

Three Concentration Techniques

These are probably the best known of all the meditations.

They are closely related to the Insight Meditation Techniques, with the difference being that Insight Meditation Techniques uses the active application of intelligence and discernment, while the Concentration Meditation techniques use the power of focused attention to a greater degree. To some extent these meditations lay the groundwork for the Insight Meditations which need a high degree of concentration.

1. Breath Meditation Technique (Zazen):

The heart of Zen Meditation is Zazen, the meditation of the Buddha. In this meditation, awareness and concentration are brought to the breathing process to help build mastery over the mind and free the system from dualistic thinking.

To practice Zazen one takes a seated posture and then begins to count the flow of one's breath. Counting each inhalation and exhalation starting from one to ten. So, an inhalation is one, the next exhalation is two, and so forth. When one reaches the count of ten, one returns to one and starts counting again. This helps focus the mind and prevents it from drifting endlessly from one thought to another.

As one develops one's ability to count undistractedly from one to 10, one starts to count each breath cycle, instead of the inhalation and exhalation separately. So now one counts an inhalation and exhalation as one, the next complete breath as two and so forth till one reaches ten. After reaching 10, one returns to one and repeats the meditation.

In the advanced form of Zazen, one simply becomes the breath. In this form counting is dropped altogether and only keen awareness of the breath is maintained. One should not progress to this level until one has mastered the previous two.

Zazen breath meditation helps develop the power of focused concentration and creates a serene, peaceful mind capable of penetrating the veil of dualistic thinking.

2. Another breath based meditation is Vipassana:

In Vipassana one extends one's awareness from one's breath, to the body and the sensations that rise and fall within it. The objective is to gain insight into the workings of the mind through self-observation.

This form of meditation is also called **Insight Meditation** as it helps one develop insight into the true nature of things.

3. Mindfulness Meditation Technique:

Mindfulness can be anything from a focussing on a point on the ceiling, a flower to anything our senses can be directed towards i.e. external sounds in the environment, how our body is feeling at the moment etc. These meditations all develop focus, concentration, self knowledge, calmness and the witnessing consciousness. Their ultimate objective, though, is to have the meditator finally drop the object of concentration and encounter the non-dual nature of *reality* directly.