

2019_04_21_pm1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

placing awareness on our experiences, even distraction

[00:04:06] So, the schedule this evening was begin with a recitation... of refuge. And then we'll continue through the next periods. Following the meditation, we'll have a short break and then... an opportunity for our usual... open questions in conversation. ... So now the refuge recitation.

sangha [00:05:18] *reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer*

[00:07:24] So, regarding the practice of shamatha and calm abiding we generally start by... placing our awareness on our breath. ... And resting our awareness there while we're breathing. ... With an effort... to not be distracted by this simple process... of fundamentally noticing... that we are alive and breathing. To most of us, it doesn't feel... normally, like a profound process. But, of course, in the moment of not having our breath, then we recognize the profundity of what we're doing. Sometimes we... *think* the process we're engaged in... is meant to slow down our thinking. ... Slow down our inner conversation with ourselves and make-believe others. And that is indeed, often considered part of the process of shamatha, or calm abiding. If we look closer, we can see that something else is going on.

[00:10:02] Sometimes our practice of shamatha is perfectly fine. But we are still disappointed. ... The reason for the disappointment *can* be... that the mind itself, not the brain, but... as *distinguished* from the brain, the mind is never still. ... It generates experiences day and night... all the time. And so, one might ask... then, what is the point of practicing shamatha... if I am to be continuously distracted?

[00:11:14] If we come back to the beginning of the session, we can see... when we rest our awareness... on the breath... we may experience a *short* duration... of clarity and absence of extraneous thought. But after a while, we're back to our old tricks. ... Thinking about... what we did yesterday and what we plan to do tomorrow. And when we catch ourselves, we make a mistake sometimes... in thinking that having caught ourselves is a mistake.

[00:12:13] Shamatha itself... resting the awareness on an object, or better yet, on an experience... is a profoundly powerful tool because... we are driven... 24 hours a day... to have experiences... generated by mind and its nature, always. ... So, as you sit now quietly... as experiences of all kinds rise... place your awareness on those experiences as they occur. ... And if you find that you are discouraged... move your awareness to the *discouragement*. Place your mind there. If you find the experience is joyful, place your awareness on the joy. If you feel disappointed... in being continuously distracted... you can place your awareness on the disappointment. The objective here is not to have a *particular* experience. ... But to gain proficiency... in recognizing first... *all* of the experiences which arise continuously. Just recognizing them, not by name... but just by the experience itself. ... When you find you are distracted... just place your awareness on the distraction. Continuing in that way... for the duration... you will have a good session.

[00:14:55] *period of meditation*

sangha [00:47:28] *dedicating the merit*