

### Three Approaches or Stages of the Meditation Technique

There are three major approaches or stages in our meditation practice and instruction. These various techniques can be viewed both as stages one goes through as one's practice matures, and as stages one might go through in any particular meditation session as one goes from the flurry of our fast paced lives to a more settled state of mind.

**Precise Technique:** A technique in which we are working very closely with the breathing process, gaze, posture, and thought process. The emphasis here is on drawing in the mind, relaxing, and stabilizing our mindfulness so that our mind begins to rest in itself. The technique is to be with both the in and out breath, lightly but continuously - be as precise as you can, but not tight. Labeling can be used, but it is not emphasized. See every thought as soon as it arises; if you stray, come back to your posture and breathing. The eye gaze is relaxed and close in, about 2-3 feet in front.

**Open Technique:** A technique in which we have stabilized our mind to a degree that the technique becomes more natural and spacious. The main point is to enjoy the space of our mind, using the out breath as a bridge, and to include sense perceptions as part of our awareness. Labeling of thoughts as "thinking." The gaze is relaxed, downward, about 6 feet in front. The mouth is slightly open as if saying "ah." One can breathe through both the mouth and the nose. Maintain a light touch – a focus of only 25% on the breath, 75% panoramic. Identify with the out breath, go out into space in all directions (not just in front). Disown, let go, but don't space out. Let the in breath be a gap and happen naturally. Recognize small thoughts that arise; if distracted completely, label "thinking," see what arose, and come back to the breath.

**Beyond Technique:** A "technique" in which our mind is well stabilized and naturally rests within itself, feeling very spacious and not needing to apply any technique. In fact, the main technique here is to disown any attempts to "meditate," and yet not to wander for an instant. Labeling of thoughts is relaxed or non-existent. Raise your gaze (between 45 degrees and straight ahead depending upon what is comfortable) and let go of any technique or object (relax the eyes - soft gaze). Let thoughts come and go, like small fish in a vast ocean. Sense perceptions are included as part of being present. Do not stray, but be present (acknowledge you are already present). If you stray, come back to simply being present—awareness of being in the room. If you start focusing on the breath, gently dissolve it.