

Fundamentals of *Seiza*, Sitting-in-Stillness

A simple sitting and breathing method established by Torajiro Okada

(Using a chair or a stool)

First, sit forward on the front third of a chair with feet separated and firmly placed on the floor. Knees are separated by about two fist-widths for men or one for women.

Second, sit up, straighten the lower back, sit with good posture. The most important point is to remember to keep your lower back straight and stably, whether sitting, standing or walking. Keep your lower back straight all the time, wherever you are, whatever you are doing. Maintain this positive carriage consistently, everywhere, all the time, and in any situation. Never sit back in a chair, never slouch.

Third, fold your hands on the lap. Clasp them loosely with one hand holding the thumb of the other, resting them comfortably below the abdomen with the palms turned down. Drop and retract the arms to body, with elbows tucked in.

Fourth, lift the head up and imperceptibly forward. Align the earlobes over the shoulders. Touch the back of the collar with the neck. Slight incline the spine forward. Relax the solar plexus (the pit of the stomach).

Fifth, close the eyes fully. Lower and retract the chin slightly. Keep the eyes and mouth gently closed.

Sixth, breathe only through the nose, softly and completely silently. Prolong the exhalation. Release the breath and automatically sufficient air will momentarily flow back up through the nostrils. Breathe out slowly and gently, for as long as possible. Again, effortlessly inhale naturally filling the vacuum through the nostrils. Continue breathing out and in this manner. Breathe from the belly or lower abdomen, not the chest. Never hold the breath.

Seventh, gradually put your energy at your lower abdomen during exhale, to a spot behind and about two inches below the navel. This spot, known as the *tanden* in Japan or the *hypogastrium* in Western anatomy, is the center of the body. Focus all attention and power into the lower abdomen during exhalation. Withdraw all mental energy from the head and channel it into lower abdomen. Concentrate the mind here, breathe from this point.

Sometimes the mind will drift back up to the head. Gently return the mind back to the *tanden*, the lower abdomen. Eventually, it will sit there, the mind and body as one.

It is important to do *Seiza* every day. Please start practicing this sitting and breathing method for 10 minutes, 20 minutes on a daily basis. I recommend you work up to 30 minutes after getting up and 30 minutes before going to bed.

It is also important to learn how to do this method from a well-trained *Seiza* instructor and to receive repeatedly the concrete instruction of the correct posture and breathing.

Once entering a state of calmness, maintain this state during the daily routine. Live a quiet but active life in this peaceful state to be truly happy.

Practice, always with beginner's mind. *Seiza* is the fundamental work of a lifetime.

If you have any questions about *Seiza*, please feel free to ask me by e-mail or phone. I will be very pleased to teach and share this with you at any place.

In gratitude with palms together,

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