



**Tips and techniques
for the meditation beginner**

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What is Meditation?

The dictionary defines meditation as "continued or extended thought; reflection; contemplation."

So what does this mean in real life? Just what is this thing called meditation?

Often we get overwhelmed in the course of our daily life. This can lead to stress and tensions that can ultimately affect our health. Using meditation on a regular basis gives our mind a chance to quiet itself and adjust to the stresses and strains that are part and parcel of our modern daily life.

Usually, people meditate in a quiet space, free from distraction. There are many different methods of meditating, which we will cover later, but they all lead to the same place.

Meditation itself is simply the process of quieting our mind. Gradually, your mind becomes calmer. The "chatter" that's often there becomes less. And you start to move mentally to a more tranquil place.

Sometimes meditation is described as reaching a higher state of consciousness. This can come about because our mind is less cluttered and therefore we start to notice things that would ordinarily pass us by. For instance, whilst meditating we may tune in more to the sounds around us, whether they are the urban sounds of traffic and people talking or more rural sounds such as bird song or the running water of a stream.

Oftentimes by concentrating on these sounds we can go deeper into a meditative state.

How Do I Start Meditating?

To start meditating, choose a time and a place where you won't be disturbed for the duration of your meditation session.

When you are starting out, you may decide to set aside 10 or 15 minutes for your meditation session. This is plenty of time when you are beginning to meditate and in our hectic daily lives it may well be that this is the maximum amount of time that you feel you can devote to meditating. That's fine. Whatever works for you is good – it's much better to spend a few minutes a day meditating than to put it off completely. Over time, you may decide that you are getting sufficient benefits that you want to increase the amount of time you spend in a meditative state, but that's completely your choice.

If you can spare the time, your aim should be to have two 20 minute meditation sessions each day. Research has shown that spending this amount of time meditating leads to better health and can help reduce the stresses and strains of daily life.

Your checklist for starting meditation:

- Choose a meditation method from the chapters that follow.
- Choose a time of day when you are unlikely to be disturbed.
- Choose a place where you feel comfortable and can relax.

That's all!

The time of day should be one where you can make it a habit to meditate at that time. Some people find that meditating first thing in the morning is a good time for them. Other people, myself included, meditate last thing at night before going to sleep. You may find that the best time for you is whilst the rest of the family is watching a program on

television. There is no exact time that is best for everyone. Whatever works for you is good! Just make sure that you practice on a regular basis.

The actual place where you decide to meditate is again up to you. A few people set aside a room in their house as their meditation room but if you're just starting out, that's probably a bit too extreme. Instead, you may decide to meditate in your bedroom, the lounge, the kitchen or even the garden. The exact place where you meditate doesn't matter too much – it's much more important that you actually start practicing meditation. If you find that the original place you chose isn't working for you, don't be afraid to change it. The same goes for the time and the method that you chose. The ultimate benefit of meditation far exceeds the precise method of meditation that you use to reach the benefit.

One of the easiest ways to start meditating is to use a guided meditation. This is a CD or MP3 that contains all the instructions you need to achieve a state of meditation. All you need to do is to find somewhere that you won't be disturbed, sit or lie down and play the audio file.

You can find a range of pre-recorded guided meditations available for instant download at <http://ultimatemeditationkit.com>

Different Types of Meditation

There are many different types of meditation. We'll cover some of the more common types below but if none of these suit you, you'll find many more to explore on the internet.

Some types of meditation involve just you or maybe you plus a small item to help you focus, such as a candle. Other types of meditation work by you listening to a CD or MP3 file. Again, there is no right or wrong way to meditate. Feel free to experiment with some of the different types of meditation explored below until you find one that works well for you.

Breathing Meditation

In this meditation, you will be focusing on your breath.

This is probably one of the easiest methods of meditation to begin with.

Start by adopting a comfortable position. You could sit down in a chair or lie back on a bed. The important part is to be comfortable so that you're able to focus solely on your breathing.

Once you're comfortable, close your eyes.

Start to notice your breathing. We breathe so often that we tend to take breathing for granted. So take the time to notice your breathing.

Notice the air filling your lungs.

Then notice as you breathe out and the air leaves your lungs.

Repeat the process of noticing your breath.

As you do this, you'll find thoughts coming up. They might be about family, friends, work or absolutely anything else. That doesn't matter – it's all part of the process and it is perfectly normal to continue to have thoughts whilst you are meditating.

But once these thoughts come up, let them drift out with your next breath. Each you're your thoughts drift, bring your mind back to focusing on your breathing.

One of the best programs I've found for breathing meditations can be found at:

<http://www.SecretsOfMeditation.com>

Walking Meditation

If you find it difficult to sit still and keep your eyes closed whilst meditating, then walking meditation could be good for you.

There are four components to a walking meditation:

- Becoming aware of your breathing
- Noticing your surroundings
- Being conscious and attentive to your body's movement
- Taking some time to reflect on your meditation experience

Become aware of your breathing in much the same way as you would for the breathing meditation process. Notice each breath as you breathe in and then breathe out again. Become conscious of the air filling your lungs and use each exhalation to send out any distracting thoughts – you'll find that after a little bit of practice, your extraneous thoughts will quite happily ride out of you on a cushion of air!

When you start noticing your surroundings, you'll likely be amazed. We take lots of things for granted in our everyday life and much of what is around us goes completely unnoticed. When you are walking around, notice the different colors that you see. Notice that even blades of grass, which initially appear just "green", are actually varied in color and hue. You'll find that once you start this tuning in process, you'll notice more and more things that have previously escaped your attention.

Don't just notice colors. Listen out for sounds. There may be bird song, road noise or the chatter of people or animals. Consciously tune in to these different sounds. Notice the different tunes sung by the birds. If you are in an urban area, pay attention to the different traffic noises. Each car's engine sounds slightly different. So does the sound of wheels on tarmac. You'll find yourself hearing things that have merely passed you by before. There

are also smells to fill your senses. Maybe the aroma of freshly mown grass or the sweet smell that occurs just after a shower of rain. There are plenty of smells in the atmosphere and the chances are that most of these have slipped past your consciousness.

Tune into your body's movement. Start to notice the light pressure on the soles of your feet as you walk. Be aware of the air brushing onto your skin, whether it's a calm day or a windy one. Pay attention to your body's movement as you walk around. Feel how your arms swing as you walk along. Notice how you hold your head – is it upright and attentive or a different position? Switch your attention to different body parts as you are walking and you'll be fascinated at what you find.

Once you've completed your walking meditation, take a small amount of time to come back to your normal world. During this period, mentally run through your thoughts and feelings that you experienced during your meditation time. Think what you can do to enhance your experience even further next time you choose to do a walking meditation. Gradually come back from your peaceful site to your regular world.

Healing Meditation

You can use a healing meditation to focus on your own healing or to help with the healing of others. When you are just starting out, it is probably best to focus on your own healing, so that is what we will concentrate on here.

During a healing meditation, you can help your body to recover from an illness or disease.

Start your meditation process as usual.

Then, once you are happy that you are in a relaxed state, you can start your healing meditation.

In your mind, fill the area that needs healing with a bright healing light. Once you get proficient at this technique, you can research the different colors that are said to help even more with the healing process. But as a starter, use a bright white light for your healing process.

Flood the area that needs healing with the bright white light. See everything brilliantly illuminated. Then visualize the affected area starting to heal and return to its regular, 100% healthy state.

Some people find it helpful to visualize their white blood cells attacking the harmful elements in the affected area.

Other people find that they can build their own construction team in their visualization. This team of miniature experts goes about the process of reconstructing the affected area and putting it back to normal.

The power of this visualization is fantastic. Let your mind run riot while you perform your healing meditation.

See the area that needs healing transform into a completely healed part of you. If you find it difficult to "see" the area, then just imagine what it would feel like if that part of your body was completely healed and working perfectly. It doesn't matter if you don't get all the details completely right. Just get a sense of what will happen. Your mind is powerful enough to fill in the gaps – all you are doing is telling it the direction that you would like it to take.

Zen Meditation

Zen meditation is normally practiced sitting on a cushion on the floor. There are two main items used for zen meditation, called zafu and zabuton. Between them, they can take the edge off sitting on a hard floor surface. The zabuton is a mat placed on the floor. The zafu is a cushion that is placed on top of the zabuton. They can help to take the pressure off your legs whilst you meditate.

The idea of using cushions is to help you focus your mind on the meditation itself, rather than any aches or pains that you could experience whilst sitting on a hard wooden floor.

The aim of zen meditation is to simply sit and open the "hand" of thought. Traditionally, it is practiced in a sitting position, with folded legs and hands. Your spine is kept upright during the meditation.

There are several different sitting positions that you can take whilst practicing zen meditation. Check the internet for some illustrations if you have difficulty working out the exact posture needed.

Once you have reached your desired sitting position, half lower your eyelids so that your eyes are neither fully open or fully closed. This will allow you to stay awake whilst not being distracted by outside objects.

When you start to practice zen meditation, you will begin by concentrating. This usually involves focusing on your breath, often whilst counting. Over time, you will find that you can concentrate your mind easier each time you start to meditate.

Zen meditation is probably best experienced by joining a local group so that you can get the most out of the various teachings associated with it, together with the support that a practice group offers.

Guided Meditation

Guided meditations are a good place to start your meditation practice. Whilst it is possible to guide yourself during the meditation process, the easiest guided meditations to follow are pre-recorded and all you have to do is sit back and listen.

A guided meditation will usually begin by taking you to a calm, quiet place. Some typical places to start are:

- A large, peaceful garden with birdsong and sometimes a stream running through it
- A clearing in a forest, often with a babbling brook nearby
- A beach, with the sound of the sea lapping

Once you are in the quiet place, you will be guided to notice the sounds, smells and sensations that can be experienced in the chosen location. For instance, if you are in a garden or forest, you will probably be guided to notice the feel of the grass on your feet, possibly some dew on the grass. On the beach, you'll be guided to feel the warm sand in between your toes.

Then the meditation will gradually explore the surroundings, bringing in the other sensations that you would expect to experience.

If the guided meditation is partially based on hypnosis, it is possible that a hypnotic deepening routine will be used to drop you further down into your meditative state. This is usually done by taking you down a series of steps and counting the steps as you go. This technique is powerful and the deepening sensation can be used to heighten any meditation process that you perform.

You can find a range of guided meditations at <http://ultimatemeditationkit.com>

Chakra Meditation

Chakra meditation is used to energize the seven different energy centers that are in your body.

These centers are:

- **Crown chakra.** This is based outside your body just above your head and is the master chakra that controls all the others. The crown chakra is normally colored violet.
- **Ajna or third eye chakra.** This is linked with the pineal gland, which is a small gland located in your brain. The color of this chakra is indigo.
- **Throat chakra.** This is linked with your thyroid gland and has the color blue.
- **Heart chakra.** Located at your heart, this chakra is linked with your immune system. Keeping your heart chakra in tune assists with your overall well being. The color for the heart chakra is green.
- **Solar plexus chakra.** This is said to correspond to your pancreas and adrenal glands and plays a valuable role in digestion. It has the color yellow.
- **Sacral chakra.** Located in your groin, the sacral chakra is related to your emotion, sexuality and creativity. If it is out of balance, you may suffer from mood swings. Color for this chakra is orange.
- **Base or root chakra.** This chakra is associated with instinct, survival and security and is located at the base of the spine. The base chakra has the color red.

A typical chakra meditation will start at the base chakra and gradually work it's way through each of the other chakras until it reaches the crown chakra.

As the meditation progresses, each chakra will be balanced. The meditation will work on each chakra in turn and will focus on getting the imbalances that occur over time back

into their natural state of balance. The meditation will also move each of the different chakra centers until they are in balance with each other.

When starting out, it is probably easiest to use a pre-recorded meditation to guide you through each of the chakras and to ensure that the balancing process is followed.

Christian Meditation

Quite simply, Christian meditation is a type of meditation that has been placed in a Christian context.

Christian meditation goes right back to biblical times. At it's simplest, any act of worship or prayer can be likened to entering a meditative state. The Bible says that all true Christians must meditate on God's word. This means that you can use some or all of your meditation time to contemplate anything to do with your religious faith and still be in keeping with your beliefs.

Once you have cleared your mind, using any of the meditation techniques we have discussed so far, then you can focus the rest of your meditation session on worshipping God.

Most monks spend a lot of their time in meditation and have learned to speak with God during their prayer sessions. The clarity of mind that is experienced whilst meditating helps with this process.

Some forms of Christian meditation use a mantra. This is a word that is repeated during the course of the meditation. There are various mantras that can be used – you can research these on the internet to see which ones fit best with your own belief system.

You should note that Christian meditation is not a replacement for being absolved from your sins. Instead, it is a tool that many Christians use to build a stronger relationship with God.

Japa Meditation

Japa meditation involves the repetition of a mantra during the course of your meditation. The mantra is usually spoken quite softly, so that only the person actually chanting the mantra can hear it. Sometimes it may simply be repeated in the meditator's mind, but this is quite rare.

Japa meditation is often practiced whilst sitting in a yogic meditation position but it is perfectly OK to sit or lie down comfortably and recite a mantra in the normal course of your meditation.

Some popular Japa mantras are:

- Om
- Hare Krishna
- Ram Nam
- Gayatri
- Om namo Narayana
- Pancha Tattva mantra
- Om namah Shivaya
- Om mani padme hum

In Buddhist and Hindu traditions, your mantra will be given to you by your personal guru. The goal of the mantra is varied but is often a simple personal communication with God in a similar way to prayer.

New Age Meditation

Many people, myself included, find that the easiest way to meditate is to simply sit or lie back and listen to a pre-recorded meditation track. There are plenty to choose from and some of my favorites are listed at the end of this guide.

New Age meditation can also take the form of a background track, which is usually one of rainfall or some other natural sounds. Behind this track, the brain is played some other sounds. These can be "binaural beats" or some tones that are designed to induce a natural meditative state without any of the hard work of actually "meditating".

Some people consider this to be cheating but personally I find it the quickest and easiest way to meditate. All you need to do is sit or lie down, place your headphones on your ears and listen. The pre-recorded track does everything else for you.

My favorite of these is the Centerpointe Holosync system, which can be found at <http://www.Centerpointe.com>. I personally use this almost every evening before I go to sleep. It has a number of different levels, which take you gradually deeper and deeper into your meditative state. I've been using it now for a number of years and have noticed lots of positive changes in myself. I'm generally calmer and more relaxed and take things in my stride much better.

Meditation Resources

Pre-recorded meditation sessions: <http://ultimatemeditationkit.com>

There's a range of guided meditations that you can download instantly. They include relaxation, creating abundance in your life, enhancing your creativity and connecting with your higher self. There's also a more comprehensive guide to meditation.

Breathing Meditation: <http://www.SecretsOfMeditation.com>

Matt Clarkson's easy to use course covers breathing meditation, one of the easiest ways to learn meditation.

Centerpointe Holosync high tech meditation system: <http://www.Centerpointe.com>

Another easy way to meditate. Put a CD into your player, put on your headphones and press "play". Let the Holosync system take care of taking you to a level of meditation rarely experienced unless you are a Zen monk.

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