

Anapanasati Overview

Anapanasati is a progressive series of 16 exercises through which we calm our senses and our minds so that we can deeply investigate and understand the world that is in us and around us.

Kaya (Body)— We can experience and calm our breath and our body, and more generally, our sense experiences.

Vedana (Embodied feelings)— When sense experiences occur, there is an immediate and automatic affective orientation toward them: pain / pleasure, like / dislike, attractive / unattractive. **We can experience and calm our vedana.**

The exercises focus on four types or levels of experience.

Citta (Mind)— We become aware of our experiences through moments of consciousness or mind moments. The sense experiences are conditioned by Vedana and our predispositions and coalesce into mental formations. In the Mahayana tradition, the predispositions are described as seeds in our Storehouse Consciousness. **We can become aware of, gladden, concentrate, and liberate our minds.**

Dhamma / Dharma - Seeing the world as it is.

Anicca: impermanence, the impermanent nature of all dharmas

Virāga: the disappearance of desire, the fading away of attraction and craving

Nirodha: cessation, quenching, the extinguishing of the fires of greed, hatred, and delusion

Paṭinissagga: relinquishment, tossing back, letting go of the burdens of life caused by ignorance and grasping

The mechanism: conditioning, sankhara/samskara (formation)

The breath conditions the body

The body conditions vedana

Vedana conditions the mind

The mind conditions the higher states

The higher states allow one to see the truth

The fruit

The Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit. (Thich Nhat Hanh translation from the sutra)

“It is like this, bhikkhus: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, sits stably in the lotus position, holding his or her body quite straight, and practices like this:”



