

Meditation in Everyday Life

Meditation in Everyday Life is a six-week course with five main goals:

1. Allow students a deeper experience of peaceful abiding and basic goodness as the foundation for their path.
2. Provide continuity between Shambhala Training Levels I and II.
3. Provide a community in which to discuss and clarify basic sitting meditation.
4. Study the principles of *shamatha* as presented in *Turning the Mind into an Ally*.
5. Introduce the relationship between meditation, daily life, and the Shambhala vision of enlightened society.

Meditation in Daily Life provides an opportunity to deepen the experience and understanding of meditation for new students, with special attention on practical suggestions for establishing a sitting practice in the midst of our speedy society. Each evening class allows for open discussion of the challenges that students are facing in their practice.

Further, this series of classes offers a glimpse of the Shambhala vision of enlightened society by emphasizing the ways in which meditation can impact our daily lives, and can expand to impact our whole society. This view is based upon the teachings of meditation in *Turning the Mind into An Ally* and *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*.

In Shambhala Training Level 1 students are introduced to basic goodness and the practice of meditation. They will also receive a guided meditation CD/card that summarizes the view, motivation, and technique of sitting meditation.

Shambhala Training Level I	<u>Meditation in Everyday Life</u>	<u>Meditation in Everyday Life 2</u>	<u>Meditation in Everyday Life 3</u>	<u>Meditation in Everyday Life</u>	<u>Meditation in Everyday Life</u>	<u>Meditation in Everyday Life</u>
	<u>1</u> Peaceful Abiding and Basic Goodness	Gathering the Mind and Working With Emotion	Obstacles and Antidotes	<u>4</u> Genuine Heart of Sadness	<u>5</u> Mindfulness in Daily Life	<u>6</u> Meditation and Enlightened Society

The Classes

For many students, this course will be their first set of evening classes at the Shambhala Center. The container should be both uplifted and relaxed, utilizing the forms of the Shambhala Training levels, and also creating a warm, communal environment. The shrine should be lit and cushions can be arranged in either rows or a circle, depending on the context. Each class should include both a period of sitting and a round of Shamatha Yoga or other Yoga series. The class could end with a short period of sitting that brings together the themes of the evening.

Sample Schedule:

7:00 Welcome, Shamatha Yoga, Guided practice
7:45 Check in; how is practice going?
8:00 Talk, and/or Contemplation
8:30 Discussion or discussion groups
8:55 Concluding practice and advice for the week
9:00 Conclude, refreshments

Class One: Peaceful Abiding and Basic Goodness

Class One is an opportunity to review the basic meditation instruction and check in with students about how practice is going. The talk re-emphasizes the connection between basic goodness (Level I) and sitting meditation. The content of the class will clarify the meaning of “peaceful abiding” (TMA Chapter 3) and present the notion of “becoming familiar with an object of meditation” (TMA Chapter 4). Teachers should rely on Appendix A in TMA “Preparing to Practice” in order to make practical suggestions for daily practice. It would be good for students to read Appendix A.

Note: The teacher should also mention some of the health benefits that come from a regular mindfulness practice. We will provide some literature and articles on the subject. We could suggest some of the ways in which peaceful abiding meditation can impact our physical and psychological health. The question is: what is true health and true peace? The basic message is that the mind can influence the body—and our overall state of well-being—in very profound ways. We can offer some of the most recent studies of the impact of meditation on health.

The teacher could provide a description of the logic of shamatha practice from TMA:

- The mind is always meditating and placing itself on an object
- Usually we take “me” (habitual, discursive mind) as the object
- In peaceful abiding, we ground the mind in the present by placing it on the breath
- We notice thoughts and continually return to the breathing

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- We switch allegiance from the bewildered mind to the stable, clear, and strong mind
- We learn to rest in our own peace, we become familiar with basic goodness
- We can understand our thoughts and emotional patterns
We can see:
 - The mind is always placing itself on something
 - We only perceive one thing at a time
 - The current of the mind is always fluctuating
 - Underneath the distraction is underlying stillness
 - *We become more familiar with the ground of basic goodness.*

Threefold Logic:

Ground: Basic Goodness

Path: Becoming familiar with natural peace

Fruition: Harmony/friendship with the mind

Class 1 Suggested Schedule:

7:00 Welcome, Introduce the Meditation in Daily Life Course

7:10 Shamatha Yoga, Guided shamatha practice

7:45 Check in; how is practice going?

8:00 Talk: Peaceful Abiding and Basic Goodness

8:30 Discussion or discussion groups

8:55 Concluding practice and/or advice for week

9:00 Conclude, refreshments

Reading: TMA Preface and Chapters 3, 4, and Appendix A (to be suggested during Level I and emailed to all who register. It is not essential that students complete the readings for each class. The teacher will present the material without assuming prior knowledge).

Class Two: Gathering the Mind and Working With Emotion

Having reviewed the basic logic of shamatha in the first class, Class Two defines the meaning of mindfulness and awareness (Chapter 5). The Sakyong defines 3 aspects of mature mindfulness and gives two similies for *sheshin*: the spy and the sheriff. Can the students begin to notice some awareness/*sheshin* in their practice? This would mean a sense of knowing what is going on in their present experience.

Having defined mindfulness and awareness, in Chapter 6 the Sakyong provides a map for gradually gathering the mind. We could use this as an opportunity to discuss how to work with fantasies, emotions, and subtle thoughts. (Chapter 7 specifically addresses boredom as one kind of emotion). The class could leave room for people to ask about the emotional content of their practice. The point is not to give all the

details in these chapters, but to give an over all sense of what we mean by mindfulness, awareness, and a practical map of how to work with fantasy, emotion, discursive thought etc.

One option could be that the “Concentric Circles of Shamatha” be photocopied and distributed and as the basis of the class. The teacher could present each ring and then discuss how students relate to that aspect of the practice. In this way, the teacher could guide the class through all of the rings.

Another option could be to have a more open discussion on “working with emotion” on the meditation cushion.

The teacher can note that the rest of “The Way of Shambhala” has a precise path of working with emotions. The basis of that path is confidence in the mind resting in itself, and some sense of peace. Shamatha, and a sane relationship with the movements of mind, is the foundation for mind training.

Threefold Logic:

Ground: Natural mindfulness

Path: Cultivate mindfulness and awareness and gather the mind.

Fruition: Stability and joy that we can work with our mind

Class 2 Suggested Schedule:

7:00 Welcome, Shamatha Yoga, Guided practice

7:45 Check in; how is practice going?

8:00 Talk: Mindfulness and Awareness, Gathering the Mind

8:30 Discussion or discussion groups

8:55 Concluding practice and/or advice for week

9:00 Conclude, refreshments

Reading: TMA Chapters 5, 6, 7 (again, the reading is only suggested and the class should be presented without assuming any prior knowledge).

Class Three: Obstacles and Antidotes

Class 3 allows new students a chance to discuss the obstacles that they are facing in their practice. The content of the talk describes the main obstacles of laziness (Chapter 8) forgetting the instructions (Chapter 9) and elation (Chapter 10) as well as the corresponding antidotes. In addition, the teacher should address the specific obstacles that students bring up in an open discussion. Note: The teacher should connect the obstacle of “laziness” with Talk 2 of Shambhala Training Level I, *Freedom from Laziness*.

Threefold Logic:

Ground: Peaceful Abiding

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Path: Obstacles
Fruition: Antidotes

Class 2 Suggested Schedule:

7:00 Welcome, Shamatha Yoga, Guided practice
7:35 Brief Talk: Obstacles
8:00 Discussion of Obstacles in students experience
8:20 Brief Talk: Antidotes
8:40 Discussion of Antidotes
8:55 Concluding practice and/or advice for week
9:00 Conclude, refreshments

Reading: TMA Chapters 8,9,10

Class Four: The Genuine Heart of Sadness

Thus far we have reviewed the basic logic of shamatha, refined our understanding of mindfulness and awareness, gathering the mind, and discussed some of the major emotions and obstacles that we meet on the journey. Now in Class 4 we emphasize the “heart” aspect of the practice. Following Chapter 3 of *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, Class 4 explores the complete acceptance and tenderness of the warrior. The meditation instruction could emphasize these elements and the discussion can allow people a chance to discuss their own experience. How is sadness connected with peace and basic goodness?

Threefold Logic:
Ground: Genuine heart
Path: Sadness
Fruition: Willing to open

Reading: *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, Chapter 3
Teacher Reading: Talk One, “Basic Goodness,” in *The Dignities of Shambhala Sourcebook*

Class Five: Mindfulness in Daily Life:

Class Five explores the natural transition from the formal practice on the cushion to post-meditation practice. How does all of this meditation affect my life? The content of the class is basic mindfulness of simple living situations, appreciating washing dishes and making a proper cup of tea, as well as how meditation can support our sense of mindful speech and relationship. We introduce a notion of panoramic awareness on the cushion and off.

Reading: *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, Chapters 5, 6, “Synchronizing Mind and Body” “Dawn of the Great Eastern Sun” [and/or “Art in Everyday Life”]

Threefold Logic:

Ground: Because of tender experience of mindfulness,

Path: We practice extending this experience to the details of our life, and

Fruition: We develop mindfulness and tenderness in daily life.

Suggestion to show part of the video: *Discovering Elegance*

Class Six: Enlightened Society: Meditation and Society

***During this class, be sure to describe how the Way of Shambhala continues through Level II and the Tiger Series. Announce when they begin.

This final class makes the link between between our individual meditation practice and our society. We have seen the challenge of allowing our mind to rest naturally in basic goodness and have also been given a glimpse into the possibilities of peaceful abiding. We have discussed how this can infuse the ordinary activities and relationships in our life. Now we can offer a sense of our vaster vision: the vision of enlightened society. Shambhala is not simply interested in our individual peace, but also in how basic goodness can influence our whole world. The logic can be presented in two ways. First, from the “outside in” we can realize that our own meditation practice is influenced by our society, our career, our families, our living spaces, etc. Technology, entertainment, the speed and demands of our society all have an impact on our state of being. Therefore, we must acknowledge that a complete life of meditation includes relating to a bigger world. We cannot hide from the pain in our world. Second, from the “inside out” we can come in contact with a natural desire to share our experience of peace with others, and our wish to spread goodness into the dark ages. How might this effect our home, our workplace, and our world?

This class is a presentation of what really makes Shambhala different: our vision of being in the world as warriors with careers and families, and the inseparability of meditation practice and transforming our society. We will also introduce the Rigden on the shrine in a simple way: The Rigden represents someone who has mastered the path, but is still in the world. [Should we introduce the shrine at this point, why we light it etc.?] The class can end with the question: Well how do we do that? How do we live in the world with peace, gentleness, and mindfulness? One part of the answer: meditation, and continue with “The Way of Shambhala” retreats and courses that are the next stages on the path. “The Way of Shambhala” unfolds the path of the gentleness, joy, fearlessness, and intelligence of the Shambhala bodhisttva-warrior. The class should conclude with a festive celebration hosted by the Center leadership.

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Threefold Logic:

Ground: Basic Goodness of all

Path: Becoming familiar with personal basic goodness through meditation, making this a part of life, family, and work

Fruition: Enlightened Society

Social Vision

In the Shambhala tradition, the confidence that rests naturally in basic goodness refers both to individual warriorship as well as a society of dignity and gentleness. Therefore, our exploration of the causes of fear, cocoon, and the arising of ego also strike to very heart of the setting sun of the dark ages. As we practice understanding and freeing ourselves from the cocoon of ego, we are simultaneously helping to propagate enlightened society. The more we integrate contentment and fearlessness into our life, our relationships, our family and career, we expand the dignity of Shambhala vision. This is a slow, but patient and deep path of social transformation that goes to the very root of our society.

There is an old saying that bringing Buddhism to a new culture is like bringing a flower and a rock together...

A society of hard and inflexible minds is a society that is incapable of nurturing the flowers of love and compassion. This is the source of the dark age. We tend to question our goodness and our wisdom. When we question these things, we begin to use seemingly more convenient ways to deal with our problems. We are less ready to use love and compassion, more ready to use aggression. So we have to continually remind ourselves of basic goodness. If we want to alleviate suffering on our planet, those of use who can make our minds pliable must plant a flower on the rock. This is how we can create a society based around the energy we get from experiencing our own basic goodness. In Tibet, we call this energy lungta, "windhorse."...

Tilling the grounds of our own minds through meditation is how we begin to create a community garden. In doing so, we are helping to create a new culture, a culture that can thrive in the modern world and can at the same time support our human journey in an uplifted a joyous way. Such a culture is called an enlightened society. Enlightened society is where the rock and the flower will meet.

TMA

Reading: TMA Chapter 1, "The Rock and the Flower" and *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior* Chapter 1, "Creating Enlightened Society," and 11 "Nowness"