

Attention to Sound Meditation

This exercise will be focusing on sound. Start your session with the basic relaxation technique [<http://www.taototem.com/basic-relaxation.htm>] once again to release all the excess tension in your body. As you find yourself losing the sensation of body, spend about 3 to 5 minutes on the basic breathing technique [<http://www.articlejunkie.com/breathing01.htm>]. This should leave you in a completely relaxed and ready for the Attention to Sound exercise.

You should be able to hear your breath flow in and out of your lungs as a steady, quiet flow of air. Now expand your attention to the other sounds you can hear within your body. You may hear that “space” sound in your head; you may hear your heartbeat. See if you can maintain focus on these internal sounds for at least 5 minutes.

The difficulty you will experience is not in the hearing, but in the drifting of attention to the thoughts that pop up in your mind. When you find yourself following some thought or image or idea and not focusing on your inner sound system, gently pull your attention back to the breath first, then to your inner sounds. Don't get frustrated at your mind wandering. It's perfectly natural. My Yoga teacher, George, used to say: The mind is like a frisky monkey; don't beat your monkey. [See article: <http://www.articlejunkie.com/friskymonkey.htm>]. The point being, we are making new in-roads of concentration here. You have never tried to control your mind at this level before and it takes time to develop the skill of true concentration.

Once you have achieved 5 minutes of uninterrupted concentration focused on your inner sound system, you are ready to expand your awareness to the sounds around you. Listen to the sound of the traffic, the wind, the air flowing through the room. As you identify the sounds, take care not to create thought patterns related to those sounds. Images will appear in your mind related to the sounds, but stay in the listening mode and don't gallop down the path of thinking about what you are hearing. This will not be easy. We create thought paths related to stimuli from our environment as a normal way of interacting in our world. This is a test of whether you can focus and control your concentration or whether you are drawn down your thought pattern path too easily. The goal is to direct your thoughts and mind rather than be reactive to your surroundings. Practice until you can reach 5 minutes of listening without thinking easily.

When you are ready, bring your awareness back to your body and then move comfortably out of this deep relaxation state and go about your day. Please do not get discouraged at how difficult this exercise may seem in the beginning stages of your practice. Give it time and practice, practice, practice.

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Chesa Keane has taught meditation and self-help for more than 30 years. To learn more about Meditation tools and techniques and an introduction to a unique meditation tool, the TAO Totem, visit: www.taototem.com.