

Shaolin Chan Meditation





Ancient verse

Sit still. Even for just a moment.

This peace means more than building
countless shrines.

Those shrines will eventually crumble. They will
turn to dust.

A pure mind, just for an instant, leads to true
awakening.



What is Chan?

- ◇ Chan. The word came from India. It meant thinking deeply. It meant training the mind. It meant quiet focus. This is the heart of Chan: concentration and wisdom.
- ◇ Chan has many names. Deep concentration. Stillness. Freedom. In Chinese, "*Chan*" means to think and to cultivate. This path brings great benefits. To think is to look closely, with a steady mind. To cultivate is to help the mind learn and grow.
- ◇ There is a clear path. First, gather your mind. This is **discipline**. Discipline builds **concentration**. Concentration reveals **wisdom**. These three steps work together. They are vital.
- ◇ Chan is one of the great perfections. It stands with giving. With patience. With joyful effort. And with profound insight. Chan is quiet thought. It shows us true understanding.

The Four Stages of Deep Meditation

- ◇ First. You **let go**. Bad thoughts fade. Desire lessens. You still think. You still notice. But there is joy. Happiness comes from this **release**.
- ◇ Second. **Thinking stops**. The mind grows quiet. It becomes pure. One-pointed. No more chatter. Just stillness. Joy now comes from this **deep calm**.
- ◇ Third. The first kind of joy fades. A new **peace arises**. You watch it calmly. Your mind is clear. You are aware. Your body feels at ease. The wise call this a **balanced happiness**.
- ◇ Fourth. Pain is gone. Pleasure is gone. Old sorrows and joys have vanished. There is no good, no bad. Only pure equanimity. Your awareness is clean. **Your mind is utterly still**.

The Four Formless States

- ◇ Go past shapes. Past sensations. Past scattered thinking. The mind finds infinite space. Dwell there. That is the first step.
- ◇ Now, go further. Beyond infinite space. Enter infinite awareness. Dwell there. That is the second step.
- ◇ Transcend awareness. Reach the place of nothingness. Dwell there. That is the third step.
- ◇ Go beyond nothingness. Enter a state neither thinking nor not-thinking. Dwell there. This is the final step.

此四无色定与四禅合称四禅八定

The Power of Breath

One day, the Buddha spoke to his followers. He shared a simple, profound practice. **“Focus on your breath,”** he said. *“Feel it. Truly feel it. In and out.”*

“Practice this often,” he continued. *“Your body will grow strong, not tired. Your mind will become clear. Your insight will sharpen. You will find a deep, steady calm inside. You will enjoy life fully, without needing to cling.”*

“How?” they might have asked. *“Just **observe your breath,**”* was the essence of his reply. *“Notice each one. This simple act,”* he promised, *“unlocks great rewards.”*

“It helps you let go of what weighs you down. It opens the door to joy. To lasting peace. It is a path to true understanding. To real freedom. It awakens your deepest potential. The benefits are immense.”

The people listened. They understood. They began to practice. And they found his words true.



How to Practice Chan Meditation

These teachings come from wise masters. They built on centuries of practice. It focuses on a simple, powerful practice: watching the breath.



Clearing the Path for Meditation

Secure Your Basics. Cover life's needs. Less daily stress. Food, shelter. When you're not anxious about tomorrow, your mind can be present.

Find Your Sanctuary. A quiet place. Free from noise and disturbance. Make it comfortable. Well-aired. No extremes of hot or cold. Your own sanctuary.

Clear Your Time, Clear Your Head. Step away from the rush. Unplug from demands. Free your mind from pressing tasks. Now, focus becomes possible.

Learn from Others. Seek guidance. Understand how to meditate. A teacher is best. Practice with others if you can. Learning on your own is also possible.



Foundations for a Centered Life

- ◆ **Know your true aim.** It is not for praise. Not for quick wins. Not for cleverness. Not merely for good karma. Seek deep understanding. Seek lasting calm. This journey is for your core. For your real self.
- ◆ **Live with integrity.** Be straight. Be fair. Act with honor. This cuts conflict. It quiets the mind. A clean life means less worry. More peace.
- ◆ **Practice moderation.** Enjoy life's gifts. Do not let them own you. Eat simply. Eat well. Nourish your body. A calm body supports a clear mind. Balance is strength.
- ◆ **Cultivate inner strength.** Let go of greed. Release anger. Don't drift. Don't delay. Focus your energy. Trust your journey. Believe in your growth.



When to Meditate

- ◇ True stillness, one day, will be with you always. Walking. Standing. Lying down. But now, as you begin, set aside specific times.
- ◇ Any time can work. Morning. Daytime. Night. If you work, try early morning. And at night before sleep. If only once, **morning is best.**
- ◇ How long? Longer is good. But don't force it. Start small. **Fifteen minutes is fine.** Build up slowly. Thirty minutes. Forty minutes. An hour. Do it every day, you will see results.
- ◇ Tired? Hungry? Too full? Rest. Eat. Wait. **Don't meditate when your body isn't ready.**
- ◇ At first, it might feel hard. Your mind might resist. Be firm. Keep at it. Like eating. Like dressing. It is Essential. Push through the tough parts. Don't give up. Even when busy, make time. This is how you find real benefits.
- ◇ Don't rush. Let it happen. Naturally.



Preparations Before Meditation

- ◇ Move gently through your day. This readies the mind.
- ◇ Find your **quiet place**. Your room needs **fresh air**. But no drafts. No one should disturb you. Less noise is better.
- ◇ If you meditate deeply, tell others. **No sudden disturbances**. A soft chime can rouse you if needed.
- ◇ **Wear loose clothes**. Comfort matters. **Keep warm**. Cover legs and back if cold.
- ◇ Sit straight. A cushion helps. **Be comfortable**.
- ◇ Wait after eating. An hour is good.

How to Sit



- ❖ **Legs.** Find your seat. Full lotus is best. Left foot on right thigh. Right foot on left thigh. Soles up. Knees touch the cushion. Body like a drawn bow. Straight. Stable. Too difficult? Try half lotus. One foot on the opposite thigh. Still too much? Cross your legs comfortably in front.
- ❖ **Hands.** Rest them in your lap. Right palm on left palm, near your belly. Thumbs lightly touch. If right leg is on top, right hand is on top.
- ❖ **Settle in.** Sway gently, side to side, a few times. Then still. Spine straight. Not stiff. Not slumped. Head upright. Nose in line with navel.
- ❖ **Breathe out.** Let go of stale air. Mouth open. Then, close mouth gently. Tongue to roof of mouth. Breathe in slowly, fresh air. Three to seven times. Lips and teeth gently together. A slight smile.
- ❖ **Eyes.** Gently closed. Or let them rest softly, gaze down a few feet in front. Sit straight. Still. If you slump, gently correct yourself. If your mind wanders, or you feel sleepy, open eyes a little. Focus softly.



How to Breathe During Meditation

- ◇ Your breath guides your mind. So, **breathe naturally**. Slow. Light. Even.
 - ◇ Try counting. Each exhale. Or each inhale. One to ten. Up. Down. Higher. Whatever helps. Then start again. Mind wanders? Start again. Practice. Soon the breath will be smooth.
 - ◇ Counting not working? Then follow the breath. Just feel it. Long. Short. Cool. Warm. Gentle. Strong. In. Out. Let nothing else distract you.
 - ◇ There are four kinds of breath. Only the last one is balanced:
 - ◇ **Wind**: noisy. Focus on wind, your mind scatters.
 - ◇ **Gasping**: stuck. Focus on gasping, you become tense.
 - ◇ **Forced**: rough. Focus on forced, you tire.
 - ◇ **Still**: silent, soft, almost not there. This breath brings peace. Joy. Stability.
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How to Train Your Mind



- ◇ Your mind will wander. First, make it still. Focus on the tip of your nose. Feel the breath, in and out. Don't chase it. Just watch. Thoughts will slow. Or, focus on your belly. Imagine the breath moving down there. A steady anchor. When thoughts come, see them. Let them go. Don't follow. Soon, a deep calm can arise. Body and mind might seem to disappear. This is **stillness**.
- ◇ But don't just stay in the quiet. Use this calm. Look deeper. See how your thoughts create your world. Good and bad. Look at yourself. Look at everything. It is all empty. Not solid. Watch your breath now. It's like the wind. Everywhere. Keep watching. Your inner eye will open. You may feel the breath in every part of you. This is **insight**.
- ◇ Stillness helps you see. Insight keeps you still. They work together. One thought at a time. Clear. Aware. Don't get stuck on words. The real work is in the doing. Be flexible.



Ending your Meditation

- ◆ When you finish, exhale fully. Mouth open. Several times. Let the heat leave your body.
- ◆ Move slowly. First, your body. Gentle sways. Then shoulders. Neck. Gently stretch arms and legs.
- ◆ Rub your thumbs. Warm them. Gently rub your eyelids. Open your eyes. Rub the sides of your nose. Rub your palms together. Warm them. Rub your ears. Then your whole head. Chest. Belly. Back. Arms. Legs. Down to the soles of your feet.
- ◆ You might be warm, even sweaty. Wait. Let the sweat dry. Then move freely.
- ◆ Once done with meditating, move around. Walk fast. Jog. Get a little sweat going. It's good for you.



What You Might Feel and How to Handle It

- ◇ As you meditate longer, things may happen. Your body might shake. Feel warm. Your head might buzz. You might see things. Hear things. Everyone is different. It's natural. Don't force it. Don't fight it. Some meditate for years, feel great, and nothing dramatic happens. These are just body and mind adjusting to deep stillness.
- ◇ Remember: everything is empty. These experiences are like dreams. Not real. Don't grab them. Don't push them away. Stay calm. Don't get stuck on them. That blocks real progress.
- ◇ If strange things happen, there are two ways to deal with them.
- ◇ First, be still. Know these things are not real. No fear. No worry. Don't hold on. Don't reject. Quiet your mind. They will fade.
- ◇ Second, look closely. If stillness doesn't work, look at the one seeing these things. Who is being bothered? Look closely. They will often vanish. If they linger, stay strong. Don't be afraid. Hold your ground. Know that the world of illusions and the world of awakening are not separate. See this clearly. The illusions will lose their power.
- ◇ If distractions persist for a long time, be firm. Hold your center. Don't fear. Recite calming verses or empowering phrases. Silently or aloud when not meditating. Trust in the good. Repent any wrongs. Stay true. Evil cannot overcome good. These things will pass. Many illusions can



Handling Sickness or Pain

- ◇ Sometimes, old illnesses flare up during meditation. Or new ones appear. This can happen if body, breath, or mind are out of balance. Good meditation can heal. Poor practice can cause problems. Know how to care of yourself.
- ◇ **Healing with Stillness:**
Some say, **focus your mind on the sick area**. The mind is powerful. Like a king, where it goes, problems scatter. Others say, **focus below the navel**. Hold your mind there. This can heal many things. Still others say, **focus on the soles of your feet**. Walking, sitting, sleeping. Why? Sickness often comes from imbalance. The mind pulling energy upwards. Grounding it below calms the body.
- ◇ **Healing with Insight:**
Some say: Use six special breaths, or healing sounds. These can rebalance your body. Make these sounds softly. With intention. They can help
 - Hē (呵):** For the **heart**.
 - Chuī (吹):** For the **kidneys**.
 - Hū (呼):** For the **spleen**.
 - Xì (呬):** For the **lungs**.



The Gift of Chan Meditation



May any good from this practice
Reach everyone, everywhere.
May we, and all life,
Together attain true peace.