

The Importance of Daily Practice

The most effective way to develop a meditation practice and experience its benefits is to commit to practicing daily. Setting a consistent time and duration helps build the habit, especially when you begin with an attainable goal—even 10–20 minutes is enough to start.

As you learn about key Buddhist concepts—such as refuge, bodhichitta, the four immeasurables, and the lineage of great teachers who have transmitted the dharma—you can enhance your daily practice by reciting the Vajradhara lineage prayer, refuge and bodhichitta prayer, and the four immeasurables before meditating. Likewise, it is important to conclude each session by dedicating any merit to all sentient beings.

In Buddhism, we take refuge in the Buddha as our guide and example, the dharma (the teachings) as the path, and the sangha (the community of practitioners) as our companions along the way.

Motivation is central to Buddhist practice. In the Mahayana tradition, the highest motivation is bodhichitta—the aspiration to attain awakening not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of all beings. We cultivate this intention through developing love and compassion, which is why practitioners are encouraged to meditate regularly on the four immeasurables. For the same reason, we conclude our practice by dedicating any resulting merit, benefit, or virtue to the welfare and liberation of all beings.

Reciting prayers mechanically or while thinking about something else yields little benefit. It is therefore important to connect with the meaning of the words as fully as possible.

It is traditionally considered supportive to meditate in front of an image of the Buddha. When you feel ready, sangha friends can help you set up a simple shrine at home. A shrine can strengthen your sense of connection to the lineage and support the powerful practices of offering and homage.