

What is Meditation?

Meditation is a way of being or approach to life supported by some degree of inner or outer silence and stillness. The word in the Pali canon which is translated as meditation is *bhavana* this could also be expressed as cultivation. Bhavana attunes us to some of the deepest possible experiences, including but not limited to:

- * Being steady with life as it arises and passes.
- * Bringing attention to the aspects of experience we often don't pay attention to.
- * Becoming intimate with our interconnected nature.
- * Developing a wise understanding of ourselves and all of life.
- * Getting to know our tendencies and habits of mind and heart.
- * Familiarisation with the awareness revealing experience.

The Practice of Meditation

Often our minds are either in a rush of worry or anticipation about the future, or preoccupied with our past hurts and triumphs. Similarly we frequently seek satisfaction from outside of ourselves.

What we call the practice of meditation is a wise response to this predicament; slowing down, being present and looking within.

By using appropriate practices we can move from restlessness, stress, or apathy to being intimately at ease with what is. With gentle sustained effort we can get fully immersed and connected with life. By looking deeply into our existence, we can begin to see through the solid appearance of things and loosen our reactivity to experiences.

We are not looking to control life, but to shape our way of looking towards skilful wholesomeness. We want our practice to dance between the unhelpful extremes of being lost and being rigid. It's a subtle approach, playful yet persistent; deeply relaxed yet profoundly aware.

Naturally as we are making a radical shift in our relationship to experience, we have to anticipate a few bumps en route. We may encounter many habits, tendencies and patterns that pull us away from being present. But don't despair and don't give up, this is the way with cultivation. Bring to mind the lessons from learning to walk; if you hadn't fallen down so many times as a child you would never have learned that skill. So whenever you fall short of your goal to be present simply pick yourself up, smile and try again.

Kind perseverance is a necessary ingredient for cultivating the path of practice.