

# An Introduction to Calm Abiding Meditation

with Michael Bobrowicz

For almost everyone, there is some time in the day or week where calm arises. It may be just as one goes to sleep, or in the moment when one notices the sun falling on a flower in the garden; or while having a quiet beer on a Friday night. There is nothing wrong, by the way, with having a beer! But these avenues to calm cannot be practised methodically; they tend to happen randomly, and sometimes the beer just does not do it. We can't really 'call them up' when we need them: for instance, when the driver in front cuts us off as we try to enter the freeway.



*Calm Abiding* meditation is different: we learn it, we practise it in formal meditation, and then it starts to pervade our lives and we can find the calm when we need it. *Calmness* is difficult to describe because it is neither a thought nor an emotion, but is perhaps a state of consciousness that contains both thought and feeling. We do know it well by its effect. With calmness present we can deal better with untoward events, we are less blown about by outside forces, and importantly, we are less stressed by what does arise around us.

Most of us do not live in monasteries full time, but instead live in a world where road accidents, blocked sewers, unpaid bills, crying children, irritating relatives, storms, floods and fires, continually happen around us. Our lives are bombarded with input, much of which we do not choose, and some of which we choose but wish we could do without – like when the mobile phone rings right at that moment when what we needed was a cup of tea and a break.

*Calm Abiding* will not stop those outside events happening but it can help us determine how we experience them and how we respond. *Calm Abiding* is a form of mind training. It is not a passive state where nothing happens. We are not trying to emulate rocks: we move, we breathe, we think and we feel. This is an *active calm* where we are engaged with the body and with all five physical senses.

Most people decide to learn this practice because there is not enough peace in their lives. The good news is that it can give us that peace, piece by piece. It will make us smarter because it teaches the value and skill of taking a pause before acting, and of considering before we speak: "Do I really need to say that?" so that we make fewer of the mistakes which can throw us into regret and inner turmoil. ***Twenty to thirty minutes of practice each day, over time, can help achieve this.***

The meditation is not complex and one does not need any previous experience or 'special' skills. If I were to use just one word to describe it I would use the word 'practical'. It works for busy people with jobs and families. Once established it can also benefit the people around you: your friends, partner, children, parents, work colleagues, even people you meet in the supermarket. As we become calmer, we react less strongly when others are in less fortunate states of mind. We more easily recognise the danger of those states for ourselves and how easy they are to fall into; we learn to guard from falling into those states; and we know how to find the calm state of mind. So we begin to be an asset to ourselves and all those we meet.

It also has a third benefit: when we practise *Calm Abiding*, we remove the obstacles to insight. Becoming calmer, we have stillness, quiet and peacefulness and this allows our own self-reflective

consciousness to come to the forefront. Insight does not come from outside ourselves. As we develop self-reflective consciousness, our inner voice speaks to us and being calm, peaceful, and still, we can now hear what it says.

The course will be 10 classes run over **12 weeks (due to no classes on Public Holidays)**. The meditation is broken down into small steps which are easy to learn and practise. The emphasis will be largely experiential including regular practice at home and opportunities for feedback. We will take a detailed look at posture, body scan, visualization, pain and other obstacles as well as mindfulness in everyday life. The course is suitable both for beginners and for experienced meditators with an interest in a systematic approach. *Anyone who has completed the course previously is most welcome to attend again.*

**It does require a commitment both to attend the classes and to try out the meditations at home between classes.** There are also two short videos which you will need to watch prior to starting the course (the links will be sent once you are enrolled). The time commitment is intended to be manageable and takes into account that most people have busy lives. But please do consider if you can make that commitment before you enrol.

The meditation is borrowed from the Sakya school (one of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism) and is traditionally taught to monks and nuns as the foundation of all meditation practice. However, it has been adapted for people living busy, modern lives.

**Michael Bobrowicz** has been studying Buddhist meditation and philosophy for more than 25 years. He has a degree in Western philosophy and in Drama. He studied for over 20 years with the Venerable Namgyal Rinpoche. Having worked in private enterprise, owning companies, and in the public sector managing waste and recycling for the city of Brisbane, Michael has a good understanding of how to integrate meditation with a busy career. Stepping out of the workforce in 2006, he studied and did long retreats with the Venerable Cecilie Kwiat. Michael loves meditation and is keen to share that love with other people: *"I try to work from experience, which in my case is very 'nuts and bolts', based on what I learned from long silent retreats. How to meditate and why has been very important to me. I was lucky enough to have teachers who not only loved meditation but had the skill to explain why they loved meditation. My aim is to try to show people what a joy meditation can be."*

**Dates:** 10 Monday nights starting 29<sup>th</sup> January, 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, March 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018. **Please Note:** No class on the first term public holidays Monday 5th March (Labour Day), and Easter Monday 2nd April.

**Time:** 7.30 to 8.45pm

**Cost:** By donation (see below).

**Bookings:** As this is a series, please plan to be present for every class. Bookings are required, please register your interest in attending by emailing Victoria at: [calmabidingmed@hotmail.com](mailto:calmabidingmed@hotmail.com)

**Please book as soon as you can. Each person will be sent a link to two short videos that you will need to watch as preparation for starting the course. You will also be sent a short questionnaire to fill out and return.**

**Returning students:** *Meditation is unlike most courses that we engage in in modern life – when you return, the general experience is that you hear it with new ears, hear things you missed the previous time and understand new things based on the ripening of your experience. Therefore, you are invited to join others who have returned 4 or 5 times to take up the opportunity to practice again within a group, deepen the practice, and of course, ask more questions!*

**Cost:** By *dana*. *Dana* is often taken to simply mean donation or gift. *Dana* is a Buddhist teaching about generosity of spirit or the sharing of blessings, the aspiration to generate health and goodwill in all the cycles of giving and receiving; the transactions of daily life. In reflecting on the practice of *dana*, one begins to understand the interdependence of life. Traditionally, *dana* is a gift that supports the livelihood of the teacher and his family. In turn the teachings offered are to support you in meeting life with wisdom and compassion. Each participant arrives at the amount of *dana* voluntarily. Teachers of the Dharma are supported by considerate donation. Following Buddhist tradition, Michael charges no fee for teaching and will distribute the *dana* to support others. It is customary to offer *dana* at the beginning of the class (there is usually a bowl near the entrance). Giving prior to the teaching supports the experience of openness and generosity.