

Ruth King
Week 1, *Ungripping the Heart and Mind*
March 6, 2017
“Cultivating Calm”



Welcome to Tricycle's Meditation Month. My name is Ruth King and I'll be your dharma teacher for the next four weeks. I'm also an author, a life coach, and the founder of Mindful Members Meditation community in Charlotte, North Carolina. Welcome. Over the next four weeks, I'd like to offer four practices that support us in ungripping the heart and mind. These practices mostly correlate with the Satipatthana Sutta, or the four foundations of mindfulness. It's just kind of a play on that and not to be held totally tightly. I thought we would play with four practices.

Let's practice together. I invite you to get into a position of ease. Sitting upright is helpful, if that's something you can do. Close your eyes and turn your attention inwards. Begin by relaxing the body. Sometimes a body scan is useful. Here we take our time, go through the body, and invite awareness to relax that part of the body. Awareness has that effect of relaxing. Bring your attention to the head and the face. Bring kind attention to the muscles in the face, the tightness in the scalp, and just invite a sense of softening. Move your awareness through the neck and into the shoulders, bringing a kind awareness there. [Move] through both of your arms—the upper arms, lower arms, the tops of your hands, the palms of your hands, all the way down to your fingertips. Bring your attention and your awareness to the inside of the arms. Invite a sense of softening there. Bring kind awareness to the chest and the upper back, the abdomen, and the lower back. Bring kind attention to all of the internal organs and muscles, and even the space that's on the inside of the torso.

Just bring a kind awareness to this area of the body. Invite a softening. Bring kind attention to the hip and pelvis region, the upper legs, and the lower legs. Include the tops of the feet, the bottoms, all the way down to the toes. Bring kind awareness to the insides of the legs, their full volume. Bring your attention to the body and the fullness of the body, softening through your kind awareness.

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Bring your attention now to your breath. Not to the thought of breath, but to the movement and the sensations of the breath, that point of contact where the breath touches the body. Allow yourself to know the stillness of the body and the movement of the breath.

Now, give special attention to being calm during this meditation. Notice the experiences of calm. Where in the body do you experience calm? You can give your attention to the exhale. Ride the sensation of the exhale and feel the settling that is the nature of letting go. Take the next few moments to notice how your body is experiencing calm and tranquility and bringing awareness to the experience of calm.

This is a really beautiful practice of centering and being in the experience of ease. I encourage you to continue this practice over the next seven days. Do it daily. Start with five minutes. If you can go a half hour, that's beautiful. Sometimes you may need to do something active before you can start to sit quietly and be still. If you need to become physically active, that's fine. Then, just sit.

You're developing a practice of being calm and knowing that from the inside. Also during this week you might want to reflect on the times of the day when you are most likely to be calm. You can start to plug into that. There are times when you're more calm than not, so just see if you can notice the rhythm there. Also notice how much importance you give to calm. Sometimes, for example, some of us might feel guilty if we have a moment of calm, especially if we look at the list of things we have to do. Begin to notice how you might interrupt the natural moments of calm that might just want to happen, or [moments] that are there and we fill them up with something else.

Also look at what supports you to be calm and see if you can cultivate more of that. What are some of the more common conditions that cause you to lose calmness? Are you aware of when that shifts for you? When you're in a state of calm, [notice if] there are habits and

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patterns in the way that maybe cause you to flip out of awareness or mindfulness of being calm.

Also notice how calmness affects your mindfulness practice or affects your decisions as you're moving through your day. One of the practices I try throughout the day is keeping at least 50 percent of my awareness on the body and breath. Even if I'm talking with someone, I want to stay close into this sense of how my body is feeling, where my breath is, and how I can be more and more in this moment. Can I allow some foundation of ease to be in the mix of everything else I'm dealing with? Okay, we'll see you next week.
Thank you.