

Free sample – you can buy full ebook at: [Jhana8.com](http://Jhana8.com).

Welcome to this easy to follow meditation course!

It's as simple as following day to day. You can go all out and meditate 10 hours per day. You might sit 5 minutes once a day. Or 5 times for 5 minutes each day. As we say in Thailand, "Up to you!"

You might want to light incense. You might want to sit or stand or lie down. Up to you.

### **Short Description of this Meditation Course:**

This short e-book meditation course is for anyone. You are probably a beginning meditator, but advanced meditators that are stuck can find the key to progressing here.

You don't have to sit in a certain posture. You don't have to fold your legs in back of your head. It isn't Yoga. It isn't Yogi. It isn't Yoda. It's just sitting. If you can't sit, you can stand. If you can't stand you can walk. If you can't do any of those you can lie down on your back. If you can't do this, can you lie on your side?

It's that flexible. Like I said, it's for "anyone".

### **Why did you decide to create this course?**

In 1997 I began to meditate. I didn't start because of any religious practice. I wasn't Buddhist, Hindu, or anything else. I didn't have a belief in any "ism" (Buddhism, Catholicism, Deism, Theism, Christianity, Muslimism, Hinduism). None of those or any other. I was not anti- any of these religions, but I found that I was more of a "free thinker" so to speak. Not believing in a certain God and yet not at all sure there isn't one.

So, I sat and focused on the sensations of my breath.

I watched it go in.

I watched it go out.

I sat in an empty bedroom on the floor, on the rug. Though I hadn't followed Buddhism and its beliefs I had read some books about it. I read some books on meditation. I read a book on Vipassana. I read some by Buddhadasa Bhikku and Ajahn Chah in Thailand. I read many things and it seemed that when "authorities" started talking about meditation, they had many rules about what one had to do and not do during it. They were very concerned

about posture, length of time sitting, knowing all the vocabulary pertaining to it, and many other things that I wasn't at all concerned with.

In my life I try things. I keep what works and throw out what doesn't. Life in the USA is quite stressful at times and I decided to try meditation to see if I might gain some peace... some calm... some relaxation when it was called for... I wanted some way to relax when upset. Relax when worried. Relax when anxious. I wanted some way to remain calm in the face of anxieties.

I found all of these things in meditation.

If you are looking for what I was looking for, meaning, some peace of mind... you may well find it here in this simple meditation course. Some of you may find more. Some of you may go someplace in your consciousness that is unexpected... in fact, some of you may find something deeper...

In my own journey I began by meditating for about 10 months in total back in 1997-1998 timeframe. I sat a few times a week. Sometimes 5 times per week. Sometimes 3. Sometimes 7. Sometimes 10.

At some point there began a revolutionary change occurring inside the mind. At the time, I was in the USA and I hadn't the slightest idea what it meant... I asked Thai Buddhist monks there in America and wasn't given any good answers to my questions about what process was going on. It was only after I moved here to Thailand that I began to understand what was happening... The abbot of a western style forest wat (Buddhist temple) here in Thailand as well as some monks there told me that I was experiencing what they called, "Jhana". Apparently there were 8 levels of Jhana, and I had been through them all.

Jhanas, as defined by Buddhists, are very tightly defined states of consciousness that have certain qualities that are best described by Buddha himself.

Is Jhana necessary for enlightenment? Who's to say. They are unique (bizarre) states of consciousness that are indescribable with words. If you're lucky enough to experience any of the states, even the first Jhana, you'll realize that you felt something that was nothing like your ordinary states of consciousness. They're rather *magical* states, for lack of a better term.

Continuing the story... The abbot of the temple (Wat Pah Nanachat in Warin Chamrap near Ubon Ratchathani) asked me to stay and continue the "process" there at the temple for as long as I wished. He said that the monks staying at the temple were all trying to reach the various states of Jhana I had, and that I was welcome to stay and continue...

Well, after some thought I decided not to stay. I came to Thailand for the answers about what the states were, but I was not ready to enter into those states again. Jhana and the road to nirvana are filled with fulfilling and blissful experiences. Even though I chose not to continue or to complete the journey right now, I know that someday I will sit again and see where it all leads. Even though I stopped meditation years ago, the process continues inside...

Meditation at the level of Jhana is an all or nothing process... it will create an incredible amount of turmoil inside you if you are one of the ones that *gets there*... Turmoil arises when you are faced with a decision about "going the whole way" or not. Conflict arises between the you that you were before the process began and the you that you are now (or are not now, might be more accurate).

The ego slowly dissolves... wants, desires, 'needs', go away gently... unnoticed sometimes... the process is sometimes very slow or sometimes happens in large jumps... what was important one day becomes nothing as it is let go... non-attachment and the realization that things are impermanent, non-self, not worth attaching to - comes naturally as a result of the state of mind that is present. It is not because it is "Buddhist" or Hindu or anything else. It is the natural state of the mind after meditation at or around the Jhana states.

Those looking for "magical" or other worldly experiences may interpret the experiences he or she has during this course, as just that. Others will interpret it in the name of their religion. Others will not experience anything. And, as I said, some may experience something that is so beyond words that they couldn't possibly even attempt to explain the experience in words. For me, I believe that anything I've ever written about the Jhana states is tremendously incomplete. To write something and put into words the feeling of the state is so ludicrous that I should never attempt it and yet I'm drawn to tell others about it so that I can share the experience on some level.

I could say so much more, and then, what's the point? I'd only be talking around the actual feeling and experiences and it's such a worthless pursuit.

I will tell you what I did. I'll outline it in this meditation course. I think that what has occurred in me can happen within ANYONE. I'm not special. I simply did a few things consistently. Then the process started in me. I didn't do something so wonderful that I earned it... what I did was not difficult. I don't think you need to be some place special - at the top of a mountain temple, or in a cave in Thailand. You don't need to be someone special either.

You don't need to do things exactly as I tell you I did them. You don't need to follow books on exactly how to meditate. You just need to...

do.

That's it - just do, and see if life changes. If not, go back to whatever you were doing before.

If you do find that something has happened... some process begins for you that is similar or even vaguely similar to what I describe in this book would you please write me an email and let me know what happened for you?

It may be a long process or it may come to you almost immediately. There are monks that spend 40+ years meditating. Here's a secret, it doesn't take that long if you don't add the extra fluff of religion on top of the experience. Religion adds additional challenges to "getting there". In fact I think that the reason there are thousands of monks in Thailand that have not had Jhana yet is because they have the fluff of Buddhism coloring their experience, piling layers of unnecessary rules and tradition on top of what can be a physical process – not religious.



## **Why meditate?**

The photo above is from one of my favorite places in Southern Thailand. It is very close to large caves and a freshwater spring one can kayak through at one's leisure, but there is more to the place than that..

This pool of fresh water is special. It is special because it's a bit like our consciousness. If you try hard you might be able to see very small waves or ripples on the right side of the top of the water. They're very slight. They might not really even be there, I'm not sure. The surface of the water is like the surface of your consciousness. The part that you are aware of.

When it ripples – when it is interacting with the world around you – it is obvious and you will have ripples. The surface ripples are what you are usually aware of. When you think, listen, speak, shout, engage in something physical or stressful, the waves are created.

With meditation - that all stops. Your mind can be totally still, unmoving. It's very possible. It has happened to me and many others that have meditated. When the surface of the mind calms and becomes still, we start to see and feel what is underneath. We wouldn't know there is anything much underneath our consciousness except what we can see from the surface.

This pool is just like that. You can see into the water maybe a foot, or at the most a meter deep. If you stumbled on this pool while walking through the forest you might guess it was about 2 meters (6+ feet) deep. I guessed that when I first saw it, and actually for the first few times I saw it.

Another way your consciousness is similar to this pool is because there is more to it than you might imagine. If you are studying your own consciousness without meditation you can see that you have a waking state, a sleeping state, and maybe daydream states and dreaming states while you sleep. That's about all we know about ourselves upon first inspection.

This pool, like your mind, has another dimension to it that you don't realize. Would you believe me if I told you a 10-story building would go underwater if we dropped it into this pool?

What about a 50 story building?

Yes, it's true... this pool is deeper than 500 feet. It's actually 200+ meters deep! That's over 600 feet deep. There is little to give the secret away until someone explores it by diving down deep and seeing how far it goes.

Your consciousness is just like this. It's deep. Really deep. It might make this hole in the ground with water seem like a *pothole*, your mind is so deep and filled with things to discover.

Meditation is a process of discovery. It's like you're exploring something that has never been seen before. In truth, it hasn't. It's you. It's all that is under your consciousness. Some people believe that under our surface consciousness is a universal-consciousness through which we are all connected. I can't agree or disagree with that, but it's an interesting way to look at things. People that meditate in a simple way by focusing on the breath until the mind stops and then just experiencing a non-moving mind tend to have similar experiences but they are probably not always the same, they are unique to the person somewhat.

Even so, they are also similar enough that when we share them with each other – we can usually identify similar experiences and feelings and say we've experienced that *too*.

I have never met anyone that shared all of the experiences I've had, nor have I met two people that explained Jhana levels or other experiences in the exact same way. We all interpret the experience a little differently.

I guess I felt a need to prepare you a little bit for what you'll experience if you happen to be a 'natural' and quickly progress through quieting the mind and having it stop. Once it stops the most amazing things happen. I'll not describe them much in these pages but I'll share a few things, as I can't usually keep the cat in the bag for long. Most of you will be following the steps outlined in the following pages – and becoming more peaceful, finding

relaxation through these simple steps. There is no need to go further into Jhanas – unless you want to. Either way, this is a good start.

## Day 1: Sit. Observe.

Let go of *ANY* expectations about what will happen as you meditate.

I'll repeat that... don't think that you will have some experience of heaven... nirvana. Don't think that you will have an empty mind. Don't think that you will stop thought today or next week. Don't think anything. If you are attached in any way to the idea that you are going to "get" something from sitting today, let it go. The reason for this is that the focus during every time you sit and meditate is just doing it. That's it. If you're sitting, you're *doing it* and that is the goal for the day, nothing else.

If you are concerned about getting something every time or *ANY time* you meditate, you will be disappointed. If you are disappointed you will likely not continue for long. You'll be happier if you continue.



Find a place to meditate for this course. Try to sit in the same place each time. Find a place that is quiet. A place where you cannot hear a TV, music, dogs barking, people talking, or cars driving by, is best. This might be very difficult for you. You may need to go somewhere outside your home to find a quiet place to meditate. You may need to find a meditation group listed in your local paper that meets in a quiet place regularly.

Finding a quiet place is at first very important because many distractions can prove too much to handle and you may stop meditation as quickly as you start.

You'll need to find a place that has a comfortable, pleasant temperature - not too hot - not too cold. Fan, air conditioning, or wind blowing directly on you is not conducive to meditation.

Find a place free of or relatively free of insects that will be flying around you, landing on you, biting you, etc.

Again, at first these things can greatly distract you. Later they may not matter at all.

Over the last two years I've found I can meditate even in the middle of chaos around me. I sometimes test it in an especially noisy area and see - can my mind be still in this environment? It can! This was not possible early on.

Before I meditate I usually drink some unsweetened tea or coffee to ensure that my mouth won't be salivating too much as I sit and meditate. To me it is disturbing to swallow endlessly as I meditate. The bitter tea or coffee always does the trick for me. It's not necessary, and some strict Buddhists don't drink anything with caffeine, but I'm not "Buddhist" and anything is permissible. Do it if you like.

I also used to burn sandalwood incense sticks in front of me on the floor. I'm not sure why except that I was able to smell it and more easily focus on my breath. I also found that watching the smoke come off it was very relaxing. Sometimes if my mind would not quiet and the 'circus of thought' was in full swing I'd open my eyes and watch the smoke curl and it served as a good focal point to relax me on occasion.

Once you've found a quiet place that you can sit undisturbed for up to an hour, you'll need to find a comfortable position to sit. You will be sitting for 5 minutes, or 50 minutes later (maybe, again up to you) so you'll need to find a posture that works for you.

The easiest posture for me was to sit cross-legged with my right foot on top of the crease created by my left calf and thigh. In Thai or Indian writings this is almost a half-lotus position. If your back is straight you'll probably have less pain and be able to sit for a longer period.

There is no reason to sit any longer than an hour. For me the longest I ever sat was just over 2 hours. I usually sat for 20-40 minutes.

So, your back *should* be straight. Put your hands in your lap. Your fingers will naturally curl inward if you are relaxed so just let them do that.

You are trying to find a comfortable posture in which you can remain alert, not get sleepy, and not fall over when you are relaxed... and yet you should be as relaxed as possible.

You will not find a painless position at first, though you can try if you wish. You can sit on a pillow or meditation cushion. I've tried soft pillows and they seem too soft - they tend to throw off my balance and once I really relax I tend to be leaning or compensating for them by tensing up certain muscle groups. You can lean back against a wall, a couch, a bed, anything to help support your back, if you have back pain.

Posture is not that important. Though Buddhists and others will stress the importance of perfect posture, I've found that it matters little. What matters is that you are comfortable and can relax completely in the sitting position. I have had the highest states of mind come whether I was sitting in the middle of a concrete floor, leaning against a wall, leaning back in an executive office chair, or sitting on a straight backed chair. No difference. Don't believe you're going to get nowhere if you don't adhere to a specific posture someone is preaching.

If you are limber you might want to try the full lotus or the half-lotus positions, as they are very stable and some people can meditate for hours and hours without too much discomfort.

I don't recommend reclining on your back to meditate, though you might find that you are one that can do it without getting sleepy. Me? I get sleepy every time I attempt it - so I just don't try anymore.

So, practice finding a sitting posture and sitting with your eyes lightly closed.

There will be many things going on in your mind... in your body. Your body will be trying to adjust to the position that it is in. You may feel pain. You may feel hot. You may feel cold.

Your breathing may be fast. Or it may be slow.

Your mind may be filled with thoughts. So many thoughts that you can't possibly focus on any one thought in particular. You may feel an emotion. You may have questions forming, and even conversations taking place in your head.

Just watch the "circus" of perception going on inside your head and body.

This is the first step. Watch all the turmoil your body and mind is experiencing even as you sit, relaxing in one spot with your eyes closed.

Why is there turmoil when you are doing nothing really, just sitting?

The mind appears to be just running on constantly, doesn't it?

Meditation involves watching this mind circus going on... As you watch it you will notice many things. You can look at feelings. Physical sensations. Fear. Love. Thoughts. You will understand more about memories and what part they play in your thoughts. You may be watching your thoughts, hearing them for the first time and in a different way.

*Do you hear thoughts or see them - or both? Do you feel them?*

The first part of this meditation course is focusing on just watching everything going on. Watch. Don't take part... just watch and focus on the various things. See how your "attention" to something can isolate it from everything else going on. Also see how things link together. One thought provides a springboard for a chain of linked thoughts that might end up going completely away from the original thought.

You might get caught in a daydream that goes for a couple minutes - or 20 minutes!

It is this attention (watching) that you'll later use to focus on breathing as you watch it come into and exit the body.

So for the first day - sit as long as you feel like - maybe 20 minutes and watch. Do nothing more. You can change position if your legs are hurting, your foot is hurting, your back is hurting... but before you change position - watch the discomfort - the pain for a just a little while.

*What is pain? What is discomfort? What are its qualities?*

Think of yourself as a scientist or a student. You are a student of your consciousness. Of your body and mind. You are going to see what makes YOU tick. You're going to learn a lot about yourself in 22 days. Keeping a short journal might be something you'll enjoy looking back on in a few weeks or months. I have journal entries I wrote 10 years ago that still bring me back to that place as if it was happening right now.

So, do that if you feel inclined - keep a short journal after each meditation session about what you experienced.

Ok, that's Day 1 of your Meditation Course...

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Metta,

Vern L.

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