

# Joy of Meditation as Nourishment

## *The Blooming of a Lotus*

1. Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.  
Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.  
In  
Out

2. Breathing in, my breath grows deep.  
Breathing out, my breath goes slowly.  
Deep  
Slow

3. Aware of my body, I breathe in.  
Relaxing my body, I breathe out.  
Aware of body  
Relaxing body

4. Calming my body, I breathe in.  
Caring for my body, I breathe out.  
Calming body  
Caring for body

5. Smiling to my body, I breathe in.  
Easing my body, I breathe out.  
Smiling to body  
Easing body

6. Smiling to my body, I breathe in.  
Releasing the tensions in my body, I breathe out.  
Smiling to body  
Releasing tensions

7. Feeling joy (to be alive), I breathe in.  
Feeling happy, I breathe out.  
Feeling joy  
Feeling happy

8. Dwelling in the present moment, I breathe in.  
Enjoying the present moment, I breathe out.  
Being present  
Enjoying

9. Aware of my stable posture, I breathe in.  
Enjoying the stability, I breathe out.  
Stable posture  
Enjoying

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**W**hile this exercise is easy and pleasant to practice, it also brings about many good results. Through this exercise, many people who are just beginning to meditate can taste the pure joy that meditation brings. Moreover, those who have already been practicing for some years can use this exercise to nourish body and mind and to continue further on the path of meditation.

**The first stage** (*in, out*) is to identify the breath. If this is an in-breath, the practitioner must know that it is an in-breath. If this is an out-breath, the practitioner must know that it is an out-breath. In concentrating on the breath even a few times, the practitioner will naturally stop thinking about the past and the future, putting an end to dispersed thoughts. This happens because the mind of the meditator is wholly with the breathing in its work of identifying the in-breath and the out-breath. In this way, the meditator has become one with the breathing. The mind is no longer an anxious mind or a thinking mind; it is simply a breathing mind.

**The second stage** (*deep, slow*) is to see that the in-breath is already growing deeper and the out-breath has already slowed down. This process happens of itself and does not require any effort on the part of the meditator. To breathe and to be aware that you are breathing (as in the first stage of the exercise) naturally makes the breathing deeper, slower, more even. In other words, the breathing has more quality. When the breathing has become even, calm, and rhythmical, the practitioner begins to feel peace and joy in body as well as in mind. The tranquillity of the breathing entails the tranquillity of the body and of the mind. At this point, the meditator begins to experience meditation as the food of joy.

**The third stage** (*awareness of the whole body, relaxing the whole body*) brings the mind home to the body with the in-breath, and mind becomes acquainted with the body. The breathing is the bridge that takes the meditator from the body to the mind and from the mind to the body. The function of the out-breath is to relax the whole body. While breathing out, the meditator allows the muscles in the shoulders, in the arms, and then in the whole body to relax, so that a feeling of comfort is apparent in the whole body. This stage should be practiced for at least ten in- and out-breaths.

**The fourth stage** (*calming the body, caring for the body*) calms the functions of the body with the in-breath. With the out-breath, the meditator expresses a heartfelt compassion for the needs of the body. If the meditator continues to practice the third stage, the breath will be utterly calming and help the meditator to treat the body with deep respect and care.

**The fifth stage** (*smiling to the whole body, easing the body*) brings relaxation to all the facial muscles. The meditator sends the half smile to the whole body, as if it were a fresh, cool stream of water. To ease the body is to feel light. This stage of the exercise nourishes the whole body through the compassion of the meditator.

**The sixth stage** (*smiling to the body, relax the body*) is a continuation of the fifth stage. Here the breathing helps remove all the tensions which still remain in the body.

**The seventh stage** (*feeling joy, feeling happy*) brings awareness of the feeling of joy when the meditator breathes in. This is the joy of being alive, of being in good health (which is the same as living in awareness), of being able to nourish the body at the same time as the soul. The out-breath brings a feeling of happiness. To sit with nothing to do but breathe in awareness is a great happiness. Countless people bounce about like yo-yos in their busy lives and never have the chance to taste this meditator's joy.

**The eighth stage** (*present moment, wonderful moment*) brings the meditator back to the present moment with the in-breath. The Buddha taught that the past has already gone and the future has not yet come; that we find life in what is happening *now*. To dwell in the present is truly to return to life. Only in the present moment is the meditator really in touch with the wonders of life. Peace, joy, liberation, the buddha nature, and nirvana cannot be found anywhere else. Happiness lies in the present moment. The in-breath helps the meditator be in touch with this happiness. The out-breath also brings much happiness to the meditator, and that is why he says, "wonderful moment."

**The ninth stage** (*stable posture, enjoying*) steadies the meditator in the sitting position he has adopted. It will help a posture which is not yet straight, not yet beautiful, to become both straight and beautiful. A stable sitting posture brings about ease and enjoyment of that stability. The meditator becomes master of his body and mind and is not pulled hither and thither by the different actions of body, speech, and mind, in which he might otherwise drown.