

# Margaret Blaine. *The Practical Buddhist*

## **How to Establish a Consistent Practice**

In the first stages of practice one of the challenges is learning how to establish a twice daily consistent practice. Consistency in practice is how you come to experience the full benefits of faith. Without it, the results can be somewhat hit or miss.

### **Chant for the Willingness to be Consistent**

If you are struggling with consistency, chant for the willingness to be consistent. This is the first step in your human revolution. I would guess that, if consistency in establishing your practice is difficult, that you are seeing this issue in other areas of your life as well.

### **Establish a Chanting Trigger**

Establish a trigger for sitting down to chant, such as doing it right after breakfast or just after you come home from work. You are establishing a new habit. Any new change will feel awkward or unfamiliar at first but if you persist for just 5-10 minutes each day, before long it'll feel comfortable and familiar.

Think about how you learned to drive a car or do a sport. It seemed very awkward at first when you had to consciously think of every move. Then, one day, your unconscious accepted the new moves and you didn't have to think about them anymore. The right move effortlessly occurred at the right time. This is the way it will come about regarding your new chanting habit.

Notice the difference between how your day goes on days you chant, and days you don't. I think you are going to be surprised. This is because when you chant, you are placing your life in rhythm with the universal rhythm. When you do this, everything works better in daily life.

## **Set Specific, Positive Goals**

Set some specific, positive goals, things you want to have happen in your life. Envision what the end result will look like. When you sit down to chant, set your intention, that this goal is going to happen, no matter what. And then chant for it.

Setting goals will encourage you to chant more consistently as well as move your life forward. Decide how much you are going to chant each day to achieve your goal. As President Ikeda says,

“We musn't have a complacent, dependent attitude in faith, chanting haphazardly without definite goals...” Faith Into Action p. 108

Make sure you set positive not negative goals. A negative goal would be worded like this. “I want to lose 25 pounds.” You are looking at the fact you are overweight. This isn't what you want to project to the universe while you are chanting. The positive goal would be, “I want to weight x pounds, your goal weight.” That is a positive goal as it describes what you want your goal to look like when you achieve it.

## **Establish the Habit of Study**

In the early stages of practice reading a paragraph a day will encourage you and teach you Buddhist concepts. President Ikeda has two books which are set up to be read, a paragraph each

day.. *For Today and Tomorrow* and *Buddhism Day by Day*. You can find them on the online bookstore at [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org)

If you are rushed early in the morning, try to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo three times before you go out the door. Just doing that will help set your day on track and also serve to help establish the new habit. But, if you miss a day, don't be hard on yourself. You are learning new habits. Buddhism has a concept 'from this day forward'. We start over every day.

### **Find a Support System**

I hope by now you are connected with your local Buddhist group. The person who sponsored you will take you to meetings. There people will answer your questions, share experiences and teach you Buddhist concepts. If you haven't found on yet go to [www.sgi-usa.org/](http://www.sgi-usa.org/) contact us. They will ask for your zipcode and connect you with the group closest to you. If outside the United States google SGI-your country name.

As you find friends you will find people to chant with. This will support regularity in your practice.

“WHEN a tree has been transplanted, though fierce winds may blow, it will not topple if it has a firm stake to hold it up. But even a tree that has grown up in place may fall over if its roots are weak. Even a feeble person will not stumble if those supporting him are strong, but a person of considerable strength, when alone, may fall down on an uneven path.” WND, vol1 598

### **Conspicuous and Inconspicuous Benefit**

At the beginning you may wonder if anything is happening. There are two kinds of benefits in Buddhism. One of them is conspicuous benefits. This means you would be chanting for something a job, a relationship and you get it. Everyone can see that you did. But there is

another type of benefit, inconspicuous benefit. This is the growth you are achieving as you chant for one goal after another and make the changes needed to achieve your goal. This kind of benefit is not so obvious but your life is growing like rings on a tree. As the years go on you will be astonished to see how your life has changed and grown.

## **Summary**

To establish a consistent practice:

1. Chant for the willingness to be consistent
2. Establish a trigger to chant
3. Set specific goals
4. Establish a habit of study even if just a paragraph a day
5. Find a support system