

## **What is Insight Meditation?**

Insight meditation, or vipassana, is a practice of cultivating awareness by giving careful attention to everyday life. Insight meditation is based on the teachings of the Buddha and has flourished as a living practice for 2500 years. The discipline of insight meditation fosters the development of clarity and non-judgmental mindfulness, which many find to be highly effective in promoting serenity, relaxation, and equanimity. According to the Buddhist tradition, insight meditation can also lead to greater wisdom and compassion and, ultimately, to the end of suffering. The techniques of insight meditation are simple to learn, yet require practice and discipline to master. These techniques offer not new experiences but new ways of relating to our experiences.

## **Do You Have to be a Buddhist to Meditate?**

Although insight meditation draws on the teachings of the Buddha, it is not necessary to be a Buddhist--or even religious--to practice. Persons of many different faiths and beliefs have found vipassana--and other kinds of meditation practice--to be of great benefit to their lives.

## **How Do I Learn Meditation?**

Surely the best way to learn meditation is through one-on-one instruction or a course taught by an experienced teacher. Books and other resources can also be helpful, but they are not of equal value to actual, live instruction.

## **Can You Suggest Some Books?**

Henepola Gunaratana. *Mindfulness in Plain English*. Boston: Wisdom Books, 1991. One of the clearest and most concrete explanations of Vipassana meditation.

Joseph Goldstein. *Insight Meditation: The Practice of Freedom*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1994.

Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1976. Written by a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, this is an excellent introduction to mindfulness meditation.

Jack Kornfield. *A Path with Heart: A Guide through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life*. New York: Bantam Books, 1993. A well-written meditation manual by an American Vipassana master.

Sharon Salzberg. *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1995. An excellent introduction to metta meditation, for developing compassion.

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