

Meditating with the Senses (Sessions 19-36)

In this series, we will explore the relationship between awareness and the senses. In using sensations, sights, and sounds as supports for meditative awareness, we learn that our everyday lives provide endless opportunities to discover a sense of inner peace and contentment that is not subject to the fluctuating circumstances that surround us. Below you will find more information on these topics, as well as suggested readings from Mingyur Rinpoche's books, simple instructions for daily meditation practice, and links to related teachings and downloadable guided meditations.

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Meditating with Physical Sensations

To a large extent, our sense of identity is intimately connected with the physical body. In meditation, we learn to use the various pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensations in our bodies as supports for awareness. The aim of this exploration is not to change what we feel, but rather to observe how the mind and body interact. Eventually, we come to see that our mental state does not have to depend on our physical condition.

Reading: *Joy of Living*, pp. 142-147

Sessions 22-24: III.C.1 (opening session); III.C.2 (deepening session); III.C.3 (practice session)

Meditating with Pain

In meditation practice, as in daily life, physical pain can be one of the most challenging experiences to deal with. When we are in pain, it is difficult to focus on anything else. For precisely this reason, however, it can be an extremely effective way to bring the mind into the present moment. Using pain as a support for meditative awareness is not only helpful in cultivating mindfulness, it also helps us to see that by changing our perspective, we can radically alter the way we perceive seemingly "objective" experiences like physical pain.

Reading: *Joy of Living*, pp. 147-149

Sessions 25-27: III.B.1 (opening session); III.B.2 (deepening session); III.B.3 (practice session)

Meditating with Movement

Though much of our daily life is spent in movement, rarely do we pay attention to our bodies as we engage in life's activities. Bringing awareness to physical sensations as we walk, talk, exercise, and do other things that involve movement can be an extremely rewarding area to explore in meditation. Not only does the body have a naturally grounding effect on the mind,

paying attention to the body also allows us to see the subtle relationship between the sensations of the body and the shifting flow of impulses that move through awareness.

Reading: Review *Joy of Living*, pp. 145-149

Sessions 28-30: III.C.1 (opening session); III.C.2 (deepening session); III.C.3 (practice session)

Meditating with Visual Objects

Our sense of sight is often the most dominant aspect of our experience. Though we may not always be aware of our thoughts and feelings, or even of sounds and smells, rarely do we completely tune out all the things we see. In meditation, all the objects that fill our visual field can be tremendous supports for awareness. Wherever we are and whatever we're doing, we can always bring awareness to what is in front of us at any given moment. Doing so can make even the most mundane situation deeply meaningful and interesting.

Reading: *Joy of Living*, pp. 149-151

Sessions 31-33: III.D.1 (opening session); III.D.2 (deepening session); III.D.3 (practice session)

Meditating with Sounds

Sounds have a naturally soothing quality on the mind. When experienced with meditative awareness, even those that we ordinarily consider abrasive can elicit a sense of deep stillness and contentment. To use sounds as supports for meditation, all you have to do is listen with awareness. In other words, as you listen, know that you are listening. There's nothing more to it than that.

Reading: *Joy of Living*, pp. 151-154

Sessions 34-36: III.E.1 (opening session); III.E.2 (deepening session); III.E.3 (practice session)

Meditating with Smell and Taste

Smells and tastes often go unnoticed in daily life. By taking the time to bring awareness to smells and tastes, you can transform boring daily routines – like cooking, eating, or simply walking through your office building – into practices that calm and strengthen your mind.

Reading: *Joy of Living*, pp. 154-155

Sessions 37-39: III.F.1 (opening session); III.F.2 (deepening session); III.F.3 (practice session)

Daily Meditation Practices

Sitting meditation practice¹

Before you start, pick a particular area of sensory experience to take as a support for meditation during the session.

- Begin by *resting in open awareness*:
 - Relax your mind and remain present.

¹ If you are new to meditation, we recommend that you start by meditating twenty minutes each day, either in one session or two ten minute sessions.

- Don't try to focus on anything in particular or control your mind, yet do not get lost in thoughts either.
- Leave all of the sense doors open, without trying to block any aspect of experience.
- After a few minutes, *bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body*:
 - Rest your attention on an object in your visual field, or on whatever sense you have chosen to use as a support for your meditation.
 - You do not need to change or alter your experience in any way, nor do you need to focus intensely or concentrate the mind.
 - Simply know that you are [feeling / seeing / hearing].
- End your session by letting go and *resting once again in open awareness*.

Meditation in action

- When you wake up, form the intention to be mindful of your body, of sound, or of whatever sense object you've chosen to use as a support for meditative awareness throughout the day.
- Remind yourself of this intention as often as you can:
 - Pick moments to remind yourself throughout the day, such as during breaks, at meal times, or when you get up to do something.
 - Place reminders, such as sticky notes or stickers, around your home and office in places where you will see them frequently.
- From time to time during the day, pause and rest your awareness on the sights, sounds, and feelings moving through your awareness.

Teachings, Guided Meditations, and Other Resources

Online Readings

- Meditation and Non-meditation [<http://learning.tergar.org/2011/11/24/meditation-and-non-meditation/>]

Online Videos

- Everything Becomes Your Friend [<http://learning.tergar.org/2011/11/19/everything-becomes-your-friend/>]
- An Introduction to Meditation, Part I [http://learning.tergar.org/course_library/intro-to-meditation/session-1/]
- An Introduction to Meditation, Part II [http://learning.tergar.org/course_library/intro-to-meditation/session-2/]

Guided Meditations and Other Online Audio

- Guided Meditation: The Body
- Guided Meditation: Pain
- Guided Meditation: Form
- Guided Meditation: Sound
- Guided Meditation on the Body, Space, and Awareness [<http://learning.tergar.org/2011/11/19/guided-meditation-on-space-and-open-awareness/>]