



Practice: Relax into Your Basic Goodness

By Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Shambhala Sun, May 2015, p. 47

*By calming your discursive thoughts through meditation,
we connect directly with our true nature.*

When you are meditating, you're doing something very powerful – experiencing your basic goodness and developing a deep sense of confidence in it. Basic goodness is not a belief but something you can know directly and embody by practicing repeatedly until you make the experience of it your own.

Meditation begins with taking your posture: open in the front, straight and upright in the back, legs crossed, hands on the thighs. The balanced container we create allows us to rest in our own vulnerability and strength. A moment of calm and openness at the beginning allows for space in which experience can occur.

As we practice, we maintain our mindfulness on the body, the breath, and the mind, with all its thoughts and emotions. In the meditative tradition, we regard every thought, feeling, and perception as an opportunity to tune into the present moment.

The reason we meditate is that most of the time we are too caught up in thoughts to feel who we really are. But to feel, we need to relax. By taking an upright sitting posture, we enable the body to relax and the mind to be awake. This is the first step in building a strong meditation practice.

Then we use the breath to train in mindfulness of feeling. Releasing thoughts and coming back to the feeling of the breath automatically bestows some insight: “It is so hard, but this is how I feel.” What follows such awareness is a feeling of openness, gentleness, and curiosity. If we respond to thoughts with “I am bad” or “I must get right of them,” meditation becomes a battle of sorts. But when we are simply beings and feeling, we find that we are naturally less discursive, less critical, and more appreciative.

That's because practice is different from conceptualizing. In meditation we train in letting thoughts go. The equanimity we develop in this way increases our ability to go forward when encountering the obstacles and vicissitudes of life. Without such freshness and fluidity, we are prone either to depression that cripples our ability to act or to elation that burns us out. Equanimity toward what is happening to us internally and externally engenders a quality of steadiness and frees us to continually move forward out of our comfort zone.

The process of allowing your consciousness to awaken through the practice of meditation is symbolized by the sun, which represented the absence of ignorance. This wisdom is the source of all happiness, because it has the potency to overcome suffering. Even reflecting on it momentarily brings dignity, because its brilliance overcomes doubts and hesitations about our own worthiness. We can release ourselves from the trap of materialism and bask in the confidence of basic goodness.