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Carrying Practice: many short sessions during day of one breath shamatha

[00:02:56] So, we're supposed to now have a period of meditation. And following that, a break and then our open discussion... of questions and any issues that you might wish for some clarification. Which doesn't mean you're in the right place to get that... [laughter] but doing our best.

[00:03:42] It's often the case that in our efforts to establish... a meditation practice which is stable... it's *often* the case, in the context of trying to establish that... we find ourselves... somewhat demoralized. Unable to stabilize the practice. Unable to stabilize it in terms of the actual meditation. Unable to remember to even make an effort to engage in the practice. So... the day goes by. The night goes by, too. And we can feel like we're left at the same place where we started... day after day. Week after week. ... And this is a serious... issue. If we keep... following *that* path of... some effort made and then giving up, some effort made and then giving up. It's only a matter of time until... the *demon of giving up*... wins. So, there's also, for those of you who have tried beating yourself up, that doesn't work so well. It makes you angry at the person sitting in this place I am. And so, then I get afraid. You can't... get there by beating yourself up.

[00:05:44] So, personally... I find most helpful... many short sessions during the day. And many short sessions during the day, I also think works best... if the sessions are... somewhere between one and three minutes. Really fast. Even possibly 10 seconds. Because in 10 seconds, you can win! [laughter] You can get it in 10 seconds. And it's *really* important... to have confidence in your experience that 'I did it. That was it.' If you never get that, you will give up. Because... we're all smart enough to know that if you try, a certain period of time and it doesn't work... our intelligence says do something else. There's plenty of things you can master. ... So... short sessions, where you can have the clear confidence that it worked... is a great boon.

[00:07:34] So, I remember once at a meditation retreat that we had... can't remember exactly... somewhere up North on Highway 5 at a place called Cloud Mountain. And... having received many complaints... complaints from individuals about themselves. "I can't do it. I can't find a period of time when my mind is just resting still. That I'm not bothered by all of the things in my life at that time." And so, then too many people go home feeling like, that doesn't work. And so, we tried an experiment. And the experiment was... what came to be known as one breath shamatha. One breath meditation. You establish a meditation session and let go of the idea of what a session is. You establish a session of one breath. Not that you breathe slow, but that you just follow the breath naturally. And... as soon as the breath is done, you just let go completely... of that meditation session. That session, good or bad, it's gone. And then, after a period of time, which might be a few seconds or a few minutes... more is better. A few seconds... instead of a few minutes is good. Because you can do many short sessions in one minute. So you just keep repeating... resting your awareness on the breath. Every time you breathe, you're having an experience of breathing.

[00:09:44] I like to add... dead or alive. You're having an experience all the time. So, if you hold that view, then... without trying to breathe, but just noticing that you're about to breathe and then you just follow that breath. Whether you're inhaling or exhaling... you're gonna do both of those. So, follow that breath in out, out in. Who cares? And when it's done... when you've exhaled...

which should be effortless, not timed... and then [exhalation] just natural. Just follow it and then let go. And then, after a few breaths, or even a few minutes, do it again. And then do it again. And then do it again. And then you're having a conversation with a friend. And your friend is... trying to meditate. And they're having the same complaint that you had. And you can just say... you just... have a session that lasts one inhalation and one exhalation.

[00:11:14] If you want to begin with the exhalation, that's totally okay. The point is, you have one breath and you have a meditation session that fits into that one breath. And in that time, you put your awareness *100 percent*... on the experience of that breath coming and going. So, the important thing is... you *put* your awareness on that experience. Easy. And then when the breath is gone, when you've exhaled, you just let go of the whole thing. As if... that was nice. But I'll never do it again. Not to *say* that to yourself, but just as if... there was nothing more to do. There was the breath and then it was done. Then just relax a little while. Somewhere between 10 seconds and 10 minutes. And then do it again... *consciously*, bring your awareness there... follow a breath. Follow it in and follow it out... with no effort. Don't try to make it deeper. Don't try to make it shallower. Don't try to make it last longer. Just follow the natural thing as if you were sound asleep.

[00:12:40] You're walking down the street. As you walk, you can do the same thing. You're breathing. If you're not breathing, you're not walking down the street. [laughs] So, you're breathing. You put your awareness on the breath, coming and going.... step by step as you walk. Same thing. Little by little, little by little, over a period of weeks and months, you will naturally come to the place where... you just notice that your awareness is more on your breath than it used to be. Even maybe more on, on your breath than it *isn't* on your breath. In other words, your awareness of your experiences as they unfold naturally, gradually grow deeper and more stable. With that stable platform, in the future, you will be able to meditate in ways that seemed not possible before. And it's best if you think... I don't care whether it works. I only care about the session I'm in right now. That's all that matters. Nothing else makes any difference.

[00:14:07] And best if you don't try to do 100 breaths at once. It doesn't matter how many breaths. You need *one* breath. That's all you need. Could be your dying breath. And if on your dying breath... you rested your awareness on that experience... we would say, from a strictly Buddhist perspective, that was about as good as it gets. So, we're not talking here about... mystical events. We're talking about the hard reality of just being alive and using that life as an opportunity to discover things that otherwise may not be easy to discover. So, what we want to discover here is the most difficult thing to discover, which should be the *easiest* thing possible. We want to discover the nature of mind itself. That's it. Everything else will rise to the occasion of its own. The *nature* of mind itself. Not the nature of the brain. The nature of mind, which has no corporal reality.

[00:15:36] So, it's helpful, again to start... by turning our minds to refuge in the *nature of mind*, itself. That of mind itself is what we call Buddha. So, if you feel better about the *person* who is called the Buddha, you can use that, too. But that person who is called the Buddha was where we got the teachings on the nature of mind itself, which we then came to call Buddha. It really doesn't matter which one you use. But a support of some kind is helpful. So, we have this sense, this experience of... what I'm doing. I may not be very good at it, but I know what I'm doing. I know that this is the way you go there. And so, little by little, you go deeper and deeper. Okay? First... refuge in mind itself. Not refuge in lunch, but refuge in mind itself.

sangha [00:16:58] reciting *Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*.

LMC [00:18:38] To the best of your ability... take this session... and place your awareness over and over again... with short breaks... place your awareness on the *experience* of... one breath from beginning to end. Over... and over.

[00:19:19] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:43:34] *dedicating the merit*