

Summary-
TWIM Meditation Instructions
with
Stages of Progress

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You may be new to Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation, taught by Bhante Vimalaramsi, **or you may** need a refresher on the practice and all of the signposts along the way. You may have forgotten some of the instructions on how to begin, and what to do when the meditation changes. This article will give you a summary of all of the instructions and most of the signs of progress that will arise. If you have read the book *The Path to Nibbana* this summary will quickly go through the points detailed there. The jhānas are not identified, as it is what you experience that is most important, not what jhāna you are in. This is the barebones of the entire process, all the way to Nibbāna.

BEGINNING INSTRUCTIONS – for more information go back to the detailed chapters at the beginning of the book.

- Sit for at least 30 minutes, either on a cushion or a chair. Later, a chair will be a better choice.
- Do not move for any reason. Do not itch or twitch.
- Bring up a smile on your lips, in your heart, and in your mind! Keep the smile going for the entire sitting. A little Buddha smile.
- Bring up a happy memory and *feel* that memory. See yourself holding a baby-what do you feel? Look into his/her eyes. How about playing with a dog or a bunch of puppies-what do you feel? Lovingkindness! Smile into that feeling.
- Now wish yourself this feeling of lovingkindness and stay with that. Stay with that feeling and let it seep into your being for the first 10 minutes of your sitting.
- To help you bring up the feeling of lovingkindness you may use phrases like, “May I be happy”, “May I be peaceful” or others. Don’t use this as a mantra, but only now and then to *nudge* along that subtle warm, glowing feeling of lovingkindness.
- If your mind wanders or is distracted from the feeling then practice the 6R process as defined in more detail elsewhere in the book. This is very important! 6Rs:
 - 1. Recognize you are distracted.
 - 2. Release your attention from the distraction.

- 3. Relax any tension and tightness continuing to pull mind's attention to the distraction.
- 4. Re-smile and bring up the feeling again with a smile
- 5. Return to your object of meditation.
- 6. Repeat/Continue and keep it going.
- The next 20 minutes of the sitting (or balance of the sitting) pick a Spiritual Friend (explained elsewhere) and radiate to and surround your friend with this warm feeling of lovingkindness that you now experience for yourself.
- During your sitting develop a content peaceful state of mind. Do not try too hard. Just *hang out* with your Friend and just feel happy to be meditating. If you notice a knot of tension in your head then you are trying too hard. Back off, and relax, and smile more. Notice the tension but **just** accept it is there and let it be. 6R. Return to your spiritual friend. Gradually the tension will go away because you aren't feeding it with your personal attention anymore. All you need to do is relax and smile, and feel that smile!

BEGINNERS' PROGRESS SIGNS

- Gradually, as you patiently stay with yourself or your Spiritual Friend, the mind will start to calm. The first 20 minutes of your sitting will generally

be active, and if you can sit through that, and don't move and smile, most of that will soon pass.

- Uplifted Joy arises—There will come a point where all of a sudden joy (*piti*) arises. It will be something that you have never experienced. It may be extreme or moderate, but you will feel it. Then a feeling of tranquility will follow.
- Don't get caught in, **or** suppress the joy. **Just** acknowledge it is there and return to your object of meditation; your Spiritual Friend.
- Letting go of the verbal phrases— After you experience this joy you should now let go of the verbal phrases that you have been using. Those phrases may actually create tension in your mind/head. Verbal phrases you have been using like “May I be happy” can be let go. You only need to remember the feeling of lovingkindness and bring that back when it weakens.
- As you continue, the joy will change and the “happy noise” in the mind will take a step down – kind of like when you are sitting **in a kitchen** and the refrigerator stops; you suddenly notice how quiet it has become.
- You will tend to have more *confidence* in the TWIM method now. You have a feeling you have found the right path. This confidence just arises on its own.
- ‘Spiritual Friend smiles back’-- Keep smiling and patiently stay with your Spiritual Friend who may seem to smile back at you or bring up a feeling in you, that they are happy too. You 6R

any itches or distractions. The feeling of lovingkindness will be in your heart area and lower body.

- Disappearing body begins: The mind has calmed a lot more and now, you notice that parts of your body seem like they are not there anymore. You know your hands are there... but you don't feel them. However, if there is contact or someone touches you, you will feel it. You are still aware of the outside world.
- Now the feeling will change from a more coarse joy to becoming a subtle feeling of happiness (*sukha*), followed by a peaceful contentment (*passadhi*). Equanimity starts to arise more now as a stronger feeling of balance arises in the mind. You should be sitting at least 45 minutes to one hour at this stage.
- Feeling moving up into the head: As you sit in this peaceful feeling, gradually the feeling of lovingkindness moves up into the head. Your awareness seems to change. You were feeling the body but now you are coming into more of a mental realm. You have now become an advanced meditator.
- Feeling a fullness in the head – When the feeling moves from the lower body up into your head, one sign of progress can occur where your head begins to feel *full*, or with the eyes closed, things inside seem to be moving away from your point of view. If this happens, just observe it, and it will settle down to stillness.

- Now, with your sitting practice, you alternate this with 20-30 minutes of walking meditation. You “take your spiritual friend for a walk.” Stroll at a normal pace, not slow walking, but enough to get your heart going. Keep your spiritual friend in mind. See him/her smiling and happy while sending them your wish of lovingkindness. Much progress can be attained through the walking meditation. You can *walk* into the jhānas.

ADVANCED INSTRUCTIONS AND PROGRESS

Changing your meditation instructions now

- Next: Breaking down the Barriers

Once the feeling of meditation moves up into your head, we ask you to do the *Breaking Down the Barriers* exercise. This should not take anymore than just one sitting.

Advancing — Breaking Down the Barriers

You are now told that you have developed the meditation skills to a higher level. You are told this so that you have confidence in the practice and gain more enthusiasm. Previously, you weren't informed of what was happening because it would just lead to more mental wanderings. Now that you have some more equanimity and your mind has calmed, you are told where you are day

by day what exact jhāna you are in, as it happens if you ask about it. You see that sutta MN 111 is real. And, like Sāriputta, you are just watching the progress step-by-step as it occurs.

—*Meditation Instruction:*

Now, you are to change your spiritual friend. You have completed the practice to this point and have now advanced. It's time to move ahead.

Let go of the friend you have been working with and change to the people listed below. Go through each group one at a time until you see them smiling and happy.

- Pick *three more spiritual friends* (any gender, living, and not a family member), and one-by-one radiate loving-kindness to them until they smile back or you feel there is a connection of loving-kindness with them.
- *Four living family members* (either male or female — gender no longer matters). One-by-one radiate loving-kindness to them until they smile back.
- *Four neutral people* (either male or female). One-by-one radiate loving-kindness to them until they smile back. A neutral person is a casual acquaintance that you occasionally see, like the bus driver or the cashier at the store. You don't really know them, but you say "Hello" every now and then.
- *Troublesome persons- Enemies* are last. Send mettā to any troublesome people, whoever arises. Enemies are those people we don't like. We may hold a grudge, or we know they don't care for us. It might

be public figures or any person who comes to your mind when you do this. One by one, radiate mettā to people who pop into your mind until you can't think of anyone else.

If hatred, or even dislike, arises while radiating mettā to an enemy, go back to a neutral person until you can let go of the aversion and come back to that feeling of loving-kindness. Then begin again. Radiate mettā to your enemy and continue until that hostile energy is dissipated and they smile back. It doesn't have to be that deep — just have a friendly feeling for them. Or even a neutral feeling in which they don't bother you. Remember: everyone has some good qualities. You can focus on those.

You can do the process above in as little as twenty to thirty minutes. But you should spend no more than an hour on this.

If you cannot get beyond this step, then perhaps some forgiveness meditation will be suggested by the teacher. Information and directions for Forgiveness Meditation may be found on the Dhamma Sukha website and practiced from the book on this topic by Bhante Vimalaramsi. Forgiveness is a very powerful practice by itself and is highly recommended to everyone, but especially to those who cannot bring up a genuine feeling of loving-kindness for any of these groups of people.

Student Comment about the Barriers:

"This morning I did my first Breaking Down the Barriers sitting. It went so well. I saw everyone smiling at me pretty quickly. Then I got to my "enemies" There is a woman I'm quite jealous of. I forgave myself for it. I wished her love, peace and happiness. Then I saw the smile. The second one is

my niece's husband. I've never seen him smile in real life, so I don't even know what that would look like. But, as I was wishing peace for both of us, it felt like a lightning bolt went through my heart. I knew then I am wrong for the hate I'm feeling toward him. Only love can beat hate." C.G. Missouri

- **Next: Radiating to the Six Directions**

Now that you have finished your *Breaking down the Barriers* exercise, you will start to radiate your strong feeling of lovingkindness outward, like a candle, or like a lighthouse radiating warmth and heat into the six directions.

Instructions:

- First, radiate your lovingkindness feeling for five minutes to beings in front of you (you can pick the order that works for you); then all beings behind you for five minutes; then to the left, to the right, down below, and all beings above you. Five minutes in each direction. A total of 30 minutes in six directions.
- Then for the rest of the sitting (which should be in the area of 1-1.5 hours now), you radiate to all beings in *all* directions *at the same time*. You become a bubble of mettā with this feeling of pure lovingkindness. You see this feeling seep or flow outward as you wish beings happiness. Keep your little Buddha smile with you.

Advanced Progress Signposts

- As you radiate to the directions, you feel lovingkindness (*Mettā*) going outward. It can be subtle or like a strong radiance or even a golden light. Continue – no need to do more. No need to make it stronger, if it is weak. Just whatever is there. Carefully 6R when your mind's attention wanders.
- As you feel more settled this feeling of lovingkindness will change. It gets quieter. Now, this feeling is turning into *Karuna* or Compassion. Your mind feels like it is expanding in all directions. It can be strong for some or just “feels big and expansive” for others.
- Next, this expansion pulls back in and the feeling in the mind changes to *Muditā* or a feeling of sublime Joy. You may see a flickering at one of the sense doors. It can be just that, or you may see consciousness arising and passing away like frames in a movie film, frame by frame. You may also start to experience strong insights into *anattā* or impersonality, as well as *anicca* or impermanence.
- Next, you take what's (not) happening between the frames as your new object of meditation. There is a strong Equanimity or balance (*Upekkhā*) that now arises. The feeling of Joy has changed to balance and quiet. There isn't much activity or mind-objects to notice. There is very strong stability. You should notice the balanced feeling and stay with that feeling. Now radiate

that to the directions. This feeling of balance or equanimity is now your object of meditation.

- You will also have this perception that “there is nothing.” Thoughts have stopped. The mind is quite still now. Awareness has moved fully up into the head. You don’t notice your body at all. You are truly in a mental realm now. You *no longer have a body* is one way to look at it. Feeling and sensation are perceived by mind—even the feelings from the body are just in mind, right?
- There can be lights that arise. Just 6R them and come back to observing and wishing Equanimity. Always come back to the feeling. Your mind will become bright and clear. You can sit longer now—up to 2 hours. If the sitting is going well then just keep sitting! If you get up now, when it is going well, you inevitably will need to build up your mindfulness once more, in the next sitting, to get back to where you just were. Take advantage of your progress and go deeper now, not later.
- Get in some fast walking in between sittings to get your heart pumping. Sitting can slow down your energy. As you walk you should radiate Equanimity to all directions at the same time. Become a bubble moving forward radiating equanimity.
- After some time in this state, where there is nothing, your mind will fall, initially, into what seems like a dream. It is dream-like, yet you feel that you are awake. Your awareness is just barely

there. You will come out of this state in a short time. The mind will now be more still than ever before. Now, we instruct you to sit with this *Quiet Mind* for up to two to three hours. Don't push or try too hard—gently! The distractions are now only just vibrations, and perhaps lights and patterns. As soon as your attention goes there, back away and relax. Just release/relax quickly is all that's needed.

- You may sit with nothing happening at all for 5 minutes or even 15 minutes. Your mind is completely unmoving, like a rock. It won't shake. If it does then 6R. Be very mindful and 6R right then.
- At this stage, the feeling of Equanimity has stopped. Now, '*Quiet mind*' is your object of meditation. You understand that there is no movement, you observe and just (contentedly and dispassionately) be with that. There is now some relief from the noise of the worldly-mind. Always come back to just being with understanding and knowing that you are observing *quiet mind*. If your attention wanders at all, from this present moment of peace and non-activity, then 6R quickly but softly and come back. Enjoy the peace of no activity and relax. Keep alert and mindful for vibrations and attention shifts and back away and release and relax right then.
- It may take 15 minutes, or 30 minutes, or an hour but the mind will take a step down to a new level

of quiet. "Patience leads to Nibbāna." Just continue. You may say "nothing is happening-time to stop." No! Keep going-you are making huge progress staying in this special state. At any moment the mind could take yet another step down.

- Finally, after some time, the mind, all of a sudden, just stops. There can be a space or blackout, or not even that, but you feel as though you are coming back from somewhere. It is like the lights were turned off but all you know now is that they are coming back on.
- If you are aware enough, you will experience a quick feeling of Relief. Like a burden thrown off. That may only just be a moment or two. Then an upsurge of joy arising-an *all-pervading* joy in the whole body. You feel very happy!
- You have just experienced Nibbāna for the first time! For more details see chapter fourteen. Congratulations!

After Nibbāna, then what?

- Now just return to your sitting practice and continue in the same way. Usually, you can start with radiating two minutes of Equanimity to each direction, and then all around. You follow the same process over and over, all the way to Arahantship, through the four stages of sainthood. There is nothing special that you need to do other than just keep going through the

stages of practice, over and over until you experience another cessation, and subsequently another moment of Nibbāna, and attain the next step in awakening.

- After the retreat, you may not be able to bring up Equanimity. That's ok. Just start with Lovingkindness again. It will always take you automatically all the way through the jhānas, to the goal. Mettā is the *Gateway* to Nibbāna.

For more information:

Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center

www.dhammasukha.org

www.thepath-tonibbana.com

Questions: email: david@dhammasukha.org

OR

In India:

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"Meditate, Ānanda, do not delay, or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you." That is what the Blessed One said. The venerable Ānanda was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words."