

Attention to Familiar Sound Meditation

As a foundation training, you will need to work on controlling the breath. The technique that you works best for basic breath control is breathing in a 4-4-8 pattern: 4 counts in, 4 counts hold and 8 counts out. To be, you may use a 2-2-4 count or a 3-3-6 count. Work to reach a 4-4-8 goal for breath control; until it begins to feel natural?

Advanced preparation 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. 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.
- 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 – and not necessarily because you have heard it frequently, but because it is a familiar piece of music in general, probably to others as well. 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 again by alternating tension and release of the muscles from the feet up through the legs, lower, middle and upper body. Continue by tensing and releasing the muscles in the arms, shoulders and neck. Finally, release the tension from the face and jaw using the same tensing and releasing process. Once you have completed relaxed your body, focus on the breath and put your attention to your breath using the 4-4-8 breathing technique.

This entire relaxation process should be very familiar and easy to accomplish by now. When you are ready for the meditation, you will turn on the music that you have already setup for easy access.

As your mind recognizes the flow of the music, there will be a slight temptation to almost hum along in your mind. You are working on your concentration skills as an *observer* of the music. That is, even though you recognize the music, you do not want to become part of the music. Stay on the outside of the music experience and watch the notes unfold.

This music may also bring up some imagery that will tempt you to move away from your observation and build a story with the pictures your mind conjures. Let the notes flow into your ears and feel yourself watching the music. If you let your visualization become complex, you will be carried away into a story and drift away from your goal of simple observing this familiar music.

When you first begin this exercise, you will find yourself easily drifting off away from your goal. However, as you practice you will find it easier and easier to stay on target and learn to observe that which is in your space of awareness. This is an important skill to develop – to maintain a sense of separateness from your surroundings while at the same time being totally and acutely aware of the surroundings.

This exercise takes 20 minutes, depending on how long it takes you to get into your relaxed state. Do not force your attention to the music. If you catch yourself wandering, gently pull your awareness back to the notes.

The music only lasts for a few minutes, so you will probably feel successful very early in this exercise, perhaps after only one or two times. However, keep practicing for the entire week either with this one exercise, or alternating with the previous exercise of listening to the sounds within and around you.

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