

# Nine methods of bringing the mind to rest

---

1. Placement – here simply means the initial process of bringing the mind to some kind of rest or stability. This is accomplished by applying the methods taught under the category of grasping the mind when it is ungrasped. This process consists of training the sixth consciousness not to follow or be caught by the thoughts that arise within it. These thoughts are of various kinds, but regardless of the thought's content, it is to be treated in the same way at this stage. Thoughts can be very negative, they can be made up of various kleshas, they can be what we regard as unvirtuous, but one does not follow them in the practice of tranquility. And even if thoughts are virtuous, in the practice of tranquility meditation they are still regarded as a potential source of disturbance. Usually we think that virtuous thoughts are not a problem, but in the practice of tranquility meditation a virtuous thought can be just as disturbing or distracting as an unvirtuous one. So therefore, in this first of the nine stages or nine methods of bringing the mind to rest, you are attempting to maintain a state in which your mind is placed at rest, and yet without impairing the mind's lucidity (clarity). The mind is still at rest, but not dull, and maintains its brilliant lucidity. Now, at this point, which is the stage of beginning practitioner of tranquility meditation, this stage will not last very long. Nevertheless, getting your mind to the point at which it comes to rest while maintaining its natural lucidity, for however brief a period, is the first of the nine stages – placement.
2. When we practice this first discipline, the discipline of placement, repeatedly, eventually there occurs some prolonging of the state of stillness, the state of the mind being at rest. This state of rest which was previously achieved as the first of the nine stages, when somewhat prolonged, constitute the second stage, called prolonged placement. It is the same state of rest as experienced in the first state but lasting longer.
3. Then through cultivating the second stage, you reach the third stage, which has two different names. In the text it is called definite placement or certain placement, but in other text contexts it is called returning placement. This is the most descriptive term for this stage, and for the following reason. In achieving the third stage you are obviously still practicing the second, which means that you are working with a somewhat prolonged state of stillness. Nevertheless it is not prolonged indefinitely. At some point thoughts arise. The discipline and practice of the third stage consists of not wandering on the basis of arising of a thought, not being caught by it, not following it, but instead, recognizing has arisen. When a thought arises, one recognizes it, thinking, "A thought has arisen; my mind is not at rest." And on the basis of what recognition, one returns to the state of stillness. That is why the most descriptive term for the third stage is returning placement. Although in our text it is called certain or definite placement.
4. The fourth method of resting the mind, called close placement, refers to resting in the state of stillness to which you have returned when, through applying the mindfulness and alertness taught in the third method, you have recognized the arising of a thought and have been able to

return to that state of placement or stillness. So, close placement consists of resting in or remaining in placement subsequent to your return to that state. But despite such resting, there will continue to be disturbances of various kinds. Sometimes you might be disturbed by your thoughts, sometimes your mind might become dull or torpid or sleepy; sometimes you might be afflicted by lack of interest in the practice itself. The next two methods, the fifth and the sixth are both remedies to these problems. Either one can be applied as a remedy.

5. The fifth, which is called taming, is recollection of the qualities of benefits of Samadhi. When your mind is torpid or disturbed, when it is difficult to practice, when you find yourself uninterested in practice, the fifth method, taming, is a way of recollecting why you are practicing tranquility meditation and the benefits of doing so. The immediate benefits of tranquility meditation are physical and mental well-being. The ultimate benefit of tranquility meditation is the pacification of kleshas or mental afflictions. Now we cannot say the eradication of mental afflictions, because tranquility alone is insufficient to eradicate mental afflictions. That is accomplished through insight meditation. The reason tranquility alone cannot eradicate the afflictions is that it does not contain enough discernment, enough prajna. But tranquility weakens the mental afflictions. Literally the Tibetan term used here, *go nonpa*, means “to suppress” but it is not suppression in the sense of repression of mental afflictions. In any case, through the application of the fifth method you promote your enthusiasm for the practice by recollecting its benefits, and to the degree one generates enthusiasm, one’s enthusiasm naturally and spontaneously reduces the amount of effort required to bring the mind to rest. The more enthusiastic you are about the practice, the more effortlessly your mind will come to rest.

For example, in the life of Jetsun Milarepa, soon after he had received his initial instruction from Lord Marpa, he went into retreat in a cave called Tiger Nak at the Southern Cliffs, near Marpa’s residence. While Milarepa was in retreat there, Marpa came to see him and said to Milarepa, “You are practicing very diligently, but why do you not take a break?”

And Milarepa said, “I do not need to take a break; practice itself is taking a break.”

Milarepa perceived practice as a state of rest or a state of relaxation because of his enthusiasm for it. Because he was so enthusiastic, he perceived diligent practice as effortless. Now, we are not Milarepa, but nevertheless, to the extent that we recollect the benefits of tranquility meditation, to the same extent we will perceive it as effortless.

6. The sixth method of resting the mind deals in some cases with the same problems and in other cases with similar problems as dealt with by the fifth. In the fifth, the mind is tamed or subdued through the recollection of the benefits of the Samadhi or stillness. In the case of the sixth called pacification, the mind is pacified through recollecting what is wrong with thoughts. Often, when we are overpowered by our thoughts – when we cannot stop thinking – it is because we regard the particular thoughts that we are entertaining as either valuable because they are pleasurable or valuable because they are in some way important. In either case, the problem is that we are attaching some kind of underserved value and importance to the thoughts. That is why we hold onto them. The sixth method is simply to recollect that in the context of meditation practice,

thoughts are completely useless. They serve no function. They are no good whatsoever. They are a complete waste of time. And they impede the practice of Dharma. This recollection of what is wrong with thinking will naturally cause you to stop liking thoughts, and when you do not like them, when you do not enjoy thinking, then you will not need to repress your thoughts; to try you will not need to consciously to stop thinking, because if you do not like something you will simply not do it. So the sixth method is called pacification, which is to recollect the defects of thinking.

7. The seventh method of resting the mind is called thorough pacification. Now, sometimes when we practice meditation, there are no problems, and as long as there are no problems, as long as your mind is not distracted or disturbed, you simply continue in the state of placement. But sometimes of course there are problems, and here the point is not to attempt to solve these problems – specifically the disturbance cause by thoughts – through force. One is not to attempt to force the thoughts not to arise by thinking, “I must not allow my mind to move at all.” Here the method employed involves selecting one thought, or one type of thought from among the many thoughts that might be arising in your mind and rest in that. Thoughts might arise with unlimited variety of contents. We have all kinds of thoughts. Especially disturbing thoughts include thoughts of spite, the wish to harm someone, thoughts of jealousy or competitiveness, and thoughts of regret or guilt. Pleasant thoughts include thoughts of excitement, recollection of pleasure and so forth. In this method you recognize one particular thought that has arisen – and you rest in that thought. When you rest in that thought, you are not attempting to fight the thought. You are not attempting to get rid of it, stop it or suppress it. You are resting in it, and when you rest in it, the thought dissolves. Now in the text it says that, if through resting in a thought you succeed in thoroughly recognizing its nature, the stuff of which it is made, it will be self-liberated. This method of resting in the thought rather than attempting to suppress it is the seventh technique through pacification.
8. Through application of the first seven methods of resting the mind you achieve the ability to apply the eighth and ninth methods. The eighth is called unification. Unification here refers to the stage at which, through the preceding diligent application of the fifth, sixth and seventh methods as remedies for problems in meditation, you no longer need to apply force in your meditation practice. You are no longer trying to force anything. Therefore, there is no fluctuation or oscillation between the state of relaxation and the state of forced meditation in response to problems. So the eighth method or stage, unification, really refers to the point when your mind is resting naturally.
9. This in turn leads to the ninth and last stage called even placement, which is a state in which there is no longer any distraction. The term even or equal here means specifically that your mind is in a state of placement free both of the defects of tension and of excessive, sloppy relaxation. The absence of tension and of the need for force, and the absence of sloppy relaxation or distraction allow the quality of the placement of your mind, of the resting of your mind, to become thoroughly even or equal.