

## Session 7. Making the Practice a Part of Your Life

By now, you have tried many useful meditation techniques and probably spent many hours practicing them. Now is a good time to think about how to make these practices an ongoing part of your life.

Which of the practices work the best for you? You might find some are particularly helpful, and some don't seem to work as well. You should set up a regular time to practice, and you should use the practices that work the best for you. You don't need to do the exact same practices every day. You can try doing the practices that you feel you need on a given day. What's important is that you spend some time each day practicing on a regular basis.

Don't worry if you think that you are not doing the practices perfectly. It is difficult, or impossible, to judge our own progress in meditation. Some days it will seem easy to practice, and some days it will seem especially hard. This is a normal part of the process, so don't worry about it. If you believe you get some benefit from practicing, then it is worthwhile to keep doing it.

Many circumstances get in the way of a regular practice. People always think they don't have enough time. There is an old saying about not having enough time to practice: "If you have enough time to eat, sleep, and bathe, then you surely have enough time to practice." Many people find that practicing the first thing in the morning or the last thing before bedtime is a way to find the extra time.

After practicing for a while, people often notice a change in the way they relate to others. This change frequently improves their relationships. It would be helpful to now take a moment to consider what has changed in your life because of all the practice you have done. Are you calmer and more centered? Are your relationships going more smoothly, or are they at least less stressful? Thinking about what has improved and what you would still like to work on can inspire you to keep practicing.

If you have received some benefits from meditating these past weeks, you may be wondering how to advance your practice even further. Certainly, maintaining and growing your daily practice are essential. Many people find that joining a class or meditating with a group gives them the support, guidance, and inspiration they need to keep going and to continue to develop. This week, spend some time contemplating how you would like to foster your own growth and development. Would you like to take more classes? Would you like to do more reading about meditation and learn more? This session's journal will help you ponder how you would like to keep your momentum going after this program has ended.

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## Session 7 (continued)

### FAQs for Session 7

*How can I find out about meditation classes?*

There are many places where meditation instruction is offered. Recreation centers, health clubs, and yoga centers frequently offer meditation sessions. Sometimes churches also offer sessions for their members. You can check the Internet or mobile application stores for online classes, too.

*When I was meditating, I remembered something bad someone did to me a long time ago, and I'd like to reconcile with and forgive that person. Should I call them and try to work it out?*

If you did, it wouldn't have anything to do with Letting Go. Many times in meditation, old memories or feelings can come up. When they do, it is a chance for us to let go of them, to let go of the hold they have on us, to rise above that level of tension. If your goal is to rise above old tensions, you should just let these things go as they come up. Focusing on or analyzing these thoughts and feelings that surface is not helpful because the more you focus on such matters, the bigger the hold they can have on you. It's like the old saying about harboring a grudge: "That guy's been living in my head for so long, I should start charging him rent!" Letting Go is a process of evicting these old thoughts and impressions to make a bigger space inside to meditate in.

*This week, I don't think I meditated at all when I practiced without the practice audio track. I practiced for the whole 30 minutes but didn't seem to get anywhere.*

How wonderful that you kept going for 30 minutes even when the practice seemed difficult! Often the practice seems to become more difficult right when we are making the most progress. It is difficult, or impossible, to judge our own progress in meditation. Don't worry if you think you are not doing the practices perfectly. Some days, it will seem easy to practice; some days, it will seem hard. This is a normal part of the process, so don't worry about it. If you believe you get some benefit from practicing, then it is worthwhile to keep doing so.

### Session 7 Practice

#### **Tasks for the Next Week**

You may consider plans for how to continue your practice, such as practicing on your own, with a group, with significant others, through online supports, or via mobile applications. This week, you can try some of these plans and see how they work. You can also prepare to discuss your experiences in the group next week.

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### ***Practice in Daily Life***

This week, there is an emphasis on using practices as much as possible in daily life. You can use all the techniques you have learned: watching the breath, Letting Go, repeating “Hum Sah,” and the Tension Release exercise.

Remember to watch your breathing throughout the day. Notice each time you inhale and exhale. Make a special effort to let go of any tension that comes up. You can do this by taking a deep breath and, as you exhale, simply let go of any tension or holding. You can repeat “Hum Sah” throughout the day with each breath. Silently repeat “Hum” every time you inhale and “Sah” every time you exhale.

Use the Tension Release exercise anytime you need it throughout the day. You can also practice it at night as you are going to sleep. Simply take in a breath into your heart area and hold it for a moment. Silently repeat to yourself, “I wish to release all negative tension.” As you exhale, feel the negative tension draining out of your two arms and out through your hands.

Use any of these techniques throughout the day. Be sure to use them when you really need them, for instance, when things aren’t going well. These techniques can be helpful in dealing with strong negative emotions such as anger, fear, and frustration.

### ***Sitting Practice***

Practice without using a practice audio track. You can use any of the techniques we’ve learned. Some people like to begin their period of practice with the Tension Release exercise, next practice the Complete Breath, and then spend some time repeating “Hum Sah,” letting go of any tension that arises. Try different techniques and see what works for you.

### ***Daily Practice Log***

Write down the number of minutes you have spent each day on each practice. You may do all the listed practices every week. It will be helpful to record the types of practices you did in your self-guided practice.

## ● Session 7 Journal ●

What are your thoughts about continuing to meditate after this program is over? Will you want to continue?

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What do you need to make it possible to continue to meditate? Do you like to practice all on your own? Would you find the company of others and the guidance of a teacher a valuable experience?

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What steps will you take this week to cultivate your practice and expand on the growth you have already experienced?

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**Debriefing the Practice:** How did the practice go this week? What was it like to practice without a practice audio track? What would you like to remember about how your meditation is going now?

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