

The Joy of Meditation as Nourishment

The Blooming of a Lotus #1

*Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I smile.
Calm Smile*

*Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment.
Breathing out, I know it is a wonderful moment.
Present moment
Wonderful moment*

Many people begin to practice sitting meditation with the help of this exercise. Even those who have meditated for many years continue to practice it, because the exercise is so effective.

Breathing in, give complete attention to the in-breath. Wherever in the body the breath may be, feel the calm it brings. Just like drinking cool water on a hot day, feel how the breath cools the inner organs of the body. When practicing meditation, if the body is calm then the mind is calm. Conscious breathing makes the body and mind one. In breathing out, smile to relax all the facial muscles (the face has about three hundred small muscles in all). The nervous system will also be relaxed. The half smile can be seen as a sign of the calm brought by the in-breath, but it is itself also a means of attaining comfort and a clearer awareness of peace and joy. The conscious breathing and smile should be practiced during five, ten, or even fifteen in/out breaths before moving on to the second stage of the exercise.

Stage two of the exercise brings us back to the present moment. By dwelling in the present moment, we put an end to attachments to the past and anxieties about the future. Life is only available in the present. We need to return to this moment to be in touch with life as it really is. To know that we are alive, that we can be in contact with all the wonders within us and around us, this is truly a miracle. We need only to open our eyes and to listen carefully to enjoy life's richness. In using conscious breathing, we can transform the present moment into a moment full of wonder and beauty.

This exercise can be practiced anywhere at any time: in the meditation hall, in the kitchen, on the bank of a river, in a park; whether we are walking or standing still, lying down, or sitting; even when we are working.