

# MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

## Of Flowers, Mountains, Water & Space

BY JANET LAU



### In, Out Flower, Fresh Mountain, Solid Space, Free

Often our minds are carried away by deadlines, worries, regrets, and stress; it is difficult to cultivate a sense of freedom and lightness even if we want to. Here I share a very simple useful meditation practice taught by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

Once you have found a space for your meditation, sit with your legs crossed or in Japanese kneeling position, whichever allows your spine to be naturally upright, your eyes closed, resting your hands wherever find comfortable.

This practice is composed of five stages, you can practice each stage as an individual meditation, or you can practice all five stages at one sitting.

#### FIRST STAGE: CALMING THE BODY

As you breathe in, say to yourself: Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. (Or shorten to:

In)

As you breathe out, say to yourself: Breathing out, I know I am breathing out. (Or shorten to: Out)

Resting our awareness at the abdomen, we notice the expansion of the belly as we inhale, and we notice the contraction of the belly as we exhale. As we inhale, we acknowledge the presence of the inhale, and as we exhale, we are aware that it is an exhale. Allowing the natural breath to flow freely in and out of our body, we simply notice each breath coming in and leaving us as if we are a door keeper, watching guests coming in and out of a building without any expectations or attachments.

Stay with this stage for a while until you notice there is a sense of peace and calmness, then we can move onto the second stage of the practice.





## SECOND STAGE: FLOWER FRESH

As you breathe in, say to yourself: Breathing in, I see myself as a flower. (Or shorten to: Flower)

As you breathe out, say to yourself: Breathing out, I feel fresh. (Or shorten to: Fresh)

When we look at small babies and small children, we are happy and joyful because of their freshness. All of us are born as flowers, very fresh. When we smile, our smile offers freshness to ourselves and others. Happiness has a natural contagious effect and when we are happy, it is easier for those around us to be at ease and happy. However, when we are occupied by our worries, frustration, and our anger, we lose our freshness and our flowers are dying.

## STAGE THREE: MOUNTAIN SOLID

As you breathe in, say to yourself: Breathing

in, I see myself as a mountain. (Or shorten to: Mountain)

As you breathe out, say to yourself: Breathing out, I feel solid. (Or shorten to: Solid)

When we feel agitated, worried, impatient, and angry, we are carried away by the emotional storm within our mind consciousness. This is a good time for us to learn from mountains. If you look at any mountain, we notice the solidity of the mountain, it stays solid no matter what kind of weather it is going under. When there is a typhoon, you look at the trees on the mountain, they might appear like the trees are about to break, but when we look at the mountain, we notice the mountain continues to be grounded firmly to Mother Earth.

## STAGE FOUR: WATER REFLECTING

As you breathe in, say to yourself: Breathing in, I see myself as still water. (Or shorten to: Still Water)

As you breathe out, say to yourself: Breathing out, I reflect all that is. (Or shorten to: Reflecting)

Have you ever been to a pond or a lake with water that is very still on a calm day? Notice how the calm water can reflect everything around the lake? As a bird flies over the lake, the lake can reflect the bird, and once the bird

has flown away from the lake, the lake leaves no trace of the bird. The still water is very similar to our mind when it is calm and free from emotions, we can reflect all that is without any distortion.

## FIFTH STAGE: SPACE FREE

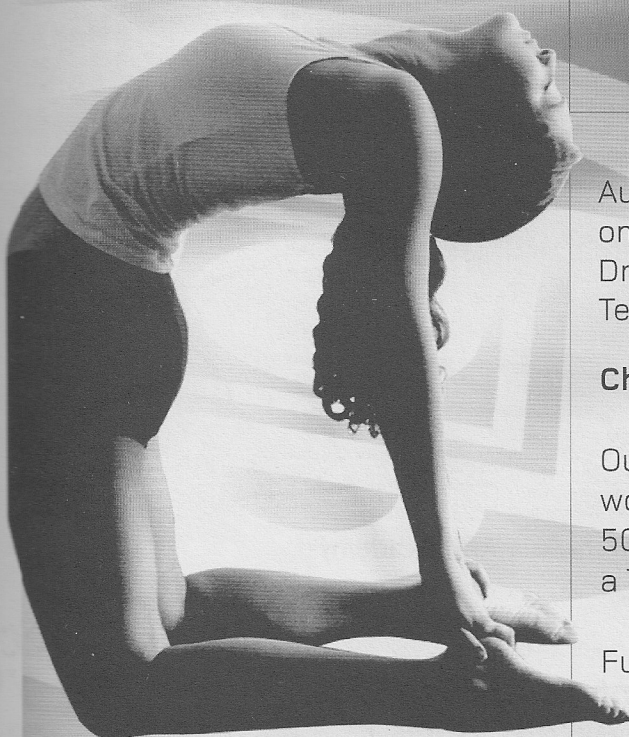
As you breathe in, say to yourself: Breathing in, I see myself as space. (Or shorten to: Space)

As you breathe out, say to yourself: Breathing out, I feel free. (Or shorten to: Free)

Thich Nhat Hanh says, "Space is the symbol of liberty." When we want to be happy, we need to allow ourselves to have enough space within us and around us. This is very apparent when we go to work by MTR in the morning. You may notice there is not much space around us and it is very easy for us to become agitated and irritated. But when we take a hike in the nature (and there aren't many people around you), we might immediately notice the sense of peace and joy arising within us.

Here allow us to use this exercise to discover the space within us, so that we can start to allow space around ourselves, freeing ourselves from chasing after material success, and eventually we learn to provide space to others and also becoming a bigger container of life, allowing life to flow through us.

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