




Key Meditation Information slides and plenary table


Windows into
Buddhism



Types of meditation

	samatha	vipassana
Spellings	samatha (Pali) shamatha (Skt.)	vipassana (Pali) vipasyana (Skt.)
Meaning	calm abiding meditation, concentration and tranquillity	insight meditation, insight
Purpose	to develop a still, calm, and focused mind	to gain a deeper insight into the nature of reality
Examples	mindfulness of breathing	zazen

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Samatha – calm abiding

- Samatha meditation develops mental concentration and focus and **brings about peace of mind**
- It allows all our busy thoughts to settle of their own accord until we are able to rest spaciously, peacefully and at ease with ourselves.
- The first step in samatha meditation is the cultivation of ‘mindfulness’, by which is meant **awareness of ourselves and our state of mind**
- One of the very first methods often taught to beginners is **breathing meditation**
 - The idea is to **rest the mind solely on the breath** and not let it get carried away by distracting thoughts and emotions.
 - As soon as we notice that our mind has wandered off we simply **bring our focus back** to the breathing and **begin again**
- We can replace the breath with **other objects of focus** a candle flame, a flower, a picture, or a statue of the Buddha for example. The object simply acts as a support for concentration.



Samatha – analogy

- **Gradually**, thoughts slow down and we become less distracted and more centred.
- Imagine leaving a **glass of muddy water** on a table; if you don't stir the water, the mud will gradually settle to the bottom **quite naturally** and **the water will become clear**.
- Samatha is like this: our thoughts and emotions slowly settle and the mind naturally becomes clear and undisturbed.



Vipassana – insight meditation

- Vipassana aims to develop **insight into the very nature of things**, ultimately leading to wisdom and realization of the ultimate truth of nirvana.
- Vipassana uses our intelligence and our powers of observation and analysis to bring us to **a deeper level of understanding**. It is also possible to contemplate on any life situations that we wish to understand more deeply and come to terms with.
- A Buddhist might choose to **take topics related to the Four Noble Truths and the Three Marks of Existence** as their focus for vipassana meditation.
- Vipassana meditation ensures that one's understanding of the Dharma does not remain theoretical but becomes personal and related to experience. In this way, Buddhists develop personal conviction about the truths of the Dharma and believe in them not simply because they have been taught to do so. It is also a way of developing an understanding of life that is in accord with the Dharma.



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