

2018_07_22_am1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

defining and working with distractions, using experience as object of meditation

[00:04:12] So for those of you who are not familiar with the schedule... we will recite the refuge prayer together and then a few very short instructions for the practice of zhinay. Short, but hopefully clear enough. And the zhinay practice will go about 45 minutes. Then we'll take a break. And following the break we'll come back and have our usual open conversation so that you can ask questions, make statements.... And then we will finish... just about eleven o'clock. ... So we'll recite together three times the refuge prayer and the aspiration to benefit all sentient beings.

sangha [00:06:40] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:08:42] First, a reminder for most of you who are familiar with the meditation that we call calm abiding or technically in Tibetan, zhinay. The practices of zhinay or calm abiding is about... developing the ability... to rest the mind without distraction. ... One of the... sometimes, misunderstanding of calm abiding is that we should have... no brain activity. Kind of like, you're dead. This is a serious misunderstanding. The issue here, when we say that calm abiding is... the skill, if you will, of being able to sit or stand or lie down or even while you're walking... you have the ability... to *rest* your awareness... free of distraction, by virtue of *all* the things... that are in our minds floating around. Those things are not *inherently* distractions. ... You could look at the back of the person in front of you and just allow your mind... to rest on that image. We would not call that a distraction. So it's important to make this distinction.

[00:11:17] Distractions are usually those things... which we are drawn to... and by virtue of our... connection with that thing... we lose our meditation. So, for example... if you rest your awareness... on the shape of a cup of water. ... And your mind rests... simply and easily on that cup of water... but then maybe... you realize that there is no water in the cup. And in that moment, your attachment to the water becomes a distraction. But in the next moment, when you realize you have been fooled... not that there was no water in the cup... that's not what fooled you. What fooled you was... having an attachment to the water that *wasn't* in the cup.

[00:13:01] So this morning, I want to suggest an alternative practice of shamatha, or calm abiding. It's a *deeper* practice. Not necessarily more difficult... but deeper in a number of ways... which I'll leave for you to discover. ... So the practice is... as always, we begin by sitting down and being still. Stilling the body. Not so difficult. Stilling the mind... is another matter. So in this case, we actually want to have the *sense* that... we don't care whether the mind is still or not. ... Each thing, each *experience*... whether the experience is physical... or mental, like some recollection of some previous experience. It doesn't matter what it is. But, we want to make that experience, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant... that becomes the object of our meditation.

[00:15:04] Pretty simple terms of... what we *intend* to do. Likely, we find that more difficult to place our awareness upon... *whatever* experience arises. Perhaps you're recalling something that you ate yesterday. And you're just remembering it. So, before it becomes... a full-on conversation with yourself... put your awareness on the memory that's unfolding. Without any intention to change it, extend it, cut it short... it's just whatever it is. Put your awareness there... and let it rest there.

[00:16:24] Could be your legs are uncomfortable sitting cross-legged. ... You could just change the position you're sitting in. That would be okay, too. But before you do that, you could also... bring your awareness... to the discomfort... of sitting on a cushion on the floor. Doesn't have to be for long. Could be 10 seconds. Or maybe as long as a minute if you're up for it. And then that experience gradually dissolves on its own... and inevitably, you're confronted again with another experience.

[00:17:23] So if you can... think to yourself... I'm going to become this morning a *professional*... at this. When the experience arises, I will see it. I will gaze directly at it without attachment, without aversion and even without indifference. As long as my awareness is there, I'll notice it. And when that object of my attention... dissolves or vanishes on its own... I will sit... quietly... until another experience arises. Which you can usually measure in seconds. ... And so like that... as experiences continuously flow through our minds... we continuously have... a *fresh*... object upon which to rest our awareness. So if you can take... that instruction and work with it... you may find something useful there.

[00:18:51] *period of meditation*
sangha [00:41:24] *dedicating the merit*