



Dr. K's Guide to Mental Health

Practice | Fixed Point Gazing | Notes

Trataka, or fixed point gazing, is one of my favorite practices. It teaches all kinds of weird things. First, it teaches us how to control the mind and physical impulses by bringing our mind to the present very strongly. Since holding your eyes open can be difficult after 20, 30 seconds, your mind will be focused on this completely. Secondly, it's very hard to "think" during Trataka. So you practice bringing the mind to one point very quickly and maintaining it there. Finally, Trataka is cleansing for Ajna chakra.

(Note: Always follow your body's signals. Don't continue doing the practice if you feel strain or significant discomfort. Don't just "power through" – listen to your body and take breaks! If you experience any side effects of the practice, please consult a medical professional.)

Phase 1: External Trataka

- Get a candle and a tool to light it
- Pick a place that is quiet, not very windy, and light your candle
 - Ideally, the flame on the candle is straight up and unmoving
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths
- Open your eyes and keep them open without blinking for the duration of the practice
 - A half-lidded gaze is perfectly acceptable and can help us see comfortably
 - Tears may form to lubricate your eyes, which is totally normal
- Over about 60-120 seconds, slowly start to move your gaze from base of the candle up towards the top of the candle
 - Start by looking at the base of the candle
 - Slowly move your gaze up towards the flame
 - Gaze at the bottom of the wick of the flame
 - Then gaze at the "empty" part in the middle of the flame
 - And finally, gaze at the heart of the flame itself
 - Your gaze shouldn't shift back and forth – but unrelentingly towards the heart of the flame

You can do this practice for about 1-5 minutes, depending on comfort. If you have any difficulties, give yourself a chance to rest. Over time, people can build up the capacity to do Trataka for 10-20 minutes at a stretch.