picture of our ordinary experience and our relationship to it. That exercise can also be helpful in the beginning of our practice this morning, which always begins with going for refuge.

[00:15:23] It's helpful, before turning our minds to refuge in the Buddha, refuge in our own awakened mind, to also be *intimate* with ourselves about the refuges that we take... regularly. Each day when we wake up... and all during the day and even in our sleep. Turning to refuge in things which are... often not so helpful. So for that reason, we begin our session with going for refuge formally to the Buddha. ... Which is really equivalent to going for refuge to our own, inherently... awakened mind. Which we are not yet completely familiar with. Our tradition of Buddhism is directed to becoming completely familiar with that awakened mind.

[00:17:03] Somewhat paradoxically, it's more effective... if we just follow the steps one by one... as opposed to our *usual* method, when we want something... we grasp after it. We save the money or we go to the store. We buy what we want, or we steal it, and leave. However it is, we work to get the things that we want. So we might think that we want to become aware of the awakened mind. It's fairly clear, should be clear, that we cannot do that by brute force. We cannot do that by manipulating ourselves... into believing that we are indeed awakened. So the path that's been laid out and practiced over the millennia... is what we use in order to come from the place of bewilderment and confusion... to the clarity of that awakened mind. So we'll begin this morning by reciting the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer together. And while we do so... listen to yourself. Listen to the recitation of everyone else who's saying it. And at the end of the prayer, then we just relax a little bit. Sit for a few minutes and then we'll begin the next step. So now Refuge & Bodhicitta. Three times together.

**sangha** [00:21:01] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:22:49] Perhaps you share this experience. I can say from my own side... the single most important quality for fruitfully engaging in the practice of calm abiding, and indeed, perhaps the entire path... is the ability to *deeply* relax. Not the relaxation that comes by virtue of sleep. But deeply relax while being completely awake. ... [00:24:07] When the mind is busy or, as we say, when the mind is moving... it's not so easy... to relax. When the mind and the body are still... the relaxation... becomes... easy. When the mind is still and the body is still and we feel mentally and physically relaxed... we experience some level of clarity.

[00:25:52] That clarity is not something that we make. It's something that we all... inherently possess. That is why we say, that we are each fully endowed... with the primordially pure awakened mind.

[00:26:33] Our puzzle... is that while endowed with that fully awakened mind... perhaps mysteriously, we don't recognize it. Not recognizing it, leads us... into... a realm of confusion. And our bewilderment... around that confusion... is an obstacle... to relaxing. So perhaps one of the most effective means of learning to relax... both the mind and the body... is to discover directly... how easy it is to be successful... at relaxing. How easy it is to experience... a still mind.

[00:28:07] And we do that by engaging in... many short sessions. To begin with, quite short so that we... can be assured of success. If you meditate for... months and years and have no sense... of an ability to relax and to rest the mind in a state of clarity... we become discouraged. Ultimately, we abandon the practice, or use our meditation time... for something else. So success in the meditation is of great importance. Normally, the practice of calm abiding... is about resting our awareness on an object. So we practice relaxing by placing our mind on... something. And just resting there with mind as if it found a chair to sit in. All of us can do this. But in the beginning, it's best to engage in shorter sessions. *Many* short sessions.

[00:30:17] So commonly, we place our awareness on our breath. ... And just follow the breath coming and going.

[00:31:03] But if we find that after a minute or two or longer... that we quickly become distracted during the period when we're *supposed* to be just aware of the breath... then you can try a slightly different approach. ... So first of all, let's understand that... the important result of the practice of calm abiding is that we actually succeed... at resting the mind... in a state of clarity, undistracted or not moving. We *must* succeed. So if we say that, we call one meditation session... a mere 3 seconds... when you just... rest your awareness on... if you wish, 3 seconds of your breath. In other words, while you're breathing and while you're aware of your breathing, you just allow your mind to relax. Free of thoughts. Free of attachment. Free of opinions. And you do that for just a few seconds.

[00:33:07] Now we often make... a significant mistake. We sit down and we meditate *until*... we're distracted. Kind of like you sit down to a meal. And when you've finished eating, you get up and go about your business. If you follow that model, it's not likely that you will... become proficient at calm abiding. Or if you do, it will take a *very* long time. So if you... place your awareness on your breath... as you're breathing, and just for a few seconds, allow... your mind to rest there on the movement of the breath. When I say just for a short time, I mean... less than 10 seconds. Maybe 3 or 3 seconds. And then you finish the session... by just letting go of it. You finish at a time when actually the mind is resting... clearly... there on your breath. So you've *intentionally* finished the session. And perhaps you've been successful. If it's short enough, the probability of success is high.

[00:35:11] Then you just leave the meditation for a little bit. Could be 5, 10 seconds, could be a minute. Could be anything, and then you *intentionally* begin again. Place your awareness on your breath. As if you were following it, but following it just with your mind... for just... 3 seconds, 10 seconds. If you're quite good at it, 15 seconds. *End* the session *before* you're distracted. If you end the session *after* you are distracted, you have made a mistake. So you need to begin *fresh* again. Your meditation will naturally get longer... with each success. With each failure... if you don't engage in it correctly... you will become more distracted. It will be more difficult. So for

a few minutes then... follow this process to the best of your ability. First the session, then the relaxation, letting go of the meditation. And after a while, doing it again. Just in and out of it... like that for the duration of this session for another 20 minutes or so.

*[00:37:13] period of meditation*

**sangha** *[00:52:22] dedicating the merit*