

# Anapanasati

**Anapanasati** (Pali; Sanskrit: ānāpānasmīrti), meaning ‘mindfulness of breathing’ (“sati” means mindfulness; “anapana” refers to inhalation and exhalation), is a fundamental form of meditation taught by the Buddha. According to this teaching, classically presented in the Ānāpānasati Sutta, practicing this form of meditation as a part of the Noble Eightfold Path leads to the removal of all defilements (*kilesa*) and finally to the attainment of *nibāna* (nirvana).

In both ancient and modern times, anapanasati by itself is likely the most widely used Buddhist method for contemplating bodily phenomena. Traditionally, *anapanasati* is used as a basis for practicing *meditative concentration* (Samadhi) until it reached the state of *full absorption* (jhana). It is the same state, reached by the Buddha during his quest for Enlightenment.

In the Zen tradition, anapanasati is practiced with zazen or shikantaza (in the Soto tradition). Anapanasati can also be practiced with other traditional meditation subjects including the four frames of reference and mettābhāvanā.

The Buddha’s teaching in this matter was based on his own experience in using anapanasati as part of his means of achieving his own enlightenment.

The Ānāpānasati Sutta specifically concerns mindfulness of inhalation and exhalation, and recommends the practice of ānāpānasati meditation as a means of cultivating the seven factors of awakening: *sati* (mindfulness), *dhmma vicaya* (analysis), *virīya* (persistence), which leads to *pīti* (rapture), then to *passadahi* (serenity), which in turn leads to *samadhi* (concentration) and then to *upekkha* (equanimity).

Finally, the Buddha taught that, with these factors developed in this progression, the practice of ānāpānasati would lead to release (Pali: *nibanna*; Sanskrit: nirvana) from suffering (*dukkha*).

## Practice

The practice of ānāpānasati varies. Typically, one begins by sitting in a comfortable position, with the back and neck straight, in a comfortable or peaceful environment.

The meditator should breathe naturally, without attempting to change the breath or depth of the breath. If the breath is short, the meditator should simply observe that the breath is short. If the breath is long, the meditator should simply observe that the breath is long.

While inhaling and exhaling, the meditator practices:

- Training the mind to be sensitive to one or more parts of the entire body, rapture, pleasure, the mind itself, and mental processes.
- Training the mind to be focused on one or more of inconstancy, dispassion, cessation, and relinquishment
- Steadying, satisfying, or releasing the mind.

Tutors will explain that, in an untrained mind, thoughts constantly arise, disturbing the focus. They arise and fall away, like waves in an ocean. If one disregards them, simply noting their arising or abiding, they slowly wither and disappear. On the other hand, if one pays them attention, one is soon lost in the web of thoughts.

In this tradition there are two types of thoughts: thoughts from the past and thoughts about the future. These may bring happiness or sadness. It is said that, when left unattended, the mind will flit from one thought to another, wandering aimlessly.

Practitioners are tutored to avoid their practice being disrupted by passing thoughts and to gently nudge themselves into concentrating on their breathing again.

## Satipatthana Anapanasati Tetrads

1. Contemplation of the body	1. Breathing long	First tetrad
	2. Breathing short	
	3. Experiencing the whole body.	
	4. Tranquillizing the body activities.	
2. Contemplation of feelings	5. Experiencing rapture	Second tetrad
	6. Experiencing bliss	
	7. Experiencing mental activities	
	8. Tranquillizing mental activities	
3. Contemplation of the mind	9. Experiencing the mind	Third tetrad
	10. Gladdening the mind	
	11. Centering the mind in samadhi	
	12. Releasing the mind	
4. Contemplation of Dhammas	13. Contemplating impermanence	Fourth Tetrad
	14. Contemplating fading of lust	
	15. Contemplating cessation	
	16. Contemplating relinquishment	

May your practice of anapanasati bring you happiness, peace, joy and equanimity!