# 9 BUDDHIST MEDITATION

INTRODUCTORY TEXT

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL I

Course of lesson
Didactic references
Material 1
Material 2
Worksheet 1
Answers to Worksheet 1
Worksheet 2
Answers to Worksheet 2
Material 3

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL II

Course of lesson
Didactic references
Material 1
Material 2 A
Material 2 B
Material 2 C
Worksheet 1 A
Worksheet 1 B
Worksheet 1 C
Answers to Worksheet 1 A, B, C
Material 3
Worksheet 2
Answers to Worksheet 2

# BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Meditation in Buddhism means an effortless abiding in what is. This goes far beyond mere contemplation, as is often taught in other traditions. It involves methods of realizing the nature of mind. It is the path to lasting happiness. But in Buddhism, meditation never stands alone as a method. Each practitioner should be explained and know exactly what each meditation is about and why it is structured accordingly. In addition, it means that meditation should meaningfully affect the daily life of the practitioner and thus benefit everyone else.

Meditations are very different. Their content and process initially depend entirely on the direct goal to be achieved through them (e.g., peace of mind, insight, compassion, wisdom, meaningful action). The long-term goal of Buddhist meditation is the full development of all inherent skills.

Buddhist meditations are practical exercises that bring about both calmness of mind and immediate realization of mind. Our mind is the basis of all experience and yet we do not really know it, comparable to an eye that sees the external world but cannot see itself until it looks in the mirror. From the state of stillness in meditation, it becomes possible to look at one's own mind. One sees how thoughts and feelings arise in the openness of the mind, how they play there and pass away again - comparable to the waves in the sea. As disturbances and fundamental confusions dissolve, liberating insights are experienced in the mind. At this level of direct insight, the mind reveals its timeless nature free from all dualistic notions.

Brief moments of this experience are known to many people. The moments in life when joy is experienced from within and everything makes sense just because it is happening, free from expectations and fears, are such moments of immediate insight.

This state of freedom and joy becomes more and more a stable experience through Buddhist meditation.

The goal in Buddhism is first of all liberation from everything that leads to suffering, such as fears, disturbing emotional outbursts, ignorance, and so on. To achieve this, Buddha first taught meditations that calm the mind (Tib.: Shine, sanskr.: Shamatha). By concentrating on the movement of the breath, on external objects such as images or Buddha statues, or on imagined objects such as Buddha forms made of light and energy, more space is created in the mind and awareness of one's thoughts and feelings increases. Concentrating on a meditation object is a tool to take the mind away from habitual wandering. As soon as a distraction is noticed, the concentration turns back to the meditation object, but without thinking about its specifics. One remains naturally in the here and now. It is not a matter of doing away with thoughts, but of not giving them unnecessary force, so that others do not endlessly attach themselves to that energy. This method of calm-abiding meditation and concentration is the basis for all other Buddhist meditations.

In the Way of the Elders (Theravada), the emphasis is placed on a calm and stable mind, as well as insight into the person's selflessness. These growing abilities are supported in daily life through mindfulness practices.

In the Great Way (Mahayana), the practitioner focuses on developing compassion and wisdom. That is, one overcomes self-centered attitudes to develop beyond-personal wisdom. Outside of meditation, one links these experiences to beneficial behavior for others.

In the Diamond Way (Vajrayana), the meditator, including both previous means, aims to develop enlightened qualities such as joy, fearlessness, love, wisdom, and energy that are already inherent in everyone. The meditator identifies with the particular qualities of a Buddha-aspect or enlightened teacher; he also uses a mantra that - given by Buddha himself and written down in the Buddhist tantras - expresses enlightened qualities on a vibrational level. Finally, at the end of the meditation, he dwells in oneness with enlightenment. This state of purity and perfection is maintained as continuously as possible outside of meditation. For this, one needs the guidance of a qualified teacher.

Both in the Great Way and in the Diamond Way, all the positive impressions that have been built up are

shared with all beings at the end of meditation.

Step by step, the illusion that a solid "I" actually exists, which has to defend itself constantly, dissolves first. This creates freedom in the mind. Subsequently, one increasingly experiences that all appearances are the free play of space. This process of insight, in exchange with a realized teacher and/or in meditation, is called insight (Tib.: Lhaktong, sanskr.: Vipassana). Deep insight into the nature of mind and phenomena brings about the full development of one's inherent potential.

Since Buddha's time, these meditations have been passed down and applied in unbroken tradition for over two and a half millennia. Their effect is undisputed, which has now also been scientifically proven.

Buddhist meditation does not have to be complicated or take place in long retreats. Even short periods during the day soon bring powerful results.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

# COURSE OF LESSON – SECONDARY LEVEL I

## OBJECTIVES

**The students will be able to:**

- bring in their previous knowledge about meditation and acquire knowledge about Buddhist meditation.
- discuss how Buddhist meditation has practical benefits in everyday life.
- have a practical experience of a simple Buddhist meditation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| APPLICATION | Meditation on the breath | **Material 3**<br>Optional offering to meditate |
| KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER | The benefits of Buddhist meditation in everyday life | **WS 2**<br>**Answers to WS 2**<br>Students discuss everyday situations and present results |
| EXERCISE | What is Buddhist meditation? Elaborates effect, sitting posture, ways, goals. | **Material 2**<br>**WS 1** and<br>**Answers to WS 1**<br>Students work according to methodology |
| INTRO | What do you know about meditation? | **Material 1**<br>Students discuss prior knowledge in groups |

## BASIS

The students hear the term meditation both in the media and in their environment and associate different things with it. Meditation is associated with a content and balanced life, without this topic being based on sound knowledge. Meditations are offered in many spiritual circles.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

# DIDACTIC REFERENCES – SECONDARY LEVEL I

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to . . .

1. bring in their previous knowledge about meditation and acquire knowledge about Buddhist meditation.
2. discuss how Buddhist meditation has practical benefits in everyday life.
3. have a practical experience of a simple Buddhist meditation.

## INTRODUCTION

**Material 1** gives the students the opportunity to introduce their basic knowledge about meditation in two steps. The pictures and the simple questions in the upper half of the picture are projected via a suitable medium and lead to the topic being taken up in the class discussion. The pictures of the accessories (lower half of the picture) can optionally be shown to lead over to Buddhist meditation.

## NOTES

The right size **cushion** helps to find a comfortable sitting position, especially when sitting in the half or full lotus position.

**Meditation beads** (Sanskrit: mala) come in a long and a short version, usually consisting of 108 and 27 beads, respectively. It is used to count mantras. It also helps to make meditation a holistic experience: The mind visualizes a Buddha aspect, the speech repeats a mantra, and the body moves the beads of the meditation chain.

A picture or statue of an enlightened **Buddha aspect** can be used as a tool for meditation to focus the mind on.

## EXERCISE

In the following, Buddhist knowledge on the topic of meditation is developed on the basis of an information text (**Material 2**) with the corresponding **Worksheet 1**. The text introduces basic goals and ways (methods) in Buddhism and also includes the effects of meditation and the sitting posture.

Note: It is advisable to print out the speech bubbles on **Worksheet 1** enlarged in order to have enough space for the method of thinking-exchanging-discussing.

1. The students first work individually to gain an understanding of **Material 2**: They read the text and write down their first key points for the individual tasks in the speech bubbles on **Worksheet 1**
2. Afterwards, two people sitting next to each other exchange their results, correct each other and add key points on **Worksheet 1**.
3. In a group of 4, a second round of exchange follows: two pairs each compare their results and complete their answers on their **Worksheet 1**.
4. Each group of students receives **Worksheet 1** from the teacher to fill in their answers for the following presentation. Afterwards, the answers are presented in the plenary. The solutions provide **Answers to WS 1**, which can also be printed out for the students as a backup.

## KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

**Worksheet 2** builds on the positive effects of meditation that have already been developed. In group work, the students find concrete everyday situations and reflect on possible practical effects of meditation. They are asked to reflect to what extent difficult situations change when one meditates regularly and reacts differently. The effects on the environment should also be included. The results will be presented in a class discussion.

## NOTES

Regardless of one's specific spiritual path, meditation practices have positive effects that manifest in daily life. The experience of everyday life changes when one meditates regularly. These effects are particularly evident in a growing sense of calm, which also leads to an increase in joy and compassion in one's surroundings.

- The ability to concentrate is increased; one can persistently deal with a matter without being distracted.
- One gets distance from mood swings and disturbing feelings. One becomes angry, jealous, etc., but can contemplate the feeling without immediately reacting with words and actions.
- One can relax in a very short time, relieve stress and then be fit for new activities.
- Meditation can have a positive effect on

numerous disorders such as nervousness, sleep disorders, anxiety, etc.
- Awareness and mindfulness develop, one becomes more aware of one's own feelings, thoughts and reaction patterns and can therefore deal with them more appropriately. At the same time, you become more mindful of what is going on around you. This can be very useful especially in interpersonal interactions.

**APPLICATION**

**Material 3** provides a simple meditation that is read aloud by the teacher. The students simply follow what the teacher reads. They sit upright with their backs as straight as possible. It is advisable to take small pauses between paragraphs so that the text can be better internalized by the students. It is simply about the experience.

Meditation can meet with great approval even in noisy classes. Therefore, the invitation to meditate should go out to all students. If someone does not want to participate, they can be asked to simply remain silent. However, individual students may burst out laughing at first because the situation is foreign to them. They are asked in a quiet manner to be still and engage in the new experience.

Finally, there may be a need to talk about the experience, but this should not get out of hand, it is simply about the experience. Every experience is individual. The likelihood is that the students (like everyone else) will go back and forth in their minds between the past and the future, or think of some other place. The trick is to stay in the here and now. It is important not to judge a meditation, and at the same time to let each thought pass, rather than attaching another thought to the first.

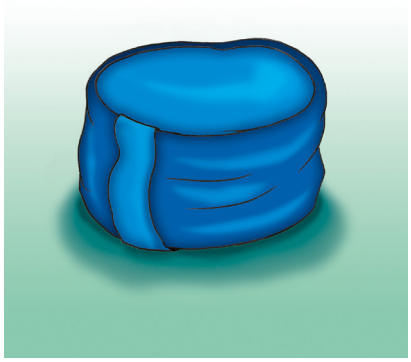
MATERIAL 1

# QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDITATION



1. What do you think meditation is?
2. Why do some people meditate?
3. Have you ever meditated?
4. Do you know someone who meditates?
5. Are there different meditations and different goals?

## ACCESSORIES FOR BUDDHIST MEDITATION



**The cushion**
A seat cushion of the right size helps to find a comfortable sitting position, especially when sitting in the half or full lotus position.
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**Meditation beads (Mala)**
For the meditation beads many Buddhists use the Sanskrit word "mala". It comes in a long and a short version, usually consisting of 108 and 27 beads, respectively. In many Diamond Way meditations, a meditation chain is used to count mantras. It also helps to make the meditation a holistic experience: The mind visualizes a Buddha aspect, the speech repeats a mantra, and the body moves the beads of the mala.



**Buddha aspect**
A picture or statue of an enlightened being can be used as a tool for meditation.

MATERIAL 2

# BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Among many other teachings the Buddha gave, he also taught about meditation: "All Buddhist meditation fundamentally means bringing the mind into a balanced state so that one can effortlessly dwell in what is. Happy moments in one's life happen mostly on the basis of a non-distracted mind resting in the here and now.

In Buddhism, meditation is done so that the mind can first come to rest and then, in the next step, recognize itself. Meditation doesn't have to be complicated, and you don't have to leave your usual life behind or sit in a cave to meditate. Just a few minutes of meditation a day can bring powerful results.

Basically, Buddhism distinguishes between two types of meditation: "meditation of tranquility of mind" and "insight meditation," where a tranquil mind is the prerequisite for insight.

## MEDITATION OF CALM ABIDING (SHINE MEDITATION)

To quiet ever-changing thoughts and feelings, one uses the "meditation of calmness of mind." The many forms of this meditation all have one thing in common: you focus your mind on one spot. This can be an object like a Buddha statue or a candle. But it can also be one's own breath or a form that one visualizes. If the mind is distracted, one lets it return again and again to this meditation object.

Thus, the ability to concentrate is increased and one can deal with a matter more persistently without being distracted. You become more aware of your own thoughts, feelings and reaction patterns, develop more distance to mood swings and disturbing feelings and can therefore deal with them more appropriately. At the same time, you become more mindful of what is happening around you. One becomes clearer and more aware in everyday life.

If one masters this meditation, this leads in the long run to liberation from everything that disturbs one: fears, disturbing emotional outbursts and confusion become less and less and finally disappear. This is the goal of the "meditation of calmness of mind" and is called "liberation".

## INSIGHT MEDITATION

When the mind has come to rest, it has the possibility to recognize itself more and more. The practicing Buddhist perceives more consciously how thoughts and feelings arise in the openness of the mind, how they play there and also dissolve again, like waves in the sea. The mind realizes more and more its timeless nature and all inherent abilities come to light. One experiences fearlessness in every situation, boundless joy that is not dependent on anything, and compassion and therefore can be useful to others. This state is called "enlightenment" and is the goal of "insight meditation".

## SITTING POSTURE

The sitting posture one chooses for meditation allows one to sit quietly, stably and comfortably for as long as possible. The traditional sitting posture is called the full lotus. Many prefer sitting in the half lotus, with the right leg in front of or on top of the left leg. However, one can also meditate sitting on a chair. It is important that the back is straight, but not stiff. This helps concentration. The eyes can be closed or open. The hands lie within each other.

WORKSHEET 1

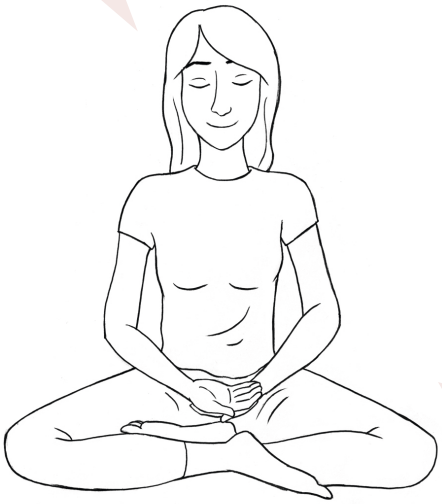
# BUDDHIST MEDITATION

**EXERCISES**

1. Read the text in **Material 2** and write down key points in the text bubbles.
2. Discuss ideas with your neighbor and add more bullet points.
3. Compare your results with a neighboring group.
4. Agree in the group which key points you will write down for your presentation.
5. Present your results in the plenary.

**What is meant by Buddhist meditation?**

**What positive effects does meditation have?**



**What is the sitting posture?**

**What types of Buddhist meditation are there?**
**What are their respective goals?**

| TYPES OF MEDITATION | GOALS OF EACH MEDITATION |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |

ANSWERS TO WS 1

# BUDDHIST MEDITATION

**EXERCISES**

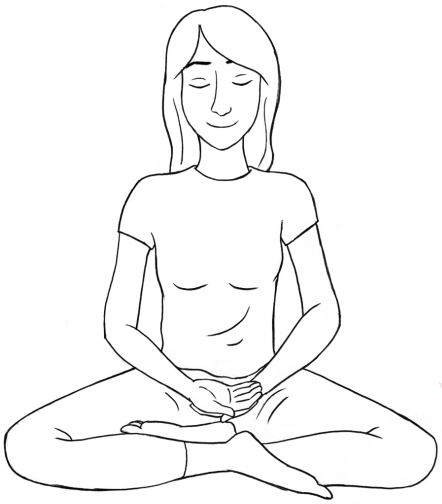
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2. Discuss ideas with your neighbor and add more bullet points.
3. Compare your results with a neighboring group.
4. Agree in the group which key points you will write down for your presentation.
5. Present your results in the plenary.

### What is Buddhist meditation?

Meditation is the practice of bringing the mind into a balanced state so that one can effortlessly dwell in what is.
Meditation is the practice of letting the mind rest in the here and now.

### What are the positive effects of meditation?

- the ability to concentrate is increased and one's mind quiets down
- one creates distance to difficult or disturbing emotional states (like e.g. anger)
- one is more attentive and aware
- one is clearer in the mind
- one experiences more joy and compassion



### What is the sitting posture?

Full or half lotus sitting (right leg on or in front of the left leg) or also sitting on a chair.

The most important thing is that the back is straight, but not stiff. The hands lie one inside the other.

### What types of Buddhist meditation are there? What are their goals? How are the two meditations related?

| TYPES OF MEDITATION | GOALS OF MEDITATION |
|---|---|
| 1. Meditation of calm abiding:<br>One concentrates the mind on one spot: on an object (such as a candle) or on the breath or on a Buddha form that one visualizes. | Liberation from everything that disturbs you: fears, disturbing emotional outbursts and confusion disappear. |
| 2. Insight meditation:<br>One sees how thoughts and feelings arise in the openness of the mind, how they play there and also dissolve again, just like waves in the sea. | Full Enlightenment:<br>The mind recognizes itself and all the skills of the mind are fully developed. One experiences fearlessness, boundless joy that is not dependent on anything, and compassion in every situation. |

WORKSHEET 2

# PRACTICAL USE OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

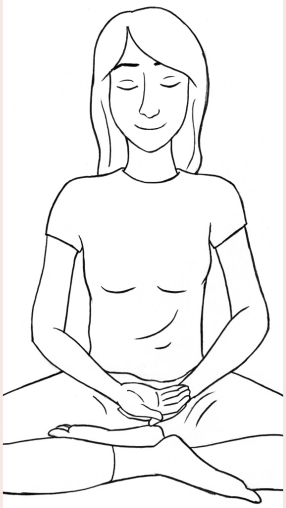
One effect of meditation practice is that the practitioner is no longer so easily carried away by disturbing feelings (e.g. anger, fear, etc.) in difficult life situations.

**EXERCISES**

1. In which difficult everyday situation could the mentioned effects of Buddhist meditation be of practical use?
2. Does everyday life change when you meditate regularly? Consider possible effects of meditation on everyday life. Also consider the effects on the environment.

**Difficult everyday situations**

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**Meditation effects**

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- 
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**Positive effects on those around you in everyday life**

ANSWERS TO WS 2

# PRACTICAL USE OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN EVERYDAY LIFEG

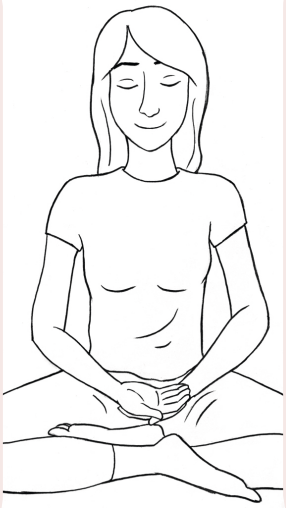
One effect of meditation practice is that the practitioner is no longer so easily carried away by disturbing feelings (e.g. anger, fear, etc.) in difficult life situations.

**EXERCISES**

1. In which difficult everyday situation could the mentioned effects of Buddhist meditation be of practical use?
2. Does everyday life change when you meditate regularly? Consider possible effects of meditation on everyday life. Also consider the effects on the environment.

### Difficult everyday situations

- studying for a class test ...
- arguing with a boyfriend/girlfriend ...
- listening to others in a conversation ...
- problems in making a decision ...
- dejection, depression, feeling of futility ...



### Meditation effect

- the ability to concentrate is increased and one quiets down
- one creates distance to difficult or disturbing emotional states (like e.g. anger)
- one is more attentive and aware
- one's mind is clearer
- one experiences more joy and compassion

### Positive effects on those around you in everyday life

As long as one is confused or suffering oneself, one can be of little use to others.
The clearer and more mindful one is, the more one sees what is at hand and can help.
The good mood also rubs off on others.

MATERIAL 3

# BREATH MEDITATION

We sit as straight as possible without being stiff. Now we pay attention to our body and try to relax everywhere – back, stomach, shoulders, hands and arms, neck and head. Our face is also relaxed, our eyes are slightly closed. Our lips are closed.

We pay attention to the flow of air coming and going at the tip of our nose and take a few deep breaths. Now we focus our attention on our breath, either in the area of the nose or the abdomen. We can count from 1 to 21 and then start again, or we can think "in" and "out" each time. Our breathing is completely natural and just as it is. If we breathe quickly, then we breathe quickly, and if we breathe more slowly, that is perfectly fine. We observe our breath as it is and count it. If a distraction enters our mind or our mind wanders, we simply take note of this and return to our breath. If we want to, we can also say "thought" or "wandered" in an inner voice.

(now observe your breath)

And our thoughts come and go, playing in the past and future. We simply take note of this, and our attention returns to our breath. We breathe in and out, our belly filling and emptying with air.

(continue to observe your breath)

Our mind is prone to distraction. And when we catch it doing so, we simply return to our breath: "inhale", "exhale" ...

(continue to observe your breath)

Now we slowly return, open our eyes and become aware of the world around us again.
We end our meditation.

