

A Beginners Guide To Meditation

What is Meditation?

We have thoughts in our mind all the time. Our mind thinks involuntarily just like the heart beats involuntarily. These constant thoughts can cause us unhappiness and even distress when they become unhelpful as we react to the world around us. Most of us feel pushed around by our external circumstances, allowing what happens in our day to affect our moods, thoughts and wellbeing.

We cannot control the events of our external world but we can control our own mind. If we can take responsibility for ourselves and the way we react to the situations around us, we can achieve a much more calm and happy state of being.

Meditation is a way of training our mind so we can gain this control. Meditation is not about stopping your thoughts or achieving an empty mind; it is about learning to focus our attention, sit with ourselves and embrace silence. Through meditation we can learn to manage how we react to the world around us.

What are the benefits of meditation?

- Meditation allows us to find an equilibrium in our own self that is not altered by circumstance.
- Allows us to become aware of our own mental patterns so we can free ourselves from them.
- Helps us to learn to let go of any unhelpful emotions, experiences or stresses.
- Equips us to cope better with stress.
- Helps us to tune in to the calm and contentment that exists within all of us.
- Teaches us to sit with ourselves and our emotions - many of us keep ourselves busy and distracted due to fear of how we might feel.
- Helps us to become more focused and to use our time more effectively
- We can use meditation to focus on creating more of what we want in our lives. For example, you might focus on love or gratitude in your meditation and therefore become more in tune with those feelings.

'I meditate so that my mind cannot complicate my life' - Sri Chinmoy



Types of meditation

There are many different types of meditation as meditation has been around for thousands of years. You do not need to know all the history or all the different forms of meditation in order to adopt it into your life and gain the benefits.

There is often some confusion around mindfulness and meditation. So, to clear that up... mindfulness is a form of meditation. Visualisation is also a form of meditation which I am obviously very active in encouraging you to do through the audios I provide. The meditations in this workbook are very straightforward and are slightly different as they are based on learning to focus and sit with yourself with very little direction.

I have outlined just a few options for your meditation here. It doesn't matter so much which one you choose to use, just go with the one that appeals to you the most. With each meditation practice you do, you might choose a different focus or stick to the same one. There is no right or wrong, it is far more important that you develop a meditation practice by just doing it.

Object Meditation

This involves using an object as the central point of your meditation. The object can help you by giving you something to focus on and bring your mind back to when you get distracted. The object acts to tether your mind to the present moment and train your brain remain in the here and now. Choose a small object that you can easily hold in your field of vision. Popular objects for meditation include:

- ◆ A candle
- ◆ A stone
- ◆ A flower

Mantra Meditation

Using a mantra in your meditation gives your mind something to focus on and something to do, which some people find beneficial. You can also use a mantra to give your meditation a positive focus that feels relevant to you. Choose from the following mantras or use your own.

- ◆ Ancient Mantras

'Aum' - Said to mean 'it is, will be or to become'

'I am that I am'

'I meditate so that I can inundate my entire being with the omnipotent power of peace'

- Sr Chinmoy



◆ Modern Mantras

'I change my thoughts, I change my world'

'Everyday in every way I am feeling better and better'

'Today I am perfect'

'I love myself no matter what'

'I am strong, I am beautiful, I am enough'

◆ One Word Mantras

Choose a word to represent what you would like to focus on or your reason for meditating today. Here are some examples:

Peace

Love

Gratitude

Kindness

Let go

Calm

Forgiveness

Repeat your mantra in your mind or out loud throughout your meditation. Try to maintain your focus on your mantra.

Breathing Meditation

When doing a breathing meditation you are aiming to keep your mind focused on your breath to the exclusion of everything else. When your mind wanders, just bring it back to your breath. With practice you will find you are able to become immersed in the experience of your breath.

'The thing about meditation is, you become more and more you' - David Lynch

'Meditation is like breaking out of a personal prison and finding paradise'

Check In Meditation

During this meditation, your focus should remain on yourself so you can bring your awareness to how you are feeling. Allow your awareness to wander around your body. You might notice emotions, areas of discomfort or body sensations. Try not to get caught up in wondering why you feel these things, just accept they are there and remain open to notice anything else. After you have finished your meditation you might find you understand yourself or a situation better.

The 7 Steps to Meditation



Work out when

When you are getting started with meditation, it is best to aim to do a short practice on a regular basis. To begin with, aim for 3 minutes of meditation 3 times a week and build up from there. It is more important to build a habit than overwhelm yourself with a long meditation. You might like to set a timer to stop you from being distracted by time.

First thing in the morning or last thing in the evening are the ideal times to meditate as there is generally less going on around you and less requiring your attention. However if there is another time in the day that will work better for you, go with it.



Work out where

Ideally, find a little area somewhere in your house that you can make into a meditation space. You only need a place to sit and perhaps a picture or some objects that make you feel inspired or relaxed. You might want to have a candle or some other similar objects close at hand.



You can meditate anywhere so don't allow yourself to get stuck on this step. All you need is a quiet place where you can be free of distractions for a few moments.



How to sit

You can either sit on a chair or on the floor. If you are on a chair, sit with your feet flat on the floor. If you are on the floor, cross your legs if you can. In either position, sit with your back, neck and head in a straight line and try to relax your shoulders. You can have your eyes open or closed - this might depend on what focal point you have chosen for your meditation.



Bring awareness to the breath

Simply bring your awareness to your breath. Try to allow it to find a rhythm without forcing it. Anytime you notice anything distracting you, just bring your focus back to your breath. Do this until you feel you have settled.



Attend to your chosen focal point

Move your attention to the focal point you have chosen for this meditation. This might be an object, a mantra, an emotion, your body sensations or you might choose to continue to focus on your breath. Your mind is likely to jump around - don't worry about it, just keep returning your attention to your focal point and persist. This is you training your mind and working towards all those benefits mentioned earlier.



Sit Quietly

Once you come to the end of your meditation - whether because it feels right to end or because your alarm has gone off - spend a little time sitting in silence. This is a chance to just observe any feelings or sensations that come to you. Sitting in meditation can open up channels of information through body sensations, inspiration, intuition, feelings etc. Just allow yourself to observe your experience after your meditation practice. Many people find this to be the most important part of meditation.



Re - engage

When you are ready, just slowly re-engage with the world around you. You might want to move your gaze to another part of the room, move your fingers and toes or stretch your body. Whatever feels right is fine for you to finish your meditation practice, re-engage with your surroundings and continue with your day.

These 7 steps are all you need to develop your meditation practice. It is meant to be simple. The work comes through your persistence in focusing your mind on the meditation and in committing to a regular meditation practice. In time, it will become easier and you will feel the positive effects in your day to day life.

Commit to the experience and the process of meditation rather than waiting for it to 'work'. You deserve to have some quiet time so just give it a go.

*'Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time
and be yourself' - Hermann Hesse*



My Meditation Plan

What do I hope to get from my meditation practice?

On what days or times will I commit to meditating?

Where will I meditate?

Are there any words or phrases that might be useful for me to use as the focus of my meditation?