

## 2018\_09\_02\_1\_Shamtha\_LMC.mp4

*detailed instruction for calm abiding: bringing awareness to all our experiences, starting with relaxing and including one breath shamatha, bodhicitta and equanimity*

[00:03:07] So, good morning to all of you on this bright day. On this first Sunday of the month... our teaching and practice will be... about... calm abiding. ... And we'll begin with just a few comments about... the *basis* of our practice today. We are all intimately familiar with... our individual distracted lives. And so, for ourselves and on behalf of all beings... we always begin by... turning our minds... from the... various things that distract us. Usually meaningless things, that we nonetheless put an... in proportion, out of proportion... amount of energy into following. ... And we will look at this... tendency towards distraction today. And explore... some ways in which we can use that... energy, those distractions... in ways that will benefit, not only ourselves, but... hopefully all beings.

[00:07:09] So, each time that we come together... even if we are the only person sitting down, like yourself in your room at home... it's always best to begin by turning the mind to refuge. A *meaningful* refuge. Turning the mind with the aspiration to recognize the *nature* of our mind, which is... fully endowed with all the qualities of a Buddha... just needing to be awakened.

[00:08:03] So, as we recite the... short refuge liturgy again today... while you're reciting it... do your best to do one simple thing. To *notice* while you're reciting it, that you *are* reciting it. And that while you're reciting it... you will also notice... that you are... having various experiences. Just like you would if you were outside... walking in the sun or... going shopping. If you can start the practice in this way this morning, then we'll elaborate on that and work with that for the remainder... the rest of the day, using various methods. So, we'll begin by reciting the refuge liturgy together three times.

**sangha** [00:09:36] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:11:37] First, as we begin... consider... consider that... even our... practice of such a simple... practice as calm abiding... a simple, straightforward method... when practiced, allows the mind... to settle evenly in a *somewhat* undistracted state. So, first this morning... understand one thing. When we... engage... in *any* of our meditation practices... thoughts and feelings... are continuously arising in our minds. ... That stream of... thoughts and feelings... are unimpeded. In case you didn't notice... they never stop. So, it is not... realistic... to think... that the practice of calm abiding... would result in your being something akin... to a corpse. The issue is not that... the mind is continually... manifesting experiences. The issue is that we are... demanding that it be different, on the one hand. Wishing that the distraction was other than it is, perhaps. I was hoping I'd be distracted by... the hot fudge sundae was going to have at lunch or something else.

[00:15:19] Our job is *not*... to become blank, but to become aware. And the objects of our awareness... are continuously there... in this very moment, in the next moment and so on. So, when we... think of and practice calm abiding... put aside... the idea... that the mind... will stop manifesting experiences, thoughts and feelings and all the rest. Our objective is to be aware of all of that. To see the thoughts and feelings. ... So, in this first session we can... relax. Really, you can't engage... in the meditation without relaxing. So, if you're not relaxed... better start

there. Physically relaxed. Mentally relaxed, even if you are... struggling with issues in your life... you still need to relax with the struggle.

[00:17:13] And so, there was a period a long time ago... by a long time, I mean, like 20 years... we introduced a practice... of calm abiding, which is also called shamatha, we introduced the... thing that we called one breath shamatha. The idea was that you could place your awareness on the movement of your breath for one breath. Coming in, going out. At *least* that much. And since that's so obvious and so easy to do... maybe you could do it twice. And again, since that's so easy, you might be able to do it a third time. And so on. One at a time. Not hoping for some... hour of undistracted meditation. Forget it. ... You don't even get that when you're dead.

[00:18:54] So begin the meditation by thinking first of what we call bodhicitta, the aspiration... that through our practice... we will benefit all sentient beings. Indeed... even more importantly... it is the aspiration to benefit all sentient beings that leads us to the practice in the first place. So, it's very important to begin [with] that. And as often... as you can... remind yourself... that *this* is the foundation of the practice. The wish... to be an agent for all beings. Now, in order to be an agent for all beings, we must... also have a firm foundation of equanimity. After all... without equanimity... the word *all* doesn't have much meaning.

[00:20:33] So, begin this morning with that sense that... your aspiration... your interest, your commitment... even just for this morning... is to practice on behalf of all beings. And later today... we'll discover even some more important things about that aspiration... and the role that it plays... in our meditation. For now, one breath at a time. Bring your awareness to your breath as you... inhale and exhale. Without judgment, without hope, without fear... just watch. Just be present. Just be aware... of what is occurring... in your stream of experience, as you... inhale and exhale, as the breaths come and go. And as you reiterate... the underlying aspiration to benefit all beings. So, we'll work with that for a while... best as you can.

[00:22:09] *period of meditation*  
**sangha** [00:50:59] *dedicating the merit*

[00:51:51] So, we're going to take a break. And on the break... to the best of your ability... bring your attention to your experience, whatever it is. Bring your attention to your breathing, which is just another way of noticing the experiences unfold. So, to the best of your ability in this session ... on your break, try to pay attention, and we'll have a little extra teaching on that when we come back after the break. And if you can maintain silence on the break, that will also be beneficial, I'm sure. Okay?