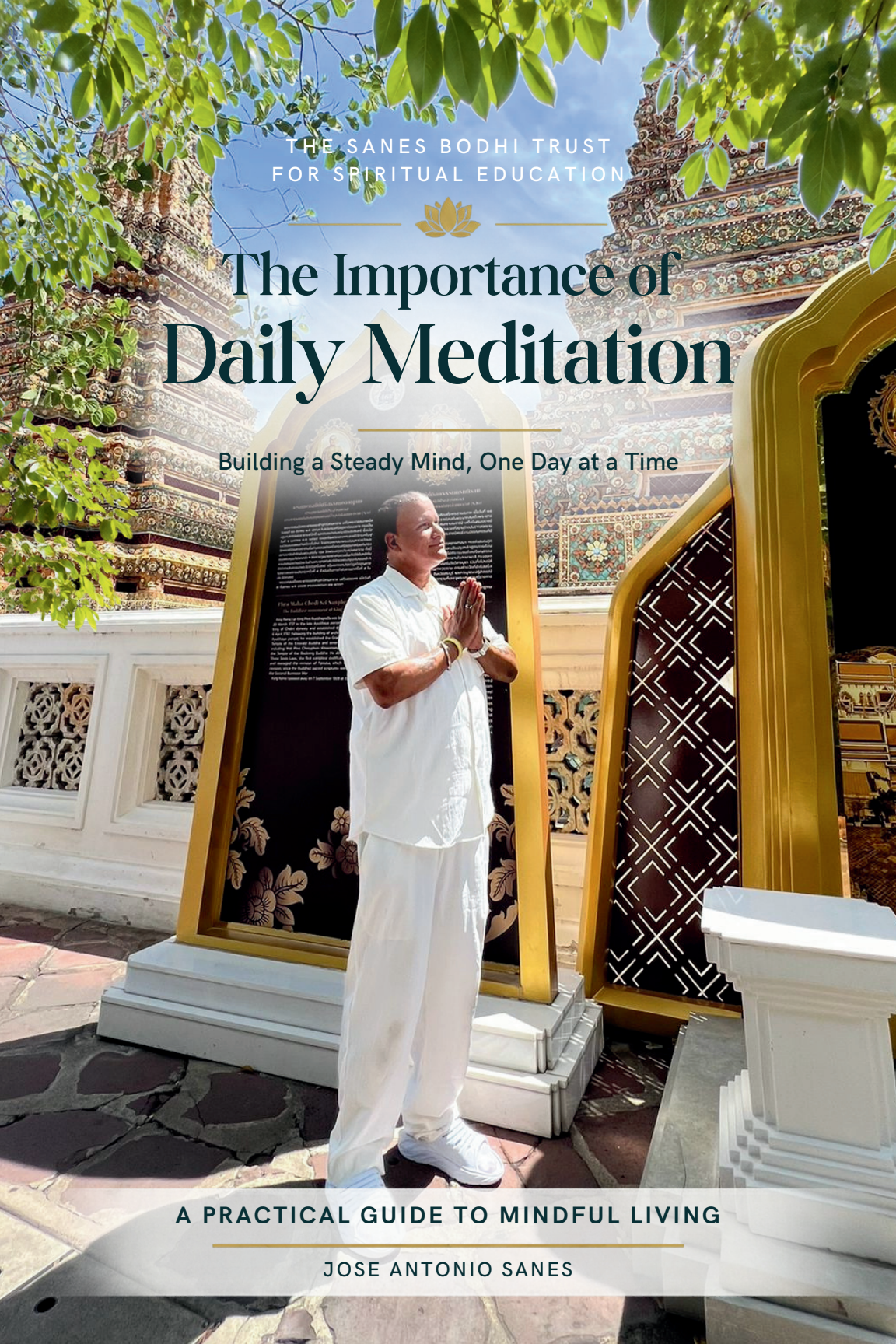


A man in a white short-sleeved shirt and white trousers stands in a meditative pose with his hands pressed together in a prayer position. He is looking upwards and to the right. He is standing in front of a large, ornate golden frame that contains a black plaque with white text. The background features a traditional Thai temple with multiple tiers and intricate carvings. Green leaves of trees are visible in the upper corners of the frame.

THE SANES BODHI TRUST  
FOR SPIRITUAL EDUCATION



# The Importance of Daily Meditation

Building a Steady Mind, One Day at a Time

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MINDFUL LIVING

JOSE ANTONIO SANES



## WELCOME

# Why This Booklet Exists

Meditation does not require a perfect setting, a particular belief system, or years of experience.

It begins with something much simpler: the willingness to pause, become aware, and notice what is happening within us.

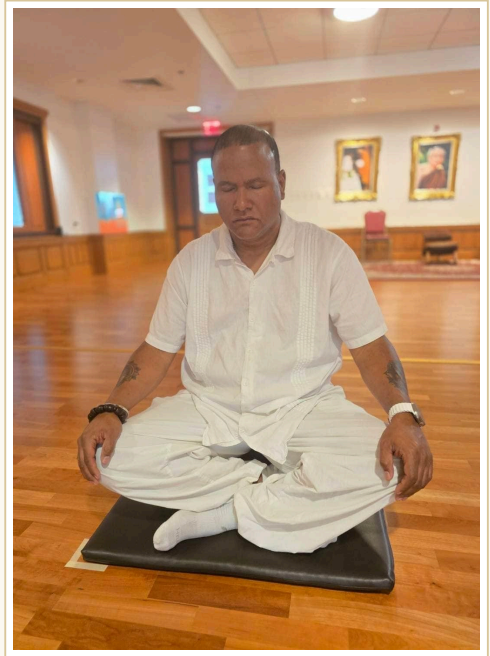
This booklet was created for people who want to develop a more consistent meditation practice but may not know where to begin. You may already meditate occasionally. You may have never meditated before.

Both are welcome here.

Meditation will not remove every difficulty from life. Change, uncertainty, uncomfortable emotions, and challenging circumstances will still arise.

Practice offers us an opportunity to meet those experiences with greater awareness instead of automatically being carried away by every thought, feeling, or reaction.

Throughout these pages, you will explore breath and body awareness, emotional reactivity, equanimity, impermanence, and ways of bringing meditation into ordinary life.



*A quiet moment of practice.*

**Begin where you are.  
Practice with patience.  
Return tomorrow.**

- Jose Antonio Sanes  
Sanes Bodhi Trust for Spiritual Education, Inc.



## WHY CONSISTENCY MATTERS

# A Practice Is Built by Returning

A single meditation session may offer a moment of stillness.

Regular practice offers something different: repeated opportunities to become familiar with the mind.

Some days may feel calm. Other days may bring restlessness, impatience, distraction, or tiredness.

Daily meditation is not about producing the same experience every time.

It is about learning to show up and observe what is actually present.

With regular practice, we may begin noticing patterns that previously went unseen: tension in the body, the beginning of irritation, recurring worry, or the impulse to react before we act.

The purpose is not to judge what we discover. The purpose is to see it more clearly.

Just as physical abilities develop through repetition, attention can also be trained through repetition.

Less useful:

"Did I have a good meditation?"

More useful:

"Did I practice?"

Five attentive minutes practiced consistently can be a more realistic beginning than an ambitious goal that is difficult to maintain.

### REFLECTION

What is one time of day when five quiet minutes could realistically belong to you?

Morning: \_\_\_\_\_ Afternoon: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose one. Begin there.



## WHEN PRACTICE BECOMES DIFFICULT

# Beginning Again Is Part of the Practice

Most people do not stop meditating because they suddenly decide meditation has no value.

Often, ordinary life simply takes over.

One busy morning becomes a missed sitting. A missed day becomes several. Sometimes we expect quiet but encounter restlessness, boredom, frustration, or an unusually active mind.

None of this automatically means meditation has failed.

Common thoughts:

- "I don't have enough time."
- "My mind won't stop thinking."
- "I can't sit still."
- "I'm probably doing this wrong."
- "I'll start again tomorrow."
- "Meditation doesn't feel peaceful today."

The mind will wander. Schedules will change. Motivation will rise and fall.

Consistency is not the absence of these difficulties. It is our willingness to return after they occur.

If you miss a day, you do not need to punish yourself or abandon the practice.

**Notice what happened.  
Then begin again.**

### REFLECTION

What most often gets between you and meditation?

---

What is one small change that could make returning easier?

---



START WHERE YOU ARE

# A Sustainable Practice Can Begin Small

It is easy to begin with an ambitious plan:

**Thirty minutes every morning.**

**An hour every evening.**

**Never miss a day.**

For someone developing a new practice, a smaller commitment can be more sustainable.

## Begin with five minutes.

Choose a time that fits naturally into your day: after waking, before work, after arriving home, or before bed.

You do not need a special meditation room. You do not need expensive equipment. You do not need to wait until life becomes less busy.

You need a safe place to sit and a willingness to pay attention.

### Three Simple Commitments

Choose a time. Connect meditation with something that already happens each day.

Choose a place. A chair, cushion, bench, or quiet corner is enough.

Keep the goal realistic. Five attentive minutes is genuine practice.

As meditation becomes more familiar, you may choose to sit longer. There is no need to rush.

#### FOR THE NEXT SEVEN DAYS

Make one simple agreement:

**"I will sit for five minutes and observe."**

*Not: I must become calm. Not: I must stop thinking.*

**Sit. Notice. Return.**



# An Anchor for Awareness

The breath is already happening.

We do not need to manufacture it or make it special. We can simply become aware of it.

That makes breathing a useful place to begin.

For this introductory practice, allow respiration to remain natural and unforced. There is no need to intentionally deepen, slow, or regulate it. This is also consistent with the natural-respiration approach described in the Goenka tradition.<sup>1</sup>

You may notice breathing most clearly:

- at the nostrils,
- in the chest,
- in the abdomen,
- or simply as movement in the body.

There is no need to search for a special sensation.

## When Attention Wanders

Sooner or later, the mind will move elsewhere. A memory appears. A plan develops. A sound catches your attention. You suddenly realize you have been thinking for the last minute.

That realization is not failure. It is awareness.

When you notice that attention has wandered, gently return to breathing. In Goenka's discussion of respiration, this repeated wandering and returning is itself part of the training.<sup>1</sup>

**The goal is not to eliminate thought.  
The practice is to recognize and return.**



## PRACTICE

# Five Minutes of Natural Breath Awareness

This exercise introduces basic breath awareness. It is not a substitute for formal Vipassana training or instruction from a qualified teacher.

- 1 Sit comfortably. Use a chair, cushion, or meditation bench. Allow your back to be upright without becoming rigid.
- 2 Let breathing remain natural. Do not intentionally deepen or slow the breath.
- 3 Notice breathing. Bring attention to wherever respiration is easiest to recognize.
- 4 Observe. There is no need to count breaths, create an image, or force concentration.
- 5 Notice wandering. When you realize the mind has moved elsewhere, acknowledge it without criticism.
- 6 Return. Bring attention gently back to breathing.

Your attention may wander ten times or fifty times.  
Returning is the practice.

When approximately five minutes have passed, remain seated for a moment before moving. Notice the body. Notice the mind. There is no need to decide whether the meditation was "good" or "bad."

### AFTERWARD

What did I notice?

What distracted me most often?



# Noticing Before We Act

Daily life moves quickly.

Someone says something difficult. Plans suddenly change. A message arrives that we do not like.

Before we realize what has happened, irritation may already be turning into anger or worry into fear.

Meditation can help us become more familiar with reactions as they begin.

The objective is not to pretend difficult emotions are absent. It is to notice them more clearly.

You might recognize:

- tightness in the jaw
- pressure in the chest
- heat in the face
- restlessness

Or:

- rapid thinking
- a strong impulse
- shallow breathing
- a wish to escape

That moment of recognition matters. It provides an opportunity to observe what is happening before automatically responding from it.

## Try This

Pause.

Notice one natural breath.

Feel what is happening in the body.

**"What is happening right now?"**

You do not have to solve everything in that moment. First, become aware.

### REFLECTION

What physical signs sometimes accompany a strong reaction for you?

---



## EQUANIMITY

# Staying Present Without Suppressing

Equanimity does not mean becoming emotionless.

It does not mean ignoring pain. And it does not mean pretending everything is fine.

In this booklet, equanimity means developing greater steadiness in the presence of changing experience.

Pleasant experiences arise. Unpleasant experiences arise. Thoughts appear. Emotions move through the body.

The practice is to notice what is happening without immediately grasping at what feels pleasant or fighting everything that feels uncomfortable.

## Consider Anger

Without awareness, we may immediately speak or act from anger.

With awareness, we may first recognize: "Anger is present."

Perhaps there is heat, tightness, pressure, or agitation. The feeling may still be uncomfortable. But awareness has entered the experience.

### SUPPRESSION

"I should not feel this."

### EQUANIMITY

"This is what I am experiencing right now."

From there, we may have more choice about what happens next.

Practice question: When a difficult feeling arises, can I notice it before deciding what to do with it?

Perfection is unnecessary. Awareness is the beginning.



## IMPERMANENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

# Everything Changes

A sound appears and fades. A thought arises and passes. A sensation grows stronger, weakens, moves, or disappears.

An emotion that seems overwhelming now may feel very different later.

Buddhist teaching uses the word *anicca* for this changing nature of conditioned experience.

Meditation gives us an opportunity to investigate change directly rather than accepting it only as an idea.

In Goenka's teaching, bodily sensations and the mental reactions associated with them are repeatedly examined through the understanding that they are impermanent.

Why this matters: when we forget that experience changes, the mind may say, "I will always feel like this," "This will never change," or "I need this pleasant feeling to stay."

Awareness offers another possibility: This is present now. And it is changing.

Recognizing impermanence does not mean ignoring circumstances that require action. It means understanding that our inner experience is not frozen.

### A SMALL EXPERIMENT

Observe one bodily sensation for thirty seconds. Did it remain exactly the same?



# Awareness in Ordinary Life

Formal sitting practice is important, but awareness does not have to disappear when the timer ends.

Everyday life offers opportunities to practice.

## Walking

Notice the movement of the body and contact with the ground.

## Eating

Pause long enough to actually experience the first few bites.

## Waiting

Notice the urge to immediately reach for your phone.

## Listening

Notice whether you are hearing the other person or preparing your response.

These moments do not need to look spiritual. Nobody else needs to know you are practicing.

## Choose One Reminder

Select one ordinary event that already happens every day: opening a door, sitting in your car, waiting for coffee, washing your hands, or beginning a meal.

When I \_\_\_\_\_,  
I will pause and notice one natural breath.

The goal is not to remain perfectly mindful every second. The practice is simply to remember more often.

**And whenever we discover that we have forgotten:  
we can return.**



## TEACHERS AND COMMUNITY

# We Do Not Always Have to Practice Alone

Meditation is personal, but the path does not have to be solitary.

A teacher can provide guidance when practice becomes confusing. A community can provide encouragement when motivation weakens.

A teacher cannot meditate for us. A community cannot replace personal practice.

But both can help create conditions in which practice can mature.

Sometimes teaching comes through words. At other times, we learn by observing patience, consistency, humility, kindness, and the way another practitioner meets difficulty.

**Teachers can point  
toward a path.  
We still have to walk it.**

Meditating with others can also help strengthen consistency. A group sitting, temple, retreat, class, or trusted community gives us somewhere to return when practicing alone becomes difficult.

Much of my own understanding of meditation has been shaped through teachers and Buddhist communities.

For that guidance, I remain deeply grateful.



*Practicing walking meditation in community.  
With gratitude for the support of shared practice.*



## A PERSONAL REFLECTION

# Why I Continue to Practice

Meditation has changed the direction of my life.

My own path has included temple practice, retreats, study, and a period of monastic ordination.

Those experiences have been meaningful, but they have also taught me something important:

A robe does not do the practice for us.  
A temple does not do the practice for us.  
A title does not do the practice for us.

Eventually, we return to the same work:

**Sit. Observe. Be patient. Begin again.**

I created this booklet because meditation became more than something I occasionally did. It became a way of looking more carefully at how I meet my own life.

I am deeply grateful for the teachers who helped guide me - especially my meditation teacher, Boonyod “Benny” Nonthong, whose guidance changed the course of my life.

But your journey does not have to resemble mine. You need the opportunity to investigate practice through your own experience.

- Jose Antonio Sanes



# A Beginning, Not the Whole Path

The exercises in this booklet are intentionally simple.

They introduce basic skills:

- noticing natural breathing
- recognizing distraction
- becoming aware of the body
- observing reactions
- returning attention to present experience

These practices can be a beginning.

They should not be confused with complete training in Vipassana.

Vipassana is commonly translated as insight or seeing clearly. Different Buddhist traditions teach insight meditation in different ways.



*A path is walked step by step.*

Within the Goenka tradition that informed portions of this booklet, learning the method involves sustained practice, an appropriate environment, and experienced guidance.<sup>1</sup>

The five-minute practice in this booklet is therefore presented as introductory breath awareness, not as a complete Vipassana course.

If meditation becomes important to you, you may choose to explore reputable teachers, Buddhist communities, meditation centers, or structured retreats.

Books can describe practice. Teachers can guide practice. Communities can support practice.  
But ultimately, meditation must be experienced.

Begin simply. When appropriate, seek guidance. Allow practice to deepen gradually.



YOUR PRACTICE BEGINS HERE

# Seven Days of Returning

For the next seven days, set aside approximately five minutes. Allow the breath to remain natural. Observe. When attention wanders, return.

| Day | Practiced                | One Word About the Experience |
|-----|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| 2   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| 3   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| 4   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| 5   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| 6   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |
| 7   | <input type="checkbox"/> |                               |

What helped me practice?

---

What made practice difficult?

---

What did I begin noticing?

---

Would I like to continue?

---

## Practice With Care

Meditation is not a substitute for medical or mental-health treatment. Difficult or unwanted experiences can occur for some practitioners. If practice repeatedly produces significant distress or feels overwhelming, consider pausing and seeking appropriate guidance or professional support.

## Selected Sources

1. S. N. Goenka. Meditation Now: Inner Peace Through Inner Wisdom. Vipassana Research Institute, 2003.
2. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Meditation and Mindfulness: Effectiveness and Safety.
3. Goyal M, et al. "Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being." JAMA Internal Medicine. 2014;174(3):357-368.

Enlighten  
Transform  
Liberate



## In Honor and Gratitude



This book is dedicated with deep mettā, gratitude, and loving-kindness to my meditation teacher, **Boonyod “Benny” Nonthong**.

Your guidance did more than teach me how to meditate. It changed the direction of my life and helped me see the Dharma, myself, and the world with greater clarity. Through your patience, encouragement, and example, you opened a path of wisdom, peace, and compassion that continues to shape the person I am today.

May whatever goodness arises from these pages be shared with you in heartfelt gratitude.

*May you be happy.  
May you be peaceful.  
May you be free from suffering.*



**SANES BODHI TRUST**  
FOR SPIRITUAL EDUCATION, INC.

A CLEARER MIND  
A KINDER WORLD  
A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

[www.bodhitrust.org](http://www.bodhitrust.org)

*Practice • Kindness • A Better Tomorrow*