

Martine Batchelor
Meditation Month 2019: Four Practices for a Firm Foundation
Week 1: “Beginning with Mindfulness”
March 1, 2019



Hello, I am Martine Batchelor, and I am the teacher for Tricycle Meditation Month. I have been meditating for 40 years, I was a nun in Korea for ten years, and I've been teaching Vipassana and Zen retreats all over the world for the last 30 years.

Thank you for joining me in my home in Southern France, and congratulations on committing to a daily practice for the month of March. I will be leading a series of four guided meditation videos. One will be released each week, and they will build up on each other's instructions.

This year we will go back to the basics of meditation to build a firm foundation that you're going to be able to come back to for the rest of your life. My aim for this series is for you to learn what meditation is through four interrelated practices that you can then use in your daily life. The aim is to provide you with a map and a framework to help you to develop calm, openness, wisdom, and compassion for yourself and for others.

For this guided meditation, we will look at the two bases of meditation, which are concentration and inquiry, calm and openness. We will look at them through using mindfulness of the breath and the body.

We will use the breath and the body as anchors to develop calm. But we will also look at change—change of the breath and change of sensation—to develop clarity, because we will see that change occurs according to conditions.

At the end of the meditation, I thought it would be interesting to suggest some homework, just to see how you could bring the practice of the guided meditation into your daily life, and how that could be beneficial.

First, I'd like to say a few words about what I mean by anchoring and looking deeply, which are really the basis of any meditation. Anchoring is choosing an object in our experience—the breath or the body for this guided meditation—and going back to that anchor again and again.

Looking deeply means that we bring a beam of light to the object, whether the breath or a sensation, and notice: how does it change? How long does it last? Does it continue in the same way?

This anchoring is the same as anchoring a boat to keep it safe. We try to focus on the breath, the body, or the sensation, but of course, we will think of something else. That's okay. Or we will be distracted by a sound or a sensation. That's okay.

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What is important is to bring a friendly and careful mindfulness to the anchoring and looking deeply. We come back again and again to the breath or the body, and we also notice: how does it change at the micro level?

Shall we start? First, we have to look at the posture. You can practice meditation in four postures: standing, sitting, lying down, and walking. Please choose the posture that works the best for you. I am sitting on a chair. I am sitting in the middle of the chair so I can support my back myself.

If you have a problem with your back, you might want to sit at the back of the chair with a cushion. What is very important, whether you sit on the floor or on a chair, is that your back is relatively upright, but not tense. You want to start with a feeling of elongation like the head going towards the sky.

You go towards the sky, and then you settle. You settle in your body with that uprightness, which keeps you bright and clear. Then the shoulders: you want to be careful not to tense your shoulders, just relax the shoulders.

You're finding a posture in which you are really grounded [like a mountain, but also open like the ocean. The hands can be in the traditional posture on the lap, or just in front of us.

The eyes can be half closed or closed. If you're a little sleepy, I would have them half closed, gazing gently in front of you. If you're a little agitated, I would gently close the eyes. Now that we have the posture, let's bring a friendly caring attention, to the breath.

How do we know we are breathing? Through the sensation we experience. We could anchor in the sensation we experience of the breath, the air coming in cooler, going out a little warmer.

We're not controlling or forcing the breath. We just let it happen in its own rhythm.

Breathing in, I am aware in a friendly way that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I am aware in a friendly way that I am breathing out.

In the foreground, you have the breath. In the background, you might have thoughts, feelings, sensations. You might hear sounds. Let them arise and pass away, and notice that they too also change.

Again and again, you come back to the breath.

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You might have thoughts of this and that, but the aim of meditation is not to stop the thoughts. It's just to see them with friendliness, and make the choice: "Right now, I can just come back to the breath," and let them go.

Now looking deeply into the breath, ask: "What is this air that I breathe?" Realizing that we are breathing the same air as everything that is alive.

Coming back to the breath, coming back to a deep connection with everything that lives.

Now bringing our attention to our feet. Our feet touching the ground, our feet touching the floor. Do we experience any sensation in that part of the body?

We bring our attention to the legs: the lower part of the legs, the knees, the upper part of the legs. Maybe feeling the sensation of the clothes on the body.

Now bringing our attention to the pelvis, the hips, the buttocks. Is there any sensation in that part of the body? How long does it last? Is it coming and going?

Being aware of our torso, the front and the back. Is there any sensation in that part of the body? Can we go inside the sensation? If the sensation continues a little, does it change within itself?

Now bringing our attention to our hands. Being aware of the contact of the hands on each other on the lap. Then being aware of the arms, then the shoulders, and the neck. Relaxing the shoulders if they're a little tense.

Noticing again, the contact of the clothes on the skin. Now bringing our attention to our head, the face, the scalp, and inside the head. Noticing in a friendly way any sensation we might have in this part of the body and how the sensations come and go.

Now being aware of the whole body sitting here, grounded, open, connected.

Thank you.

In terms of the practice, you can either follow this guided meditation, or if you practice without the video, you could just be aware of the breath in a friendly way. Otherwise if you feel it is useful, you could just do the body sweeping practice. Just going up from the feet to the head, and

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then back down again. Either anchoring in the breath or anchoring in the body, and also noticing change.

Now that you are familiar with the meditation, try practicing it everyday either with a timer, or with the video. Additionally, you can do sitting meditation, lying down meditation, standing meditation, and walking meditation if you need to.

I am glad that you are committed, and that you've signed up to meditate everyday. But it might not be easy to meditate everyday given your circumstances or your condition. So just do the best you can and be kind to yourself.

Sometimes you might do a shorter session, or you might forget about a session. But you can always start again with a friendly and caring attitude.

I would like to suggest that you do these two extra pieces of homework in a light way.

The first piece of homework is whenever you suddenly feel stressed or a little agitated, just stop, take three breaths, and then continue with what you were doing. If you feel a little agitated or a little breathless again, just stop for a second. Just be aware of three breaths, and then continue to do what you were doing.

The second exercise is if at a certain point in the day you notice a sensation in the knee, or maybe an itch on the cheek, just check: how long is this going to last? Not a major physical sensation, but a light sensation. Just the sensation of an itch on the cheek, or a little sensation in the shoulder. Bring your attention to the sensation and then notice, how long does it last?

Thank you for trying. I will be posting a live call to answer any questions you might have about your practice. You can find more information on that below on this page.

Thank you for your commitment. Thank you for signing up to do this meditation month. I hope you bring friendliness to your practice every day. See you next week. Goodbye.