



Our mind is innately pristine. People ask, “How do you know the mind is pristine? I don’t experience my mind as pristine—I have anxiety and fear.” We all have so many different experiences, and we have so many thoughts and emotions. We tend not to feel that our mind is pristine. We always feel that our mind is so complicated. Sometimes we fight our mind—many days we’re stuck on one thought or one feeling. Emotions can control our lives. Sometimes we’re stuck in our belief systems. We don’t experience pristine mind. There are so many different levels of experience, so many mental-emotional distortions that we experience in everyday life. While at work we experience that. With our family we experience that. [We experience] so many things, always up and down. But today I want introduce how you can experience the pristine mind. It can be an amazing, life-changing experience.

How do you know your mind is actually pristine? The pristine mind is your natural-state mind and thoughts and emotions are just mental events. These thoughts and emotions are not who you are—they’re conditional. Conditional means they are there the way that clouds, a rainbow, or a storm in the sky is conditional. As long as conditions are present, there will be clouds, rainbows, and storms. But when the conditions are no longer present, they all disappear. Conditions like weather patterns, temperatures, storms or clouds—they are all conditions. Because they conditional, they will disappear. Sometimes they are present, other times they are not. Similarly, thoughts, emotions, experiences, and beliefs are all conditional. But what does conditional mean?

Let’s use anger as an example. To be angry means having an object of focus for the anger: “Someone did something to me.” Your anger allows you to focus on that object, to ponder the situation while other feelings like stress, anxiety, and fear arise. All experiences have conditions. As long as its conditions are there, you will have that specific experience. Our mind is controlled by so many mental events, because we have so many conditions surrounding us. These mental events always occupy our mind.

So how can we dissolve these mental events? When conditions disappear, mental events dissolve, and you experience pristine mind. In order to accomplish this, you follow the technique



of pristine mind meditation. There are two different kinds of meditation: mindfulness meditation and pristine mind meditation.

Mindfulness meditation focuses on the breath and our sensations. This meditation always involves an object, and its goal is tranquility, stability, calmness, and a peaceful mind. That's the goal of mindfulness (or *samatha*) meditation. The other kind is pristine mind meditation. Pristine mind meditation does not focus on any external objects—it is objectless meditation. Where *samatha* or mindfulness meditation is object-based, pristine mind, Dzogchen-style meditation is objectless.

Pristine mind meditation comes from Dzogchen teachings, mainly through Padmasambhava. The four steps of the pristine mind meditation technique teach us how to dissipate our thoughts and emotions. Step one, Padmasambhava says, is “don’t follow the past.” When you meditate, pay attention to the moment. Don’t focus on the events of the past. The more you focus on the past, the more these mental events come to life. You don’t need to forget the past, but you shouldn’t follow the past. Bring your mind to the present moment. Step two is, don’t anticipate the future. The more you think of the future, the more you elicit mental events. Step three, just stay in awareness of the present moment—do not follow the past, do not anticipate the future. Step four (the most important), leave your mind alone. Leave your mind without conditions.

If you follow these four steps of meditation, your mental-emotional experience will not be conditioned. There will be no conditions in your sky. The clouds will disappear. If you are not focused on the past or on the future—if you leave your mind alone naturally—then all conditions of the mind will disappear.

If you do these meditation exercises for five minutes, slowly, gradually your mental-emotional experience will dissolve. Thoughts are conditions—they will disappear. Emotions are conditional—they will disappear. Belief systems are conditional—they will disappear. Tendencies are conditional—they will disappear. When all thoughts-emotions subside, what do



you experience? What remains is pristine mind. When you experience this undistorted state of mind, you know completely who you are.

Until now you were only aware of the very heavy clouds, almost like armor, of your thoughts, emotions, belief systems, and tendencies burying your natural mind. Your natural awareness is buried under so many layers of thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and tendencies. Because of this, we are depressed, angry, upset, or in conflict with friends and family because so much is piled up on the mind. Through this practice of mind, all these piles slowly subside. All these things in your mind are relieved, and your mind enters a completely distorted, genuine state. When you have this experience, its sense of well-being penetrates the physical, mental, and emotional levels of every experience. That is the benefit of access to the pristine mind. We know our pristine mind through direct experience. Meditation is not only theory—it is not just intellectual. It is a direct, first-person experience.

This can change your life. I think of it as “living fully.” You’re living fully, there’s fulfillment in your life because you experience your mind as pristine. When you experience your mind as pristine, everything is alive and fresh. In *Our Pristine Mind*, I write, “Our mind is pristine; everything is pristine.” This is very special—in the moment of experiencing our pristine mind, everything that we see, hear, touch, and taste is pristine. When your mind is pristine, everything is pristine. If your mind is polluted, everything is polluted. When your mind is polluted, everything you see, hear, touch provokes an immediate positive or negative reaction. This distorts and contaminates the mind.

We do not simply *know* that our mind is innately pristine. We must *realize* pristine mind. We must *experience* and *perceive* pristine mind. These three features—realize, experience, perceive—are very important. It’s not like meditation where you just sit there tranquilly. But meditation can bring realization. By meditating, we can realize, through direct experience, that the mind is innately pristine.



After you realize that your mind is innately pristine, then you realize your mental events are not innately who you are. The more you meditate, the more you leave your mind alone, the more you begin to experience some degree of pristine mind. The more you experience higher degree of pristine mind, the more you realize that mental events are just that: mental events. When you are angry, you know that that feeling of anger is just a mental event. But if you pay attention to your anger, the anger takes over your mind, completely dominates your mind.

When you are or unhappy and you do not realize those feelings are just mental events, they take over your entire mind and preoccupy you, until you believe you're an angry person, or an unhappy person. We tend to identify ourselves by our good or bad experiences. But once you experience pristine mind, you have different attitude—my mind is innately pristine, whether I'm happy or sad, whether I'm experiencing something positive or negative. Any experience is just a passing mental event. You should never identify yourself by these positive or negative experiences, because through pristine mind, you realize they are just passing.

The first realization is to realize that the mind is innately pristine, through direct experience. The second realization is to realize that mental events are just mental events, not who you are. The third realization is that your own mental events are just illusions. But for these realizations, you need the practice of meditation. Eventually you realize your mental events are illusions. Although we experience these mental events, they are not truly there. Negative thoughts and emotions—unhappiness, anxiety—cannot control you because you know their nature. They're guests, passing events. You are the master of your mental events. This is the benefit of meditation.

When you realize your mind is innately pristine, you realize mental events are just that, events. This brings about true, unconditional happiness, in gradually higher degrees. To experience the innately pristine mind is to experience the mind wonderfully without conditions. You feel a sense of wellbeing. You feel happiness that does not depend on circumstances. Without

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dependence on circumstances, you can be fulfilled because the unconditional happiness of the mind comes to the surface. This is the realization of pristine mind.