

Dear Friend,

I checked through my library at home and found that I had duplicate copies of the two Thich Nhat Hanh books in this package. You are welcome to keep them if you want. Thich Nhat Hanh is a very good teacher and I find myself going back to his books as I contemplate and meditate on the teachings in his books. So the books can be useful for reference as well as study.

The meditation of breath awareness is very helpful with building inner calm and mindfulness. It's more than just that though. Even when it's just 20 minutes a day, one's meditation practice seeps into your daily life. It helps me be more patient when I am faced with an unpleasant patron or other stressful situation. Meditation practice helps you be more mindful (aware of your feelings and thoughts as they bubble up into consciousness). That helps you pause and slow your breath when you notice yourself becoming stressed or angry. You don't suppress the emotion, you just breathe into it, just stay with it for a little while. When you respond in that way, you will notice something nice. The emotion just evaporates. Just watching the feeling bubble up without engaging it keeps it from becoming enflamed and causing you to lash out (verbally or physically) or get upset and damage yourself through agitation and stress. You are in control of how you respond to a situation, your attitude towards it and perception of it. Instead of impulsive reaction, you act mindfully. It's a much more pleasant way to engage with life.

When you start to meditate you are going to notice and maybe be concerned about your mind buzzing constantly with thoughts and being very distracted by them. Every meditator experiences this. It's normal and does not need to be a problem. All those buzzing thoughts come from the same place as emotions that well up, and are of the same nature. Just notice the thoughts bubbling up, just watch them without engaging with them (either trying to push them away or suppress them or clinging to them or getting on the thought train and riding it). If you just watch them, after a little while, just like emotions, they will evaporate. You notice you are thinking and with mindfulness and alertness you just gently keep bringing yourself back to awareness of the breath. This gets easier to do over time.

As you practice and become less distracted you start resting in calm abiding – being here and now in the present resting in clear awareness. That opens up the possibility of gaining direct realization and insight into what the nature of reality really is. That's the path that leads to Buddhahood.