

Jhana Practice and Study Group
Metta Dharma Foundation
www.mettadharma.org
Berkeley, CA

Homework for October 2019

Welcome to the first session of the Jhana Practice and Study Group. For many of us who have been practicing insight meditation, jhana may seem exotic or far away from what we believe is possible in our own practice. Others may have practiced or experienced jhana in one or more of the many ways it is taught and understood and want to deepen their understanding of jhana and its relationship to insight meditation. Jhana practice was emphasized by the Buddha throughout his teaching, but there is a lot of disagreement, confusion and misunderstanding about exactly what kind of meditation practice and experience he was talking about, what jhana is and how it relates to insight meditation.

During the next six months we will explore in depth the wide range of teachings, practices and experiences of jhana. We will examine the various ways jhana is understood and taught, including the different ways jhana is understood to relate to insight meditation.

People often think the only way to deepen samadhi (concentration) is through silent retreat practice. And though retreats are powerful and highly recommended, you can go quite far in strengthening samadhi and deepening meditation in the daily life context. You are encouraged to maintain a regular meditation practice as best you can within the constraints and demands of your daily life.

There will be lots of detailed meditation instructions for deepening concentration, developing jhana and incorporating samadhi into your insight meditation practice. Each month there will be optional readings, reflections and practice suggestions for you to explore.

Optional Reading for October:

The Experience of Samadhi. Up through page 17, pages 53-62.

Reflections

1. What is your intention for your meditation practice? Spend some time each day reflecting on your intention.
2. How do you intend to use this group to support your intention?
3. How do you see the place of samadhi in your meditation practice?
4. What is the priority of your meditation practice in relation to the other activities, interests and demands of your life?
5. Notice when other aspects of life pull you away from meditation. What is the priority of those things compared with meditation?
6. Notice if craving for samadhi or jhana, or if clinging to meditative experiences, arises in your meditation practice.

Practices

	Theme	Practice
1	Finding Ease	Begin each of your meditation sessions this month with a few moments dedicated to relaxation and ease. Notice if it is easy or difficult to bring a sense of ease into the practice.
2	Letting Go Of Struggle	Check in a few times each sitting to notice if you are struggling or tense in any way. Try relaxing mindfully into your present moment experience, even if it is unpleasant. Notice when this is easy to do and when it is challenging.
3	Balancing Ease and Effort	Right Effort is the sixth element of the Noble Eightfold Path, and entails the balance of ease and making effort. We need a certain amount of effort, which can sometimes be quite strong. Notice the balance of ease and effort in your meditation. When is more effort needed? When does effort become over-striving and feel tense?
4	Keeping it Simple	Stay with your simple meditation object as consistently as possible, without struggle.
5	Breath Meditation	If breath meditation is new to you, pay particular attention to how it is working to practice in this way. Notice if there are any aspects of breath meditation that are difficult.
6	Continuity	Experiment with mindfulness of breathing during daily activities.