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*Live the life you are meant to live.*

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# **Meditation for Beginners**

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## **Purpose of Meditation**

The purpose of meditation is to increase the awareness of self. It is an easy and comfortable way for you to get to know yourself. It is a process that you can use to calm your mind to the point of peace and tranquility.

## **Who Am I? Why Am I Here?**

Meditation is an excellent way to begin to find answers to the age old questions of "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Is there a purpose for my life and if so, what is it?" Through meditation you may gain insights about challenges in your everyday life; gain clarity about decisions you are going to make or make a space to receive creative ideas. It is said that Einstein received many of his ideas while he was doing what he called "pondering."

## **Stress Reduction**

Some people meditate in order to reduce emotional and mental stress, which in turn can cause the physical body to relax. Studies have shown that many of the body's physiological processes slow down during meditation.

Meditation, long the foundation of spiritual enlightenment, has become accepted in many sectors of the health care industry for its many positive physiological effects. Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., founder of the University of Massachusetts Stress Reduction Clinic in Worcester, has demonstrated that people who meditate (and thereby alter their state of consciousness) are able to reduce the pain and some of the physical symptoms of chronic illness such as high blood pressure and headaches. According to research by Herbert Benson, M.D., at Harvard Medical School, meditating Tibetan monks can raise their body temperatures high enough to dry wet blankets outdoors in sub-zero weather.

## **Guided Meditation and Self Meditation**

Although the concept of meditation is quite simple—to quiet the everyday mind—it is not that easy to just "stop thinking." There are basically two types of meditation: guided meditation and self meditation.

*A guided meditation* is one in which you listen to someone who leads you on a meditation by "telling a story" in which you follow along in your mind. The "story" would be along the lines of "see yourself entering a meadow and sitting under a cool shade tree next to a calm, peaceful lake . . ." By visualizing the "story" in your mind, you can cause the "mind chatter" to cease, and to connect with your Higher Self.

A *self meditation* is one in which you select what you are going to focus on. You may have some meditation music playing in the background, but you are the “leader” of a self meditation.

## **Your Sanctuary**

You need to create a quiet place where you are sure you will not be disturbed during your meditations. This can be a challenge if you have other family members who are not used to you taking time out for yourself!

Under ideal conditions you would have a place that is your special meditation place. It can be in the corner of a room where you can close the door and unplug the phone. You may want to have a little space where you can burn incense and light a candle. It is said that incense made from frankincense or myrrh or sandalwood assists the mind to calm down and get into the meditative state.

Part of the purpose of lighting a candle and incense is to create a transition moment from everyday life to your inner life and set your intention of what it is you are doing. It is said that each time you meditate in the same place you build up an energy field around this place that makes it easier and easier to get into the meditative state each time you do it.

An accomplished meditator can go into a meditative state at will, anytime, anywhere. But this takes practice. So in the beginning you will want to make it as easy on yourself as possible to get the maximum results from the time devoted to your meditation. This is *your* time just for you to get in touch with who you really are. Your family and friends will benefit as much or more than you will from your meditation in that you will gradually become more loving, kind, and peaceful.

## **Making Time**

You will receive the greatest benefit if you can meditate everyday. Start slowly with just 5 or 10 minutes a day, gradually working up to 20 minutes, twice a day.

You will find it easier to meditate *before* eating rather than after, and *after* waking up rather than before falling asleep. Remember, these are just guidelines. What works for you is what is right for you. TRUST YOURSELF to know what is right for you.

## **Meditation Posture**

The recommended meditation posture begins with having your spine erect. It is suggested that you do not lie down to meditate because it is likely you will fall asleep. However, if lying down feels like what you want to do, then do it. There are no hard and fast rules, or a right or wrong way to meditate. Trust that whatever

feels right to you IS right for you, although, as a beginning meditator you may wish to start by sitting up.

In addition to having your spine erect, you will want to adjust your head and neck so that your head is slightly bowed. This is referred to as opening up the back of the head and neck. This allows the energy that is released in meditation to flow easily out the top of your spine.

## Mind Chatter

The purpose of meditation is to quiet the mind. It can be next to impossible for the beginning meditator to simply make the mind completely blank. In fact, while you are beginning to learn to meditate, you will become aware of the “mind chatter” that goes on during your every waking moment. It has always been there, it just usually goes unnoticed.

There are many different methods that have been devised to assist you in quieting the “mind chatter.” One way is to focus the mind on a word, like **love**, or **peace** or **joy**. Another way is to focus your mind on an uplifting object like a **rose**, a **holy picture**, or a **candle flame**. Another way is to focus on your **breathing**. Imagine breathing in a color, such as blue, and breathing out another color, such as green. Another way is to **repeat a word** (mantra) from another language that has no conscious meaning to you, over and over in your mind (such as Shanti, Shanti, Shanti, which means peace in Hindi.) Whatever you decide to focus on is up to you.

## Your First Meditation

You may find that, at first, it is hard to even focus on the object. You may immediately begin to think of things you forgot to do. “Did I unplug the phone?” “Did I turn off the stove?” You may experience physical discomfort, such as feeling thirsty or “fidgety.” Just notice that you have these thoughts and reassure yourself that you will attend to these things as soon as you are finished with your meditation and return your focus to your selected object.

Each time you notice that your mind has strayed to “mind chatter,” simply bring your focus back again to your object. THIS IS MEDITATING. Do not criticize yourself if you find it difficult to concentrate on your object of focus. Understand that you are changing the habit of “mind chatter” that you have had all your life. Congratulate yourself that you are now aware of this “mind chatter.” Many people go their whole life on automatic pilot being run by their mind chatter and don’t even know it. *Your meditations will get easier with practice.*

## Physical Sensations

You may experience physical sensations: tingling, swirling sensation, heat, etc. This is not unusual or cause for alarm. If it gets uncomfortable, just stop the meditation by opening your eyes, and stretching your body.

## Accelerate Your Growth

Meditation will accelerate your growth. Whenever you go for growth you are going to have to let go of some things - beliefs, behaviors, people, etc. It *is* possible to grow with joy. When you meditate you will bring up issues that need to be looked at. You'll experience more joy if you can look at things with detachment, not make yourself wrong or beat yourself up for discovering that you are not perfect!

## Practical Value of Meditation

1. Stress reduction.
2. A way of seeing and learning without effort.
3. As you meditate you will become more loving, kind and non-judgmental.

The value of having a peaceful mind cannot be overstated. When others are in a dither about this and that in their lives, your world can be one of peace and calm. You can be *in* the world, but not *of* the world, centered in your own space of joy. Having the ability to calm your mind allows you to "think straight" in times of crises and chaos. I wish you well on your journey to wholeness.

I hope you have found this information helpful. Learning to meditate is like learning any other worthwhile skill. The strength of your desire to obtain the skill is the motivator that tides you over in the early stages when results may not be entirely evident.

Love and light,

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