

How to Meditate with the Hong-Sau Technique

Preparation: Relaxation

Posture: Sit up straight with your back away from the back of the chair. Place your hands palms upward on the thighs at the junction of the thighs and abdomen. Keep your chest up and your chin level.

Eyes: With eyelids closed, turn your eyes slightly upward. This upward gaze should not involve any strain. Feel as if your eyes are *resting* in this upward position, not as if you are trying to look into the distance.

Tense and Relax: Inhale with a double breath through the nose, hold your breath and tense the entire body; then throw the breath out with a double breath through the mouth and relax completely. Do this 3 times.

Measured breathing: Inhale through the nose to a count that's comfortable for you; hold your breath for the same count. Exhale through the nose to the same count. Begin your next inhalation immediately. Do this for at least 6 rounds, going as slowly as you can with comfort.

Final deep breath: End with a deep inhalation and exhalation. From this point onward, let go of controlling the breath in *any* way.

The Hong-Sau Technique: Concentration

Watch the breath: Breathe only through the nose. Notice the breath wherever you feel it, not controlling it in any way. Imagine you are watching someone else breathe – in other words, you are not involved in making the breath happen.

At first, you may be most aware of the movement of the air in the lungs. If so, watch the breath there. This step is optional.

The most important place to notice the breath is in the subtle flow of air *inside* the nose. To aid you in feeling the movement of air, *relax* the inside of the nose. As you become quiet, notice the breath higher inside the nose, until your attention is at the very top of the nose. Feel as if the movement of air is stimulating the spiritual eye. Remember to let the breath flow as it wishes, even if it seems to become very shallow.

If you notice pauses between breaths, enjoy those pauses.

Repeat Hong-Sau: As the breath flows in, think "Hong"; as the breath flows out, think "Sau." Let the natural flow of the breath dictate the pace. (The meaning of Hong-Sau is "I am He" or "I am Spirit," but your focus should be on the sounds, instead of the meaning. "Hong" and "Sau" have a calming effect on the breath.)

Right forefinger: As the breath flows in, slightly move the right forefinger toward the palm. As the breath flows out, relax the right forefinger away from the palm. This can be a very subtle movement. As you get more absorbed in the feeling of deep peace and it becomes too distracting to move the forefinger, you can let go of this part of the technique.

Ending your practice of Hong-Sau: Practice Hong-Sau for the first two-thirds (or so) of your meditation time. End your practice by exhaling gently 3 times in quick succession, then let your breath stay out as long as is comfortable, enjoying the sensation of stillness. Let go of practicing the Hong-Sau technique.