

## 2018\_02\_25\_am1\_Shamata\_LMC.mp4

*recognizing our awakened mind perhaps by first recognizing it in another, placing awareness on experience and resting there, working with distractions by using many short sessions*

[00:06:22] Well, good morning to all of you. Perfect day for being inside. So you have no excuse. ... So our schedule this morning is... first, now a period of meditation... with some *brief* instruction. ... Then we'll take a break. And return for second short session. Followed by a time when we can... raise questions and clarify things about the meditation or the Dharma in general.

[00:09:32] So first of all... it's important for us every time that we... plan to sit down and meditate, whether it's in a group or alone... that we remind ourselves of why we're doing it. So at the very top of our list... is the practice of going for refuge... to the Buddha. Reminding ourselves at the same time... to be *careful*... in our daily activities, and certainly... in our meditation practice... *not*... to go for refuge... in the confusion of the world. Which is so easy to do... in times like this when the confusion... feels like a high tide. It is still the case... that we are each inherently endowed... with the fully awakened mind. Essentially requiring nothing of us except to recognize that fact. Not to recognize it conceptually! That's so easy, you can read that it's there in any book. But to recognize the *actual*... presence... of an awakened intelligence... and understand that all of our practice... all of our gatherings... all of the work that we put into a place like this to come and sit together... all of these are meant to be... to recognize that awakened mind.

[00:12:15] Not a single living being... *lacks* it. And yet it is truly rare to recognize it. The great majority... of those who recognize that awakened nature... *do so*... in part... by virtue of having... felt like we recognized it in another. A great being, someone who we hold as our... inspiration for practice. Sometimes we recognize it in *that* person. ... When we recognize it, no matter what the source is... we have an opportunity to rejoice. And joy is one of the *key*... elements... in all of the formulas... through which we accomplish the Dharma. ... So when we see it in another, it's time to rejoice. And when we recognize it in ourselves, no less... it is time to rejoice.

[00:14:25] Since this morning, our practice is the practice of shamatha, and we'll begin first with the recitation of the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer. The refuge being... recognizing the utter lack of *confusion*... in the awakened state... if only conceptually. Recognizing that our... relationships with others... is cause for joy. And this does not mean... that someone else... *owes us joy*. But rather, it's like... it's one of the ingredients that we carry around with ourselves... all the time... to attain full awakening. So we want to remind ourselves... *regularly*... that joy, along with loving kindness, compassion and equanimity are key. ... We'll start with a recitation of Refuge & Bodhicitta three times together.

**sangha** [00:15:57] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer.*

[00:17:53] As we know, there are a... myriad of ways to engage... in all of the... extraordinarily vast... teachings on meditation. And even the simple practice of shamatha... which requires little more than the ability to just relax. You can do that now if you wish ... *Relax*. ... And in that relaxation... it's likely it begins with the body. The body relaxed is a support... for the mind to relax. ... Relaxing the mind... is the first step, in a way, to the practice of shamatha, calm abiding. Because you cannot proceed calmly... if you are not relaxed. If you are having angst... or ill will... or confusion of almost any kind... it is very difficult to relax. So therefore, it's *especially* important to *practice* it... regularly during the day. Take a moment or two and relax... at any time.

In our practice of shamatha... the usual method is to place our awareness... on something like our breath. Or some object. ... Could be a statue of the Buddha. It could be a stone. And commonly... back to the breath... we use the breath.

[00:20:59] The breath is helpful... for a couple of reasons. One is... when we rest our awareness on the breath... we are resting our awareness... on a continuous flow of experience. Breathing... is that experience. But within the breath itself... memories arise... opinions arise... distractions... thinking about what you're going to have for lunch, or what you're going to do today. We want to *train our minds*... so that when we sit down and relax the body... the mind naturally also settles. And we stay *with* it. Not in the sense of... a blank... stare of some kind. But we stay with the experience... of the body. ... Or some experience in the body, like... some pain... or some itch... or the feeling of our clothing on the skin of our bodies. ... We don't need to pay attention... for example, to that clothing. But we *need* to pay attention to all of the experiences which arise. In the manner of just... recognizing the experience... *not* as a name like pain or itch... or clothing against the skin. We need to pay attention to the *actual* experience. ... And if you're using your body in this way for the meditation... then you bring your awareness... to the experience... whatever you're using. And you *place* your awareness on that experience and *rest* there.

[00:24:34] Now, I want to say one thing about... the *problems* that we have in this sometimes. We often get caught... in a kind of vicious circle... where we can place our awareness upon some experience... for a few moments and then we're distracted. ... Commonly... we may be able to... begin our meditation... in an appropriate and useful way. And then, make the mistake... of ending the meditation with distractions. ... We want... and it's *important*... to end the meditation from within the space of stillness... and awareness. In order to do that... one of the most *effective* methods... in the process of training ourselves... is to keep the sessions quite short.

[00:26:37] You might say there's... almost no such thing as a session that is *too* short. Especially if it aids... bringing the meditation to a close... in the *context* of the meditation rather than the context of a distraction. So if you can... *engage* in this way, place your awareness on an *experience*... again, the body's a good starting place. You place your awareness on that experience. Settle it. And even if you only settle it for a few seconds... and then intentionally... *relax*... and let go of the meditation. While your awareness is on the *experience*... you may also have... the experience... that, for example, the... physical sensation that you had your awareness on, maybe that sensation disappeared. ... If you can end the meditation... at that point, before you begin to *conceptualize* the process... that's very good. ... Repeat the process as often as necessary. And we'll continue for that, with that for a while.

[00:28:44] *period of meditation*

[00:44:18] So just a reminder, as we... come up to the... end of this session. A couple of key points and then we'll just take a few minutes and... you can try again. If you found you were making mistakes, perhaps this could help.

[00:45:01] We often... more or less naturally, hold the view... that our meditation sessions... should be long and free of distraction. Yet we almost never *get* that result, precisely. And part of the... support for missing that, is that we... think that the session *must* be... long. That the longer the session is, the greater the success. ... So we need to actually... more or less eradicate that view. In the practice of shamatha, I think it's better to hold the view that... *success* is preeminent. Success is... the mind resting on an experience... as we mentioned... for *any* period

of time whatsoever... that the mind rested there on the experience, undistracted. So if you place your awareness... *on* an experience... and rest it there... it's highly probable that if you don't carry it beyond a few seconds, that you will succeed. ... Succeed in having the experience of beginning the session... and *ending* the session... without distraction. *That* experience, of beginning and ending without a distraction... is perhaps the single most important thing. ... You could, in a short time, have a dozen... successful sessions. ... Especially likely if you made those sessions quite short. So we'll just sit here now for another couple of minutes and... you can add this to your repertoire of experiences and instructions.

[00:47:46] *short period of meditation*  
**sangha** [00:49:35] *dedicating the merit*

[00:50:20] So we'll have a little break now and... time to use the restrooms and... we'll come back in a little bit and during the break... do your best to... observe silence. And if you can... continue to... bring your awareness to your experiences... in short sessions, just while you're walking around, sitting down, whatever... it's appropriate, at any time. So take your break and we'll ring the bell when it's time to come back.