

# 静坐 *Seiza* – (Quiet-Sitting/ Sitting-in-Stillness/Stable-Sitting) For Beginners

Written by Kobayashi Nobuko (小林信子)

The words of Okada Torajiro (岡田虎二郎) Sensei:

- When the vertical line of the body is established, then the perpendicular of the mind is also firm. Undisturbed quiet and fearless courage naturally occur.
- *Seiza* induces the development of our intelligence, virtue, and body. If we are able to rebuild our mind and body by training, we can make full use of our facilities.
- *Seiza* sitting style alone is not significant, but all of our behavior, walking, standing, sitting, lying as well as our daily lives must be *Seiza*.
- As jealousy, hatred, anger, ambition, doubt, and other vices arise, there is no power at the *tanden* (the point below and behind the navel).
- Breath by breath complete the great art of oneself.
- Release all force except for *tanden*.
- Be silent & sit down.

## Preface

I have written in this booklet the precious and simple way opened by Okada Torajiro Sensei. Please start *Seiza* immediately. Practice it earnestly and without impatience, so that each of you can certainly embody this wonderful power.

I believe that by living based on *Seiza*, all way of our lives are developing steadily.

Please use this little booklet...

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Celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the issuance of the first *Seiza* newsletter, with my endless gratitude.

Kobayashi Nobuko

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*Seiza* is the precious path/way (道 *michi*) (tao) established by Okada Sensei. This is natural law and the way to properly activate our mind and body. *Seiza* is meant to be experienced rather than explained. It should be embodied/realized not researched. The power/strength/force/energy (力 *chikara*) of *Seiza* is enormous and without end.

We should not carelessly harm our precious bodies through incorrect posture or idle life.

By proper posture and proper breathing, *Seiza* nurtures the power of *tanden*, the internal energy of mind, and deeply strengthens the body's power, in so doing, we realize how precious and valuable our life and health are.

Through the self-discipline of sitting repeatedly we will deeply embody this realization.

*Seiza* masters say: “Regardless of circumstances, we must become real human beings settled calmly in the strength of their 腹 *hara* (belly), completely accepting things as they are, and surpassing the hardships in their lives. We fervently hope young people will adopt *Seiza* and earnestly practice it.”

### **The Elements of *Seiza***

Here are the key points of *Seiza* to be learned.

#### **Posture:**

(*Seiza* posture is well known to Japanese as kneeling on one's heels, as witnessed in the tea ceremony or in martial arts. One should kneel on a flat cushion or carpet or *tatami*.)

1. Deeply cross the insteps.
  - It doesn't matter whether the right or left foot is placed on top. Unaccustomed beginners might feel this foot placement unnatural, but this particular arrangement properly straightens/erects and aligns the lower back (腰 *koshi*) and stabilizes the body.
  - Should beginners feel pain or numbness, they can rest by lifting off of their heels, so that the body is vertical to the knees, or just reverse the foot placement. Gradually one painlessly accepts this position. The crossed feet splay out and the ankles rest on the floor.
2. Separate the knees two fist-widths apart for men and one for women.
  - If the knees are set too wide, then the chest tenses creating improper posture.
3. The buttocks should be set lightly on the heels, thrust as far back as possible (without leaning weight backwards so that one can easily rise off the heels and stand)
  - This posture does not appear odd and will easily heal hemorrhoids.
4. Straighten/erect/lift the lower back (lumbar) (腰 *koshi*) and sit with the lower belly/abdomen (腹 *hara*) resting on the laps (within the hips).
  - In order to let your force come to the lower belly, you should totally erect/lift 腰 *koshi*

- (pelvis). Lift the lower back while sitting on the floor, standing, or sitting on a chair. In any situation, never let the lower back slump downwards. It is critical/crucial to maintain an erect lower back.
5. Straighten the upper body while releasing/relaxing the chest, shoulders, and the solar plexus (the pit of the stomach).
    - When laughing, placing your hand on your solar plexus will help you discover the unmistakable feeling of your solar plexus dropping down. Never forget this knack.
    - The act/posture of throwing one's shoulders back and sticking one's chest out (and chin forward) manifests pride/arrogance.
    - All of the representations of excellent Buddha statues show him with solar/cealic plexus (鳩尾 *mizōchi*) collapsed (showing humility) (and a protruding *hara*). A slight stooped-shoulder is acceptable. The spine never collapses (but maintains a gentle natural curve).
  6. The neck is erect and the chin/jaw drawn-in.
    - Earlobes fall over the shoulders.
    - Sense the top of head being pulled up towards the ceiling
    - If the neck collapses/falls/slumps forward, delusion always arises in the mind, emptying the *hara* (belly) of its power
  7. Both hands (either left or right dominant is ok) are gently and deeply folded, resting on the belly and lap, with the palms down. (Here the *mudra* is one hand holding the thumb of the other and forming a loose fist enclosed by the other hand).
  8. The mouth and eyes are lightly closed.
    - The shut eyes look to a point on the floor a meter ahead to calm the mind. If the eyes are elevated, they wander and make the mind restless.
    - Our eyes are always receiving stimulation from the outside world, so shutting them allows the body and mind real rest/ease and tranquility/calmness/serenity.
    - Shutting the eyes does not induce drowsiness. During *Seiza*, the mind stays concentrated on every breath and on filling the *tanden* with energy, maintaining a cool/calm (and never drowsy) head.

## Breathing:

1. **Exhaling:** First, assume the correct posture described above and start by exhaling. Release/let go the power (力 *chikara*) of the solar plexus (*mizōchi*) and breathe out slowly, gradually, and continuously (without pause) while filling the *tanden* with energy.
  - Exhalation is so gentle that a feather (fur of a rabbit) placed near the nostrils would not be blown away. Of course the sound of the exhalation cannot be heard even by oneself.
  - Finding where the energy is directed may be experienced by placing a finger at the *hara* and exclaiming “*Hai!*” or laughing and finding the finger sharply thrust forward. This point is the where we fill our power, putting our energy in the *tanden*, pushing the lumbar (腰 *koshi*) forward.
  - If one completely exhales, one necessarily inhales using the chest. Therefore leave a little air before inhaling.

2. **Inhaling:** When the power of *hara* is released (that is to say filling the power of *tanden* is halted) the upper belly (*mizōchi*) swells/expands effortlessly/naturally. The inhaled air goes immediately/spontaneously in the nostrils to the bottom of the lungs. Inhaling happens without deliberate effort. Inhaled air enters automatically/without conscious action. When the air enters, drop/relax the solar plexus (*mizōchi*) and exhale slowly and gradually filling the lower abdomen (*hara/tanden*) with energy.
- Breathing is naturally part of living so that air is inhaled effortlessly. Without effort, enough inhaled air is automatically obtained. If inhaling is intentionally forced with the desire to get more air, (If one gasps) the air will not reach the bottom of the lungs, but only the upper portion. Instead of that, properly exhale the air which was obtained by inhaling and then allow fresh air to enter effortlessly.
  - When the upper belly (*mizōchi*) descends, the diaphragm presses up the bottom of the lungs. That is the time to exhale.
  - When the upper belly (*mizōchi*) extends, that is time the diaphragm descends. In this interval, our lungs have no pressure so enough inhaled air passes through the nostrils to the bottom of the lungs. This breathing proceeds as if a dropper is squeezed to exhale and inhales naturally when released.
  - Ordinarily, by habit, we greedily inhale more air by effort. We aren't content with simply natural inhaling through releasing the power of *hara*; we can't avoid inhaling using the chest unconsciously. We can't breathe comfortably unless we break this habit. Moreover, I know there are people who find it difficult to release the upper belly (*mizōchi*). I suggest that those people allow their upper belly to let it expand forward lightly during inhalation, then they will be able to inhale comfortably. To let it expand forward means that putting one's hands on the upper belly it extends. This is time of inhalation and after inhalation as you put your hand on the upper belly, it softly retracts. Practicing this five or six times, will assist the upper belly and the brain to coordinate.
  - Chest breathing will always be shallow. One cannot put enough force into *tanden* without retracting the upper belly. Therefore, diligently practice retracting and floating your upper belly (*mizochi*).
  - Stomach ease and digestion will improve with upper belly movement.
  - Inhalation is a time of rest. Beginners may pause after floating their upper belly and before exhaling. However, after practicing, one can naturally exhale immediately.
  - Beginners need not suddenly lessen the frequency of their breathing, but only gradually as one is able. What is essential is to fill the *tanden* with power.

### **The Power/Force of *tanden*:**

Power resides only in the *tanden*. By incorporating the points of *Seiza*, the body develops stability by raising/erecting the lower back while relaxing the rest of the body. Then proper breath by breath, we fill the *tanden* with power.

Okada Sensei said,

**“Fully Strengthening the *tanden* breath after breath, it shapes the body like a chisel.”**

So while practicing *Seiza*, we should stay mindful and fill the *tanden* with power from each breath. Should a thought arise, we should neither cling to it or reject it, but let it pass as through

an open window. We should immediately return the mind to the prime power of *tanden*.

### **Duration of *Seiza* practice:**

*Seiza* should be done repeatedly for half an hour each morning and evening every day. We need just thirty minutes to really calm our mind and body.

- It is difficult to maintain a practice but it is the most important thing, so please diligently practice and encourage each other.
- Do *Seiza* without wasting time, any time, any place, for example when waiting for someone or waiting for the next train etc.
- Needless to say, when listening to lectures or while having a discussion or dialogue when meeting, we should maintain *Seiza* poise in any situation while keeping our eyes open.

### **Practicing *Seiza* on the chair:**

Please sit on the chair, if you can't sit down on *tatami* or floor. Sit on the front third of the chair according to the previous points. By practicing on the chair you can learn/realize/embody how to do *Seiza* and your center of gravity (重心 *juushin*) of *tanden* will be grounded/stabilized. You will develop the capability to sit on *tatami* or floor comfortably.

### **Devotion to and mindfulness of the power of *tanden***

- Do whatever you do with the power of *tanden* with this posture and with this breathing throughout the day. Before bedtime, we do *Seiza* in order to end the day and relieve all fatigue. While lying down on the bed you release the power of *tanden*, then you can enter deep sleep. On arising, sit *Seiza* immediately. Start your day by strengthening your *hara* and keep stabilizing your lower back to be able to do all you do with the power of *tanden*.
- Anyone can fully achieve their ability with the power of *tanden*, because it nurtures the fundamental human life force and our sound development of body and mind will be attained.
- If one slumps absentmindedly and the lower back isn't kept elevated, 20-40% of the total (5L) blood (equivalent to half or even a full large bottle of *sake*) in whole body will stagnate and not circulate out of the inner organs. Using the power of *tanden* (found in the sustained exhalation), we eliminate this stagnation, improve blood circulation, and activate the inner organs. This nutritious blood flow will be absorbed and rapidly heal any illness naturally. The subordinate organs will carry out the harmonizing will of the strong central authority, improving our vitality, both physical and mental. Repeated *Seiza* practice will reveal this unity of body and mind.
- The three factors necessary for health are good diet, adequate sleep, regular bowel movements. These conditions are easily attained through *Seiza* practice.
- One is aware and sensitive of the body, so that should illness arise, one immediately takes care both by visiting a physician but more importantly by focusing the power of *tanden*, which will actually benefit you.
- If one always maintains *tanden* with power one should be ashamed of one's carelessness in catching a cold. Getting any illness, physical or mental, is never blamed on others, no matter what. Each accepts their own responsibility for these occurrences and practices *Seiza*.

- First putting power into *tanden* and breathing slowly will calm school students to better face examinations.
- *Seiza* practice will calm pregnant mothers and their fetuses mentally and physically and make childbirth easier for both. Mothers will be more able to easily breastfeed their infants and their children will grow up healthy and tranquil, passing vibrantly the spirit of *Seiza* to the next generation.
- Okada Sensei said, “Health is *Seiza*'s free gift.” Not only achieving good health, but more valuable matter, by avoiding dependence on external things, one achieves fundamental power (底力 *soko-jikara*) through *Seiza*, the power of being truly alive. That achievement is the real value of *Seiza*.

### Appendix

Please feel free to contact Miki Nakura by e-mail, telephone or letter about any questions and inquiries on *Seiza*.

Miki Nakura,

*Seiza* fellow

[mikinakura87@gmail.com](mailto:mikinakura87@gmail.com)

Po Box 103, New York, NY 10113, U.S.A.

Tel: 1-917-769-8253