

THE THREE TENETS MALA

A Practice created by Roshi Egyoku Nakao



Egyoku's Three Tenets Mala

The Three Tenets were formulated by Roshi Bernie and the founding teachers of the Zen Peacemaker Order in 1997. The Tenets are:

- **Not-Knowing** by giving up fixed ideas about yourself, others, and the universe.
- **Bearing Witness** to the joy and suffering of the world without attachment or judgment.
- **Taking Action** that arises from Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness.

The Three Tenets Mala (3TM) is a process mala with a clear framework which centers you in the oneness of life. The mala can be used in any situation. No situation is too big or too small; too serious or too mundane.

Use it when you feel stuck and confused,

want to express appreciation, are in a challenging situation, or to reflect about an aspect of your life, and so forth.

When I first began to practice with the Three Tenets, I tended to focus outwardly on situations. In time, I heard the voices within myself, and I began witnessing myself from deep within, speaking my truths to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, holding nothing back. Creating the 3TMala has been a way for me to keep this intimate conversation going. There is no right or wrong, shoulds or oughts—just intimate, open-hearted sharing.

The process invites in your inner voices, including those that haven't arisen to consciousness, or have been dismissed or repressed. The process provides a private and safe space for saying things out loud. It gives space for your own wisdom and compassion to arise and can untangle and clarify confusion. When practiced regularly, a tender intimacy begins to form between you and the Buddhas, between yourself and Your Self.

I encourage you to use the 3TM regularly. Insight and well being will arise. Don't overthink it; trust that whatever arises and is spoken out loud will lead to uncovering wisdom and love.

Experiment and have fun!

— Egyoku

The Practice of the Three Tenets Mala

Say the entire mala out loud.

To begin, rub the mala between the palms of your hands and say: “I affirm the oneness of life. All beings are related to each other.”

Situation bead:

“I call the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to witness my process.” Then, state the situation in whatever way it arises to you.

Bead 1: “I acknowledge the awakened nature of all beings.”

Bead 2: “I meet all beings with respect and dignity.”

Bead 3: “I invite all hungry beings into my practice.”

Not-Knowing bead:

“I return to Not Knowing.”

Bead 1: “I release my knowing.”

Bead 2: “I release my fears and resentments.”

Bead 3: “I release my energy blocks.”

Bearing Witness bead: “I Bear Witness.”

With each bead, express one ingredient that arises from the situation. Speak out loud and free associate from one ingredient to the next. You are speaking intimately to yourself from deep within yourself. Speak whatever arises. Give yourself time and space for whatever wants to arise.

Do bead: “I will (action). By this action, ...”

Bead 1: “I serve the wholeness of life.”

Bead 2: “I serve (name).”

Bead 3: “I take care of myself.”

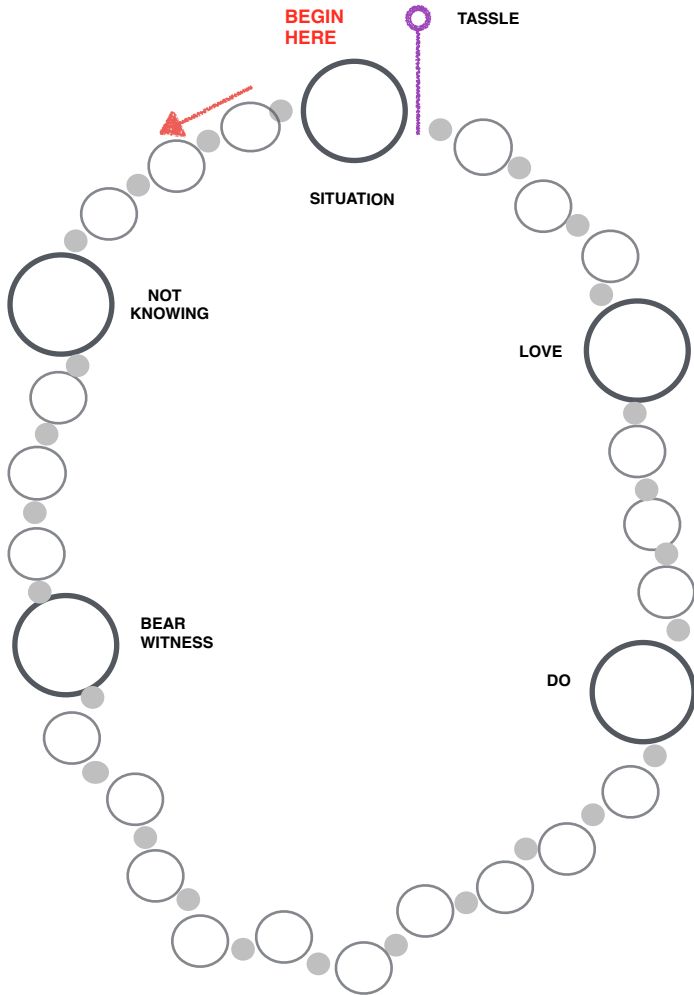
Love bead: “I affirm Love as the great force of my life.”

Bead 1: “I offer my gratitude to (name).”

Bead 2: “I dedicate the merit of this practice to (name).”

Bead 3: “I humbly take my place in the Circle of Life *just as I am.*”

To close, rub the mala between the palms of your hands and reaffirm the oneness of life.



Note: An abbreviated sheet to keep with your 3TMala is on page 6.

The Practice of the Three Tenets Mala (Annotated)

Say the entire mala out loud. In time, you will memorize the lines. Hold the appropriate bead for each section as you work your way around the mala. You may find yourself lingering over a bead and needing to spend more time with certain aspects. Follow your instincts. There is no right or wrong way to do this.

To begin, loop and rub the mala between the palms of your hands and say: “I affirm the oneness of all life. All beings are related to each other.”

Oneness is the container. Oneness is not a thing, rather it points to the essential nature of life. There is no outside; there is no inherent division, exclusion, or disconnection in essential nature. Rubbing the mala between your hands is an affirmation of inclusion and inter-connection. Everything exists in relation to everything else. This affirms the dynamic and insubstantial nature of the life force—all is constantly in flux, co-arising, appearing and disappearing together.

The Situation bead. Holding the Situation bead, say: “I call the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to witness my process.” Then state the situation.

We invite the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to be present with us to witness our process. Acknowledge and include any energy that shows up to witness, even if you don’t understand it. Just include. Then, describe a situation in any way you wish. Situations can range from the mundane to the very serious. Be daring and willing to look at any life situation through the lens of The Three Tenets. Over time, the Tenets will inform your everyday life.

Recite one line with each bead following the Situation bead:

Bead 1: “I acknowledge the awakened nature of all beings.”

Bead 2: “I meet all beings with respect and dignity.”

Bead 3: “I invite all hungry beings into my practice.”

This recitation anchors you in the context of the oneness of life. You affirm that everything is awakened nature and, therefore, not in opposition to any other thing. Difficult and complex situations co-exist together. You welcome everyone with respect and dignity. There is no need to demonize anyone. The very things that you exclude are invited intentionally into the circle of life because they are already included. A hungry being is not another person, but rather an aspect of yourself that is not fully acknowledged or satisfied and, therefore, creates a hunger within your own being. Because there is no outside in oneness, affirming this inclusion helps create a sense of expansion and connection.

The Not-Knowing bead. Holding the Not-Knowing bead, say: “I return to Not-Knowing.”

Recite one line with each bead following the Not-Knowing bead:

Bead 1: “I release my knowing.”

Bead 2: “I release my fears and resentments.”

Bead 3: “I release my energy blocks.”

Not-Knowing is being open to whatever arises. It is the open spaciousness of being that is always present, although it may not often be accessed by you. We simply return to it. At its deepest level, it is empty of any fixed point.

Simply say the statements and feel into them. If you wish, you can explore further. For example, consider these guiding questions: “What beliefs, opinions, and judgements am I holding? What are my mental patterns and habitual stories about myself or the situation. What fears and resentments do I recognize? What blockages do I see?” These ingredients will likely arise when you Bear Witness.

The Bearing Witness bead. Holding the Bearing Witness bead, say “I Bear Witness.”

With each bead following the Bearing Witness bead, express an ingredient that arises from the situation. Free association is key, just naturally allow whatever arises to be spoken. The process is not logical, rational, or linear. When your mind makes a leap, leap. Remember, you are witnessing yourself from deep within yourself.

Say whatever arises for you, giving voice to as many ingredients as arises even if it doesn't quite make sense to you in relation to the situation. Give yourself time and space for things to arise. When you get stuck, try raising a guiding question, such as “Why am I so stuck?” “What's keeping me from seeing through this?” “What's going on?”

As you listen from deep within yourself to the many facets of a situation, the gaps between you and the situation dissolve. Complexities and nuances may be revealed and surprising connections may appear. When you hold each bead, listen intimately to yourself as you speak out loud ingredients that are arising. If it is helpful, you may use phrases such as: “I notice, I see, I hear, I feel, I sense, I wonder, I believe” and so forth. Repeat this section for as long as ingredients are arising, returning to the first bead of the section and continuing until the end of the section, and starting over again as needed. The ingredients may arise quickly or slowly. Sense into and respect your own rhythm. This is an intimate, visceral, and feeling process. It is not a thinking process; it is a connecting process. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to do this.

The Do bead. Holding the Do bead, say: “I will (say your action).

Speak out loud the action that has arisen. When you practice Not-Knowing and Bearing Witness, an action that is grounded in these practices will emerge. The action will have a spontaneous quality, rather than something pre-conceived or what you *think* should be done. The action could be something so simple that you could easily dismiss it or not recognize it. For example, if you find yourself very stuck in a particular emotion when doing the mala, the action may arise to do the process again with that emotion as your situation. Or, you may find yourself saying, “I really need to be kinder.” Be alert to the action that arises and allow yourself to be surprised.

Recite one line for each bead following the DO bead by saying, “By this action, ...”

Bead 1: “I serve the wholeness of life.”

Bead 2: “I serve (name).”

Bead 3: “I take care of myself.”

Once you have clearly stated your action, acknowledge that it serves the situation and the person(s) involved or affected. Lastly, acknowledge that this action takes care of you, too. This last acknowledgement is important so that you do not harbor resentment.

The Love bead. Holding the Love bead, say: “I affirm Love as the great force of my life.”

Affirming love as the great force in your life declares your intention to care for yourself and others with an open and awake heart in all situations.

Recite one line for each bead following the Love bead:

Bead 1: “I offer my gratitude to (name).”

Bead 2: “I dedicate the merit of this practice to (name).”

Bead 3: “I humbly take my place in the Circle of Life *just as I am*.”

Offering gratitude is a foundational practice that acknowledges the myriad connections that make your life possible. Offer thanks to the persons, seen and unseen, who have helped you in some way. When dedicating the merit of your mala practice, extend the beneficial energies outward, expanding the circle of influence as far as you are willing to go. For instance, “I dedicate the merit of this practice to all those who also struggle with this situation throughout the Ten Directions.” Finally, you yourself, with all humility, take your place in the Circle of Life — you stand on your own feet, use your own hands, inhabit your own body, speech, and mind, and assume full responsibility for this unique being that you are, *just as you are*.

May the Three Tenets Mala practice reveal your wisdom and love and bring you peace!

QUICK REFERENCE

Copy and Keep with Your Mala

“I affirm the oneness of life. All beings are related to each other.”

SITUATION: “I call the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to witness my process.”

“I acknowledge the awakened nature of all beings.”

“I meet all beings with respect and dignity.”

“I invite all hungry spirits into my practice.”

NOT-KNOWING. “I return to Not-Knowing.”

“I release my knowing.”

“I release my fears and resentments.”

“I release my energy blocks.”

BEAR WITNESS. “I Bear Witness.”

DO: “I will (state your action). By this action, (see below)...”

“I serve the wholeness of life.”

“I serve (name).”

“I take care of myself.”

LOVE. “I affirm Love as the great force of my life.”

“I offer my gratitude to (name).”

“I dedicate the merit of this practice to (name).”

“I humbly take my place in the Circle of Life *just as I am*.”

Rub the mala between your hands and reaffirm the oneness of life.

INSTRUCTIONS for making a Three Tenets Mala are available separately.

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