
Mindful Meditation

made easy!



"Meditation is simply removing the distractions and the exterior made up identities to get to our true inner core."

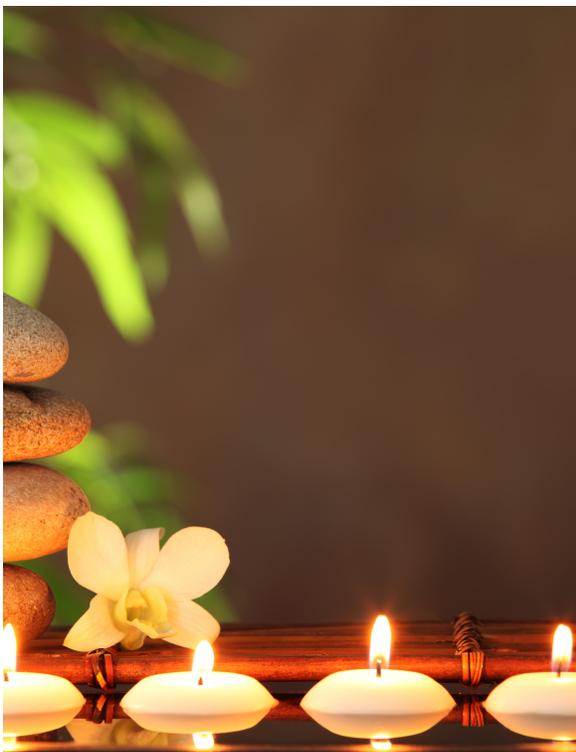
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What is meditation?

Meditation is training your mind to focus and bringing the awareness to your breath. Although it sounds simple to sit and focus on your breath, it can be a challenge to see how the mind gets caught up with several thoughts. A thoughtless mind seems to be daunting and the more you focus on not thinking, the more you end up thinking. A thoughtless state cannot be achieved however with practice, instead we learn not to react to our thoughts. The first good sign is when you notice your thoughts, which mean the awareness of the thought has come up. We simply observe our thoughts and let it pass by our mind like clouds floating away in the sky without getting attached to those thoughts and bring the awareness back to our breath. Sometimes there could be moments where there are simply no thoughts, where your mind slips into total tranquility for a few seconds, as soon as we realize that, we tend to have the thoughts back. With practice and dedication, we learn to exercise the elasticity of the mind by stretching the space or the time gap between our thoughts so we can get to experience the tranquility longer.



Am I progressing in my meditation?

Meditation takes patience and time. It's called practicing meditation for a reason since we can never claim to have an accomplished status, there's always more to learn and know more about. Some people tend to get frustrated and sometimes even angry or bored with their first attempt. It could be challenging if we are trying to monitor and remove every single thought. Also not getting too attached to the results will make meditations more experiential. Most research shows that meditations can work quickly in a short period of time. It's best not to use analytics or ask what's the goal? Am I progressing? Or am I doing it the right way?

You may observe how you feel at the end of a session to know the impact of meditation and how you are progressing. If you feel calmer, relaxed, happy, blissful, energized, rejuvenated or at times, even sleepy, since that is your body's way of asking you to take the needed rest, then you are progressing. You will feel less stressed (when stressed your breath is shallow, when relaxed you tend to take slow long breaths), more accepting and at greater peace during the initial stages.

If you continue to return to your mat for meditation everyday then that's a great sign. Over time the effects may continue in all other areas of your life too, you may become less judgmental on other's behaviors and actions, more compassionate, have greater mental clarity and decision making abilities, develop a sense of urgency as well as the courage to work on your purpose, gain a sense of responsibility towards your health and wellbeing, begin to eat healthy, become more intuitive and feel a strong sense of inner guidance and be more aware of your actions, thoughts and words.

Think of meditation as peeling an onion. We have to peel away the layers of distractions and what we are made of to get to the core, sometimes even causing tears. Once we reach that place, going through the process of peeling, the core onion can help make our lives more flavorful. True healing comes from peeling and going through the process. Enrolling in a class and having a teacher to guide you through the process could be beneficial if you find it overwhelming to do it on your own.

Beginner tips for meditation

Zen Spot: Find a quiet place in your home where you can meditate. You may choose a specific corner in your home intended only for meditation.

Zen Time: Choose a convenient time you can meditate where your distractions might be less and make sure you get to do it the same time every day. The ideal times are early mornings (start during sunrise or right before sunrise) and evenings (during sunset) or before bedtime (read more in the Golden Hour MOTTO section.) Increasing the frequency of meditation sessions helps to calm down your body and recharge your energies throughout the day.

Zen Props: A cushion or a blanket to make you more comfortable. When you close your eyes, you turn off the visual distractions and you get enhanced abilities on other senses and sensations, you take your experience to a whole new dimension. Some meditators also adopt an open eye meditation focusing on a candle light or an object however personally I have not tried this.

Zen Pose: There are a few poses to adopt when seated on the floor, you may also sit on a chair if you have any trouble sitting down.

Some of the poses are:

Lotus pose with legs overlapped over the other and palms facing upward, Japanese posture if your legs and hips allow and if it's comfortable and Padmasana or Sukhasana where the legs are not overlapped but more at ease like the criss cross applesauce pose, and this is the way Indians sit on the floor to eat. If sitting poses don't suit you well, you can choose the corpse pose which is Savasana.

Zen Posture: When seated make sure your spine is erect, you are able to sit upright and not hunched over. Maintain good posture, one which is comfortable and can be maintained for a long time. The spine is the conductor of energies and how we conduct the energy depends on the erectness of our spine. One Yogic guru says the spine is the axis of the universe. Meaning we can channelize our energies from our spine and through to all other parts of the body.



Zen Gesture or Mudra: You may use a hand gesture or mudras to channel your body's energy flow. Chakras are the circular vortexes of energy that are placed in seven different points on the spinal column, and all the seven chakras are connected to the various organs and glands within the body. These chakras are responsible for distributing the life energy, which is also known as Qi or Prana. The throat chakra governs the thyroid, parathyroid and respiratory system.

The Akash Mudra helps to activate the throat chakra. To form this mudra, bring your thumb and middle finger to touch each other gently, do not use force or pressure to press down the finger. This is a popular mudra and helps with concentration, eliminating negative thoughts and congestion, regularizes the heart beat and helps with blood pressure. Through use of breath, focus and mudra, we are working on channelizing the energy within our body. There are several mudras, however as a beginner, open palms rested on the lap can also be used in place of a mudra.

Zen Mantra: The mantra associated with the Throat Chakra is HAM (pronounced HUM). Chanting this mantra will work to remove the blockages in the throat chakra that prevent it from moving through to the other main chakras. I chant OM before, during and after my meditation. One way to feel the vibration more within your body is to close your ears with your thumb and Akash Mudra place the other fingers on the center of the forehead and closed eyes and chant OM extending the M sound to reverberate more. With practice you will begin to notice the vibrations near the heart and also get to feel it within your head and throat. The mantras can be used during grounding poses in yoga such as the garland pose or mountain poses to enhance the experience.

During meditation I try to focus or point my eyes in between my brows or the third eye. This might be uncomfortable initially, however you may get used to it with practice. You may continue to focus on breathing and not focus on the third eye too.



There are also guided meditations available where the process is to do a mental body scan of the different parts of your body. The whole idea is to exercise the brain muscles for increasing the attention span and focus. By focusing on the moment we can get to the true essence of meditation. There is no good or bad meditation, even a few minutes is much better than no meditation. There is a Zen proverb that ‘you should sit in meditation for twenty minutes every day - unless you are too busy; then you should sit for an hour.’ I feel meditation is something that even if you feel you are failing, you are still winning with your personal wellbeing.

