



One-Minute Plunge Meditations

You sit in meditation and someone rings a bell. You focus totally and completely on a single meditation topic. You do the meditation for just one minute. After 60 seconds there's a bell and it is over.

We approach the one-minute meditation as a "Plunge." You plunge into it. You cast away, let go of, and drop everything that might be distracting you. You dive in. Your focus is 100% on your topic. You become completely open to the truth that your topic points to. You allow for complete absorption in your immediate inner experience.

By plunging into a meditation, you can get a glimpse of something deeper. We've noticed that people who have done some of this have access to some remarkable deep states and realizations. Some people find that certain Plunge meditations open something up, plants a seed, and perhaps catalyzes a satisfying path towards knowledge of the nature of mind and spirit.

Note that in a Plunge meditation you are not trying to think intellectual thoughts about a topic. There's no figuring-out. *Just experience the actuality of what your mind does when you engage the topic.* There is no "right answer" or "wrong answer." You aren't seeking an answer. You just become conscious of where the meditation takes you. In this respect, it is very open. All responses that might arise—ideas, feelings, and so forth—are accepted as true reflections of where you actually go when you engage with the Plunge topic.

Of course, before you begin you should make sure that you know the meaning of what the words are attempting to point to. It is best for the Plunger to have some confidence that they know what they are trying to do. You should at least start with a "taste" of the chosen topic, but it doesn't have to be much more than that.

We've compiled a list of topics that you can begin with. Here's an example. We'll use the first Plunge meditation on the list (below). The bell rings and you Plunge into "What do you do to know that you are aware?" So you go, "Hmmm. What DO I do to know that I'm aware?" If someone asked you if you are aware, you'd most likely check and inwardly go to an experience of some kind within your subjective field. No need to fuss at this point about inquiring what awareness truly is or anything like that. You just do what the question asks for, whatever that may be, and you notice what comes up.

It's whatever you do in consciousness, and that's what you become aware of. There is no one asking you to improve or change in any way, nor is there anyone insisting or even expecting that you do it in some particular way. You simply have a tool to consciously access some very basic aspects of mind.

In the Plunge, you fully commit to the moment. Letting go of all distracting thoughts and purposes, you invest all of your awareness, ability, concentration, etc. on your chosen topic. You can learn a lot in that one minute.

It is interesting that people can have a very deep realization or awareness many months after doing the Plunge meditation. It is as if the Plunge planted an *inquiry seed* in the mind and that begins to unfold naturally into realization.

Hard and Soft Plunges

You can approach a Plunge in two ways which, for lack of imagination, I'm calling "Hard" and "Soft."

With the Hard Plunge you use your will to forcefully dive deep into contemplation. You can find a good example of this in Philip Kapleau's book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*. It would seem Charles Berner used this model when devising the Enlightenment Intensive. One's will or intention dominates this approach. One might think of it as *pushing* deeply into contemplation, with a strong willful focus and energy. It can even be like a diamond-edged sword of awareness swung forcefully at the object of contemplation.

With a Soft Plunge, the will plays a negligible role. Rather, one simply opens deeply to the object of the Plunge. One relaxes into a profound openness to the truth. In this, the will is virtually abandoned. Instead, one thoroughly allows a conscious experience of what arises from being open to the particular Plunge theme. You just give reign to your natural intuition of it. In the Zen tradition, this is often cited as the flavor of the Soto approach.

In my experience, both of these approaches have their value. It just depends on where you are at. If your mind tends to wander easily, or if you seem to have trouble landing on the topic, then the Hard Plunge is helpful as it keeps you focused and helps to put you on track. If you find that your concentration stays on topic easily and doesn't tend to wander, then the Soft Plunge might be a good match for you.

Pre- and Post- One-Minute Plunge Practices

To get the most benefit from doing a One-Minute Plunge, we recommend that you do a pre-Plunge and a post-Plunge practice as well.

Pre-Plunge Practice

Do these in order. All three should take less than a minute unless you are in some strange state. Take as long as you need.

- **Body:** get the body ready

Assume a meditation posture. Let go of any body distractions. Take no actions with the body. Your eyes can be open or closed. One-by-one, relax your face muscles, neck, throat, shoulders, diaphragm, torso, etc. Relax, but not so much that you fall over.

- **Speech:** let go of the discursive mind

Put aside any inner dialog you have going. Speech goes to silence. Abandon the conceptual mind. Don't figure anything out, chase after descriptions or dwell on opinions or preferences.

- **Mind:** fully focus

Have your Plunge topic clear in your mind. Become one-pointed. Become focused and fully alert, ready to Plunge while waiting for the start-bell to ring.

Post-Plunge Practice

When the end-bell rings, stay within your meditation (or near it) for a moment and observe any changes that may have occurred from doing the Plunge. Give it a moment to sink in. Let the freshness of the state subside naturally.

Journaling

You might want to try journaling after doing a Plunge meditation. It's optional, of course, but after each Plunge meditation you could write down what you experienced. If you're in a Plunge session (a group doing Plunges together), just write a few sentences to capture the essence of what you experienced. If you write too much you can miss out on the discussion about the next Plunge. If doing them on your own, there's no time limit so write as much as you want.

If you continue to do Plunge meditations, you might find it interesting and edifying to look back on your initial impressions of what occurred.

Be sure to have some paper and a pen handy during a Plunge session. Or just use your computer's text editor. Whatever works for you...

Plunge List

Here are some of the Plunge meditations we've tried. These are ones we found worthy of one's efforts. They are presented in no particular order, except for the first four. You should do those first. There are many other possibilities.

1. What do you do to know you are aware?

You are aware right now. It doesn't matter what you are aware of at this moment in particular. Whatever it is, you are still aware.

This is a starting assumption: that you have some sense of what the word "awareness" means. If the idea of awareness seems super confusing to you, you should probably sort that out first before trying the Plunge.

How do you know you are aware? What do you do internally to be satisfied that you are aware? Directly experience that. This could also be worded as, "How do you know you are aware?"

2. Do absolutely nothing

The meaning of this topic is totally self-evident. For one minute, don't intentionally *do* anything. No intentional outflows or inflows. Your intent, your will, your desire to be, do, or have is temporarily abandoned. It helps to relax into it. Release your willful focus and attachment to any process or result and you will Plunge into that place. Stay with this for one minute.

3. Inner light

Close your eyes and find the light that illuminates mental pictures and check it out completely. You might just view a mental picture (or several mental pictures) and notice the inner light that illuminates them. Focus more on the light than what it illuminates. Notice that light is internal to the mind. Do that for one minute.

4. Awareness aware only of itself

Let go of all sensory input, all thoughts and all emotional entanglements. Attend to only one thing: your own actual awareness. You'd just hold *pure awareness aware only of itself*. Give that a shot for one minute.

5. Pure and total presence

Pure awareness aware only of itself gives rise to a sense of being "present." At its maximum, it would be pure awareness with total presence. For one minute Plunge into pure and total presence.

6. Completely surrender to "how-it-is"

Drop all of your willful action, on all levels, and become willing for every other independent cause or intent to have its way. You let any "capacity to choose" (that is not your own) do its thing without depending on you. Utterly abandon having your way. Be surrendered to an unfolding reality that is beyond your control. Do that for one minute. (Don't worry! You can have your will back shortly.)

7. Now—be on the leading edge of the unfolding present

Being "now" in awareness is not all that unusual. That's pretty easy to cultivate, at least for brief periods of time. However, "leaning in" to the unfolding moment is new to most people. From the base of "now", watch for the instant in which the next moment of reality emerges, and the next, and the next, and so forth. Hang on that edge, moving with it, for one minute.

8. Now—be on the trailing edge of the now as it slips into the past

Be aware of what just occurred in consciousness. Keep as close to that as you can while noticing its movement into the past. Watch the wake of time unfolding. Do that and nothing else for one minute.

9. Find the sound that is closest to the silence

Find the underlying silence, the silence that lies beneath all sounds. Then find the sound that is closest to silence. This is the quietest sound that arises from the silence. Go deep into that point where that sound begins.

10. Ever-fresh awareness

A state called "ever-fresh awareness" eventually emerges from meditation on pure and total presence. Ever-fresh awareness could be called "observing with 'new mind', that is, seeing things as if for the first time and being present with that new awareness at each moment. For one minute, see if you can directly experience ever-fresh awareness. Stay with that state for the remainder of the one-minute Plunge.

11. Experience a thought as a thought

Notice what you just thought and experience that as a thought. You could also remember what you thought sometime in the past and experience that as a thought. Notice what is in the mind and see it as a thought. Get really clear about it.

12. Confidently present for truth

Find a place within or state where you are confidently present for truth. There can be many meanings for the word, "truth," but in this case, "truth" is what is experienced non-conceptually while you are present. Abiding in confidence, you open to the truth, whatever it might be. Plunge deep into that for one minute.

13. Wish everyone well

Whomever your attention is on, just wish them well. The goal is to really mean it. It has to be authentic, not pretend. Wish that they have a good life, that they are happy or something like that. Set aside any condition you put around doing that (e.g.: I won't wish them well until they do this...) If you can wish one other well, open it up so that you wish well-being for *everyone*. Do that for one minute. If you can access an authentic sense of unconditional loving kindness, do that.

14. Peace inside

There is an inner *set-point* called "peace inside." The set point is a state where you have "landed" at a complete state of peace. Go to where this language seems to point to, and go with the intention of being fully conscious and present within the set-point. Do this with a background intention of developing your ability to quickly get access to that point from wherever you are.

15. Have no preferences

Abandon all preferences and priorities. Do not intentionally prefer one thing over another, or one state or another. Don't forget to include what goes on in this one-minute Plunge. Don't worry, you can allow your preferences to re-assert themselves after the one minute, so you shouldn't have to really give up anything permanently. However, you might get some increase in your ability to let things go by doing this meditation. Preferences have consequences—grasping, criticalness, attachment, disappointments, and so forth. Clear the mind of all preferences for one minute.

16. Be willing to experience

Be open to whatever life might bring you *in this moment*. Be willing to experience what arises in the field. Be totally willing for one minute, as in, "OK, bring it on. I'm ready." Experience this as no resistance, no blocking of any information or feeling inflows.

17. Just receive

Similar to "Be willing to experience." Abandon all out-flows (acting from your intention or will, projecting something outward). Attend for one minute to only in-flows: in-flows from your senses, in-flows from your emotions, in-flows from your thoughts, in-flows from others. Just receive whatever arises in consciousness without creating anything to stand in the way by blocking or pushing out.

18. Find your natural state

Find the state you are in when untouched by mental and emotional reactivity. It's the state that exists in peaceful quiescence. It's the state where nothing is on your mind. It is always available, though often obscured by reactions. Just experience your natural state for one minute. This could also be called your "native state."

19. Find the base

When awareness resides in awareness itself (its own nature), and when that awareness holds itself so lightly that it fades, perhaps even disappears, it is at the *base*. It is naked awareness without the mental attribute of being a thing that is aware. It is from the base that awareness opens out into the world with pure awareness, bringing things into consciousness in its purest form, a kind of direct perception. Find what to you is this base. Try that for one minute.

20. Get the idea of not having to be anybody

We all get busy at one time or another trying to be a certain kind of person. We often feel that we must do this (for many different reasons). See what it is like to let that go entirely. Spend one minute not having to be anybody.

21. Just be

This is similar to the previous one. In this case, just be. With this one, you do not engage with the mind and then try to not have to be something. In this case, it's not doing a remedy, you just quietly be. Just be without an attempt to be or not be something and see where that takes you.

22. Thought holding

Latch on to the first thought that arises and don't let it get away. Hold that thought still, keeping it right at the focus of your conscious experience. You're not agreeing or disagreeing with the

thought, nor are you trying to fix or change anything. It doesn't matter what the thought is, just grab it and don't let it go. See if you can hold it for the whole minute. If it slips away, jump on it again and take it to the mat. Don't let it wiggle free.

23. Increase alertness

Increase your alertness to the level of walking on a narrow plank one to two feet above a stream. Hold that alertness steady for one minute. (Thanks to the Vajra Vidya Austin Study Group for this one.)

24. Self-knowing quality

This one depends on having some success with the Plunge, “awareness aware only of itself.” Notice how your awareness, when experienced directly (awareness-of-awareness), has an intrinsic self-knowing quality. For one minute, locate what to you would be that self-knowing quality and savor it. Get it really clear. (Also from Vajra Vidya.)

25. Find the state that is the most open to others

We all experience varying degrees of openness to others, depending on past and current conditions, where you are at the moment, etc. What would be the most open state you could ever possibly be in? Find that state and experience it fully. Allow it to flood your consciousness.

26. Moment of death

The body will die. No one escapes, so this applies to you. In some future moment, you will be at that edge where you are alive now and quite soon you will be dead. Your relationship with all that you know may change right then, for instance your current goals and desires, your wealth and possessions, your sense of what's next will change. In this Plunge, go to your current subjective sense of that moment. You are not actually dying now, but your inner assumptions and feeling about that moment exist right now. Experience this as clearly as you can as if it were happening now.

27. Remembrance of the Present

Remembrance of the present is another way of bringing “mindfulness” into consciousness. The intention here is to have no separation between your experience occurring in this conscious moment and your remembrance of it. Remembrance means that you bring sustained awareness to impressions as they arise and pass away. It might be like briefly remembering at the same time you are storing an experience in your memory banks. To do the Plunge, put your attention on something and do remembrance of it. Do that for one minute.

28. Memory

Remember something that happened recently. Something that did happen. What about that makes you think that it actually happened? Hold the memory in your mind and focus in on the element (feeling?) within the memory that convinces you that it actually happened. Try not to just re-live the memory content, but focus on what feeling makes it seem so convincing that it actually happened. It is so different than just imagining something happening.

29. Open doorway

Normally we reside in a state in which we have some ground of certainty. It's sort of locked in. If you intend to be “open” you need to abandon that ground (at least temporarily). Often this is uncomfortable, so we have difficulty remaining open for more than a few seconds. Openness seeks closure. In this plunge, the idea is to remain open (willing to experience) while resisting

getting closure on anything. You leave all your stable data behind and persist with pure openness. If your mind comes up with something immediately drop it and go back to being open. See if you can remain in this state for one minute. Note that one often discovers a *ground of openness*. Try not to focus on that too much, just the pure state of being open to whatever arises in consciousness.

30. No story

When we get in the habit of seeing everything through stories in our mind, we can lose touch with the fact that we are projecting attributes from our mind into things occurring in our subjective space. We mix stories with our perceptions, making us a little delusional. From a state of inner silence—a state of calm-abiding—experience the world with no story at all. Observe the world, inner or outer, with no story “overlay” for one minute.

31. Observer and Observed

A fundamental principle of consciousness: the observer is not the observed. Consciousness “looks” away from itself. Pick out something to observe, either in the physical world (through your eyes) or in your mind (through mental imaging). Go back and forth, with each breath, putting your attention on what you are seeing and then who is seeing it. One side or the other might seem hard to get, so just get a little. Don’t push it. Do this back-and-forth for one minute, going back and forth between being self-aware as the observer and then contacting what is being observed.

Appendix

Thoughts about Plunges after the Initial 5-Session Series

Starting May 21, 2022 a group met on Zoom for two-hour sessions on a Saturday morning. On average, about 20 showed up. The final session of this first series ended on August 20, 2022.

Recordings of the sessions can be found at www.sandoth.com/Share.htm. There is also the latest version of this document.

By the looks on their faces and their verbal and email reports, doing a ~2 hour session of Plunges was very positive. A few people remarked that it was as powerful as some three-day Enlightenment Intensives. The attendees were experienced meditators and some had many hours of dyads, so that particular group of people would be the ones most likely to enjoy and benefit from Plunges in my estimation.

Plunges seem to be a powerful tool that can be used to give people experiences of some key elements of mind and enlightenment that they would otherwise just hear about intellectually.

About six Plunges in a two-hour period is about all that people can take. It would be best to target 90 minutes, with a 10-minute break in the middle.

The informal style worked well. I was keen on making sure there was no pressure to perform and no "right answers." People could come and go as they pleased. People could arrive late, though it would be best for newcomers to be there at the beginning because of the training.

No emphasis on dyad values. Communications are mostly directed to journals.

Recordings are available for training and for ad hoc guided meditation use.

Plunges can be grouped so that each topic would tend to enhance the next. Here is a preliminary grouping. Some Plunges can be in more than one group. This list is fluid at the moment so expect changes.

- **Pure awareness of awareness:** "What do you do to know you are aware?", "Inner light", "Awareness aware only of itself", "Pure and total presence", "Ever fresh awareness", "Increase Awareness", and "Self-Knowing quality."
- **Surrender group:** "Do absolutely nothing", "Completely surrender to "how-it-is", "Find the sound that is closest to the silence", "Experience a thought as a thought", "Confidently present for the truth", "Have no preferences", "Be willing to experience", "Just receive", "Moment of death."
- **IPR Group:** "Wish everyone well", "Peace inside", "Have no preferences", "Just receive", "Find your natural state", "Get the idea of not having to be anybody", "Just be", "Find the state that is most open to others", "Moment of death", "Forgive."
- **Other:** "Do absolutely nothing", "Inner light", "Now—be on the leading edge of the unfolding present", "Now—be on the trailing edge of the now as it slips into the past", "Find the sound that is closest to silence", "Ever-fresh awareness", "Experience a thought as a thought", "Confidently present for truth", "Peace inside", "Have no preferences", "Be willing to experience", "Find your natural state", "Find the base", "Thought holding", "Increase alertness", "Get ready to meditate."