

Attention to Unfamiliar Sound Meditation

Hopefully you are finding the breathing easier and more natural and you can relax at will whenever you want or need to release tension. Keep practicing, that is the only way to reach our meditation goals.

Since this is a sound mediation as well, there are some advanced preparations for this exercise:

- You will again use the relaxation technique you used before [<http://www.taototem.com/basic-relaxation.htm>] to put yourself into a quiet, relaxed state of being. At this point of your efforts to learn and perfect your meditation skills, you may still be lying on the floor or in bed as you go through the relaxation process, or you may be sitting in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the ground. Whatever works best is what you should do.
- Choose a piece of classical music or music with a quieting effect on you. I would suggest Moonlight Sonata or a similar piece of music. The music you choose must be familiar, because it is a familiar piece of music in general, probably to others as well. Take care to choose a soothing piece of music that does not stir, but rather calms you.
- Place your CD player close by so that from your relaxed state, you can easily start the music playing without much physical movement and avoid disrupting your quiet.
- The volume should be comfortable whether you are using headphones or simply listen through the speaker system. Do not make the volume either too high or too low.
- These exercises are always more successful if you are alone in the room without outside distraction.

Begin your relaxation method as always by putting your attention to the feet and moving up through the limbs and trunk and head until you feel deeply relaxed. By now, relaxation is probably not the difficulty, but not dropping off to sleep may be something you struggle with. We are going to lie down on the floor or flat surface for this exercise.

Use the 4-4-8 breathing technique once relaxed to deep your inner awareness. This exercise is similar to last week's exercise except that the focus will be on less familiar music something you have probably not heard before. A suggestion for unfamiliar music that is not distracting in a negative way would be Indian sitar. The purpose of this exercise is to find your-self following music that is unfamiliar and therefore carries no preconceived imagery. If you do not have sitar music, try Native American drums or Australian outback music. If this becomes difficult to find, locate a station on the radio that plays non-popular music that you can listen to comfortably.

This music may be easier to hold your attention because it is a little unfamiliar but it may also generate new images or curiosity feelings that you will want to control. Again, listen to notes, tones, sounds without generating thoughts or imagery that takes you away from your concentration. Developing the skill of just listening without preconceived ideas or thoughts is not always easy, but try to flow with the music.

This exercise should not take more than 20 minutes but you should gently bring yourself back to your goal of focusing on the sounds, staying aware, without drifting into thought patterns or imagery. The keyword here is *gently*. If you get frustrated at the natural wandering of the mind, you will defeat any progress you make.

Keep practicing your exercises, switching between the four exercises you have been working with so you can continue to develop those concentration skills. Success in any one of the exercises will enhance your level of success in each exercise.

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