

## Handout #7

# The Nine-Round Breathing Meditation

### **About the nine-round breathing meditation:**

The nine-round breathing exercise comes from the more esoteric collection of meditation practices contained in tantra. It is a simple but profound method to clear up the energy channels in the body and thus make the mind more serviceable for meditation. In tantra, it is explained that there are subtle energies in the body known as “winds.” The mind is said to accompany these winds, like a rider on a horse. If the winds are serviceable, the mind is serviceable. Nine-round breathing is a way to bring balance to these winds in the body and thus balance to the mind. For us, it is a method to bring the mind to “neutral” in order to generate a positive motivation for the meditation. Other methods to do this are things like counting the breaths from 1 to 10, or 1 to 21, or just focusing on the breath without counting. This is why breathing meditations like this one can be helpful to practice at the start of one’s meditation session.

Nine-round breathing is one of the particular methods that Lama Yeshe taught to his students to help prepare the mind for an effective meditation. So, it is a practice that was given with the blessings of our teachers and can be used from the beginning stages of meditation all the way through the advanced practices of highest yoga tantra.

*Kendall Magnussen*



### **Calming the mind:**

Focus your attention on your breathing. Use the technique of counting the breaths to settle the mind and bring it to a state of deeper focus and concentration, ready to engage in meditation.

### **Motivation:**

Create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own individual benefit, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop your mind to become a wiser and kinder person, able to be of benefit to all beings.

### **The main body of the meditation:**

#### **(Variation 1):**

This is a very helpful technique for relaxing the body and mind before developing meditative concentration on any topic.

Begin by visualizing the three psychic channels, or tubes, within your body through which the wind energy moves. The channels are round and hollow, the size of a straw, and very

fine, smooth, flexible, and luminous. The central channel is blue. It starts at a point midway between the eyebrows, curves up and back along the inside of the skull, like the handle of an umbrella, and then down along the inside of the spine to a point four finger widths below the navel. The right channel is red and runs from the right nostril back and then downward along the right side of the central channel to end at the point four finger widths below the navel. The left channel is white and also runs from the left nostril down along the left side of the spine to also end four finger widths below the navel. For this meditation, imagine that the ends of the three channels join together at this point four finger widths below the navel. Focus for a moment on this visualization.

Now, holding the left nostril closed with an index finger, inhale slowly and fully through the right nostril. Imagine that you are sending the breath all the way down to the end of the right channel. Imagine that the breath flows from the right into the left channel as you move your index finger to hold the right nostril closed. Now exhale slowly and fully through the left nostril. As the breath leaves the left nostril, imagine that all impurities (such as distraction and mental dullness) are expelled with the breath.

Repeat two more times (three breaths in all), inhaling through the right nostril and exhaling through the left and imagining the impurities being expelled with each out-breath.

Now reverse the process. Holding the right nostril closed with your index finger, breathe in deeply through the left nostril, sending the breath all the way down to the end of the left channel. As the breath moves into the right channel, move your index finger to hold the left nostril closed. Exhale slowly and fully through the right nostril. As the breath leaves the right nostril, imagine that all impurities are expelled with the breath.

Repeat two more times (three breaths in all), inhaling through the left nostril and exhaling through the right.

Now inhale slowly and deeply through both nostrils, sending the air down through the right and left channels. As you exhale, imagine that the breath is expelled up and out through the central channel. As you breathe out, imagine that you are expelling all impurities out through the point between the two brows. Repeat two more times (three breaths in all).

Now imagine that the three channels are completely clean and luminous.

If at the end of these nine rounds, you find that the mind is still scattered and distracted, repeat the nine rounds again. Once you have completed as many sets as you intend to do, then spend a few moments just breathing gently and evenly, imagining your breath flowing freely through the inner channels of your body.

### **Dedication:**

Finally, dedicate your positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of all living beings.

**(Variation 2):**

In this variation, conjoin the above meditation with the visualization of white light and black smoke. For each of the nine rounds, as you inhale, imagine that you are inhaling purifying white light. The light descends through the channel (right, left, or both, depending on where you are in the meditation), pushing all the impurities of body and mind through and cleansing the channel. As you exhale, imagine that all those impurities, in the form of black smoke, are pushed upward and out of each channel and exhaled into space, where they completely disappear. Imagine the white light and black smoke with each of the nine rounds, purifying your body and mind with each breath.

*Colophon:*

Composed by Ven. Connie Miller.