

2019_01_06_1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

Carrying Practice: *train to recognize nature of mind by placing awareness on experience for short times many times*

[00:08:47] So, this morning, as... is our usual... beginning with the recitation... for the practice of calm abiding. Which includes, again... in addition to the sense of turning our minds to refuge... in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha... we also give rise to bodhicitta, the 'aspirational variety'. So, there are two kinds of bodhicitta. There is the aspirational bodhicitta, which is our *wish* to... engage in the practice of bodhicitta and to manifest its fruit... of unbounded, loving kindness, compassion, joy in the positive deeds of others... and equanimity. ... So, we'll recite the Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer together three times to begin.

sangha [00:10:54] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:13:05] Any of our Dharma practices... and primarily... any of the meditation practices that we engage in is always first prefaced by turning our minds to refuge in the Buddha, refuge in the teachings. We need also to understand... that our ultimate intention... is to recognize the nature of mind itself. ... Which is, in truth, not so difficult. Since every... thought and every word we speak, every experience we have... comes to us through the nature of mind itself. So, in one way, the truth is... we do not need to *look* for the nature of mind... since it is present with us before we were born and will be after we end this life. Something so profound, so important... it would seem... it must be easy to recognize. ... But we have trained ourselves... to not recognize it. Trained ourselves to be occupied... mentally and physically... with so many things which *do not* bear the fruit of recognizing the nature of mind.

[00:16:04] So, in the practice of shamatha... every time we engage in the practice... every time we place our awareness upon a breath, which is coming and going... essentially, every time we recognize any experience whatsoever... that we are having... we are recognizing... in essence... mind itself. Mind *itself* is with us all the time. The nature of that mind itself... however, is... sometimes difficult to recognize. So, in the practice of shamatha, we want to set the stage... that will allow us to recognize that nature. ... We can do that... most effectively... for most of us... by engaging in *small* pieces of the practice itself. So, resting our awareness... on the experience of breathing, for example, is one method. Resting our awareness on... some object that we place in front of ourselves is another method, and then we just keep placing our awareness on that object. Could be a small statue. Could be anything... a piece of cloth. ... It's very easy to place our minds on our breath or on an object external to ourselves. It's very difficult... most often... to hold our awareness... *still*. We tend to move all around. ... So, one... method, which can be extremely useful, if practiced *diligently*, and it *can* be practiced diligently without interrupting a *single* thing in your life. Perhaps you have an experience like... a physical experience. Maybe your legs... are tired of sitting this morning or you have a backache. Or maybe you have an experience that occurred yesterday, but when you remember it today, it's still an experience, just not the same as yesterday. If we try to rest our awareness on any of these things... for a long period of time... it's *very* difficult to hold the awareness there.

[00:20:38] But if you place your awareness on... a little pain in your leg. Or perhaps a sense of joy from something you remember yesterday. Or a sense of joy for something you plan to do tomorrow. It doesn't matter what the experience is. In the context of our ordinary lives, it makes a *great* deal of difference. In our meditation practice, it really doesn't matter what the experience

is. Though it has been said... once we have a little bit of... successful practice... it has been said... that the best experiences to place our awareness on... are difficult experiences. Physically difficult, mentally difficult, interpersonal relationships difficult... whatever it is. But difficulty does not translate into... difficulty in placing our awareness on that experience.

[00:22:14] Again, it has been said... by some very authoritative figures... that placing your awareness on... difficult experiences, actually aids... and abets... the probability... that you will be more successful... at resting your awareness there. *Epecially*... if the experience is something that cannot be avoided. Perhaps something uncomfortable. Perhaps something, something *extremely* pleasant. It's very difficult to avoid... those kinds of experiences. So, sometimes we decide not to meditate because... we're having a difficult time... and we just can't quite do it. Then, *especially*, if that difficult experience arises and we can place our awareness there... there is a... *high* probability... that we will actually be more successful... then when we place our awareness on... experiences which are not particularly potent. The experiences, in other words, that are in the 'ho hum, so what' category... are *not* the best experiences to use.

[00:24:22] So, this is easy to try. And I'd like to say try it for the duration of this morning. But I would even *more* like to say... try it for the remainder of this day... or this week or this month. If you can engage in this practice... let us say, 10 times a day. No matter where you are, you stop... and place your awareness on... whatever experience you're having. Not your *idea* of the experience. The *actual* experience. Not your *thinking* of the experience, like, oh, I'm looking forward to this afternoon having a nice lunch or something. No, *this* is the experience to have when you're *having* the lunch. When you're actually eating it, to stop for a moment and place your awareness *on* the experience while you're eating... or while you're sitting or while you're walking. ... You will get two benefits... in the moment that you do it. One is... successful shamatha. Sort of instantaneous. May not last long, but you'll perhaps have it last long enough to recognize that... you did it! That is so important.

[00:26:00] So, now take... some time. Allow your awareness to... just be present with your experiences. And when possible, place your awareness *on* the experience... without regard... for whether or not the mind is still. Who cares if the mind is still? The truth is, have you ever actually witnessed your mind being still? ... I haven't. ... But you might be able to witness... your awareness being still. Resting on the experience arising. Put your mind there. ... And again. ... Every day. Every day. As many times as you can remember. This only takes... seconds. And in the *process*, you will develop... a habit of being present... with your own experiences. Which in time will lead... to the direct recognition of the nature of mind, the source of all of those experiences. So, this is not an exercise... that bears no fruit. It is a meditation which can bear extraordinary fruit.

[00:28:13] *period of meditation*

[00:35:36] Let's take a little stretch in place. If you need to get up, it's okay. But otherwise, continue the meditation while your stretching. Because of course, there is an experience associated with that. So, use that kind of *moving object* of your meditation. So, you get a stretch and you get some meditation. And it just might be that you make a little discovery.

[00:36:15] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:48:31] *dedicating the merit*