



LEARNING TO MEDITATE

—
Find Out What Works for You

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Introduction

Are you stressed, overwhelmed, and can't think clearly? Does your mind race with a million things to do, but you can't seem to focus? Do you feel like life is passing you by?

Meditation can help.

Meditation has become increasingly popular over the past decade as research confirms the benefits practitioners have known for thousands of years.

Those benefits are wide and varied. From reducing stress and anxiety, building healthier relationships, improving performance, focus, and clarity, boosting confidence and self-esteem, enhancing sleep and well-being, and helping you tackle life's challenges.

But with so many types of meditation available – and uncertainty over when and how it should be done – it can feel overwhelming to start.

This guide will introduce the common types of meditation, along with some handy tips and tools to get you started. With sessions of only a few minutes, you're sure to find one that brings a pocket of calm to your busy day.

Remember:

- There's no wrong or right way to meditate, nor is there one "best" type. Put simply, the best type is the one that fits your daily routine.
- You might feel more relaxed straight after meditating, but the ripple effects – including attitudinal and behavioral change – come after making meditation a regular habit.

So, try it for at least a week or two, and see how it works for you.



Style of Meditation
FOCUS OBJECT

This type of meditation uses an object (like the breath, heartbeat, or an image) to focus the mind. Using the breath is one of the simplest and most accessible ways to meditate because it uses the natural process of breathing as an anchor. By following the rhythm of your breath, you can gently let go of distractions and be more present.

Instructions:

- Find a quiet place to sit, then gently close your eyes.
- As you breathe, pick a spot in your body to focus your attention.
- This might be your belly, chest, nostrils, or top of your head.
- Try to concentrate on that spot while noticing the sensations of breathing.
- Follow your breath all the way in, then all the way out, like a wave.
- Count your breaths as you exhale. When you reach ten, begin again at one.
- Continue for a few minutes

Duration: Aim for 5 to 10 minutes per day, for at least a week.

Benefits –

You may feel more balanced, calm, and relaxed immediately after meditating. Over time, this type of meditation can also reduce stress and self-judgment, lower your blood pressure and heart rate, and improve your focus and concentration skills.

When Things Go Off Track –

It's normal to get lost in thoughts, plans, memories, or worries while meditating. Instead of feeling frustrated when your mind wanders, simply nudge it back to the breath. Return to counting your breaths, or labeling your breathing as "in" and "out."

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Breethe App (Try the "Focus Breath" track)

- App Website: <https://breethe.com>
- Go to: One Offs - Life Situations - Breethers - Focus Breath

Download the Smiling Mind App (Try the "Exploring the Breath" track)

- App Website: <https://smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app/>
- Go to: My Programs - Adult - Mindfulness 101 - Exploring the Breath

Download the Simple Habit App (Try the "Beginner Breath" series)

- App Website: <http://www.simplehabit.com>
- Go to: Meditate - Learn to Meditate - Beginner Breath

More Info –

<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

<http://how-to-meditate.org>

<https://ggia.berkeley.edu>



Style of Meditation
MANTRA

Mantra meditation involves repeating a word or phrase during the meditation. The words act as a rhythmic way to focus your mind. They can be spoken, sung, or chanted, and can be said out loud, whispered, or internally.

Some traditional forms of mantra meditations use chants in other languages (like the “Om” mantra), while others use a word or phrase of your choosing. The mantra can be repeated a certain number of times (usually 21 to 108 times), or for a specific duration.

Instructions:

- Find a quiet space and sit comfortably.
- Clear your mind by breathing deeply for a minute.
- Then recite the word “Om” slowly and quietly.
- Repeat the word 21 times (either count on your fingers or use prayer beads).
- Then sit quietly for another minute.

Duration: Aim for 5 to 10 minutes per day, for at least a week.

Benefits –

Mantra meditation is great for focusing the mind and improving concentration. You may feel more clear-headed immediately. With practice, this type of meditation can improve clarity and calmness, and increase your ability to recognize and handle distractions.

When Things Go Off Track –

If you feel self-conscious saying the mantra out loud, try whispering or saying the words internally. The key is developing a rhythm so your mind follows along rather than being distracted. Try using a guided meditation with background music so you can stay in rhythm.

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Gaia App (Try the “Mantra Audio Meditation” track)

- App Website: <https://www.gaia.com>
- Go to: Search - Mantra Audio Meditation

Download the Insight Timer App (Try the “Kundalini Mantra” track)

- App Website: <https://insighttimer.com>
- Go to: Explore - Kundalini Mantra Meditation

More Info –

<http://liveanddare.com/mantra-meditation>

<http://www.swamij.com/om-mantra.htm>

<https://programminglife.net/mantras-for-meditation/>

A person in a plaid shirt and dark pants is walking away from the camera on a paved path in a park. The path is surrounded by lush green trees and a stream on the left. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The text 'Style of Meditation WALKING' is overlaid on the image.

Style of Meditation **WALKING**

Meditation doesn't need to happen inside while sitting down. It can happen anywhere. Walking meditation is a great way to add some movement to your mindfulness, because it uses the rhythm of walking to focus your thoughts.

For the time poor, it can be incorporated into your daily walk to the office, grocery store, or park. Traditional forms of walking meditation focus on very slow, precise movements while others simply bring awareness to, and appreciation of, your surroundings.

Instructions:

- Find a place to stand, center yourself, and take a few deep breaths.
- Start walking, moving a little slower than your usual pace.
- Notice what's around you. What do you hear, see, and smell?
- How does the ground feel? How do the parts of your body feel when you walk?
- What sensations do you notice as you walk?
- Let a feeling of ease flow through you as you walk to your destination.

Duration: Aim for 5 to 10 minutes per day, for at least a week.

Benefits –

Walking meditation will help you feel calmer, centered, and focused while reducing stress and anxiety. It's a great alternative if you feel uncomfortable sitting down to meditate. The benefits may be felt immediately, but will develop with regular practice.

When Things Go Off Track –

It might feel difficult or frustrating to walk at a slower pace than usual, or you might feel self-conscious as others hurry past you. If this happens, walk normally for a while and then return to the meditation when you're ready.

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Headspace App (Try the "Walking" track)

- App Website: <https://www.headspace.com>
- Go to: Discover - Singles - Walking

Download the Breethe App (Try the "Mindful Walking" track)

- App Website: <https://breethe.com>
- Go to: One Offs - Life Situations - On the Go - Mindful Walking

Download the Calm App (Try the "Walking Meditation" track)

- App Website: <https://www.calm.com>
- Go to: Meditate - Guided - Walking Meditation

More Info –

<http://howtopracticezen.com/kinhin-2/>

<https://ggia.berkeley.edu>

<https://www.mindful.org/>



Style of Meditation

MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION

Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is a structured course in meditation that teaches you how to bring mindfulness into your everyday life. Mindfulness is simply focusing on the here and now, where you're not worried about the future or the past.

It means paying attention to what is actually happening – rather than what you think is happening – and observing things with a sense of curiosity. MBSR develops these skills through a program of mental training, which can change the structure of your brain and the way you think. The instructions below will guide you through an example exercise.

Instructions:

- Find a quiet place and sit comfortably.
- Close your eyes or let your gaze soften on a spot just in front of you.
- Spend a few moments sitting quietly.
- Move your attention to your breath, and notice the sensations of breathing for a while. Where do you feel the air when you breathe? In your nostrils, chest, or belly?
- Now, notice what sounds you can hear. Are they near or far? Are they quiet or loud?
- Gently open your eyes and slowly look around. What can you see? What colors are around you? Is there something you haven't noticed before?
- Close your eyes and return your attention to your breath for a few more moments.

Duration: Aim for 10 to 30 minutes per day, for at least a week. Structured MBSR courses are usually held over 8 weeks.

Benefits –

Learning how to bring mindfulness into your daily life can help reduce stress, anxiety, and pain. The increased awareness can improve focus and memory, help eliminate distractions, and boost resilience and creativity. These benefits may be felt immediately, but completing a full course will enhance your ability to limit stress and distractions as they arise.

When Things Go Off Track –

Thoughts will come and go while meditating. This is normal. The goal is not to stop thinking, rather just to notice when thoughts come and go without judgment. When your mind wanders, bring your awareness back to your breath and the sensation of sitting. You can also label thoughts as “thinking.”

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Mindfulness App (Try the “Mindfulness and the Brain” Stress Relief course)

- App Website: <http://www.mindapps.se/themindfulnessapp>
- Go to: Search - Mindfulness and the Brain

Download the Simple Habit App (Try the “Everyday Mindfulness” series)

- App Website: <http://www.simplehabit.com>
- Go to: Meditate - Relax & Unwind - Everyday Mindfulness

Download the Calm App (Try the “21 Days of Calm” series)

- App Website: <https://www.calm.com>
- Go to: Meditate - Programs - 21 Days of Calm

More Info –

<http://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/>, <https://palousemindfulness.com>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-courage-be-present/201001/how-practice-mindfulness-meditation/>

The image shows two silhouettes of people performing qigong exercises against a sunset sky. The person on the left is standing with arms raised, hands interlocked above their head. The person on the right is standing with arms raised, hands interlocked above their head. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text 'Style of Meditation QIGONG' is overlaid on the image.

Style of Meditation QIGONG

Qigong (pronounced “chee-gong”) is a style of meditation that incorporates breathing, stretching, and strengthening exercises. It’s great for beginners because the movements are gentle and flowing.

There are many forms of qigong – some are performed while sitting or standing, and are often incorporated into tai chi – but each is essentially a series of exercises designed to circulate your “qi” (or energy) around the body. Try the foundation qigong movement below as an example.

Instructions:

- Stand naturally with your feet under your hips, breathing slowly and steadily.
- Interlock your fingers in front of you, bring your hands above your head, palms facing upward.
- While holding the arms up, tilt slowly to the left, then to the right, then back to center.
- Release your arms down beside your body.
- Repeat the process 24 times.

Duration: Aim for 10 to 60 minutes per day (try for the morning), for at least a week.

Benefits –

The movements of Qigong can both calm and energize you after the first session. If practiced regularly for four weeks, it can also improve concentration and focus, help circulation, reduce joint pain and stress, and boost the immune system.

When Things Go Off Track –

Learning the movement sequences may be confusing at first, and the slow pace may feel frustrating. If you need to, stop and re-center yourself before continuing. Try to be patient, and remember this is a gentle practice that will feel more natural over time.

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Gaia App (Try the “Roots & Branches” track)

- App Website: <https://www.gaia.com>
- Go to: Search - Roots & Branches

Download the Gaia App (Try the “Alchemy of Qigong” series)

- App Website: <https://www.gaia.com>
- Go to: Search - Alchemy of Qigong

Download the Eight Brocades App (Try the “Standing Exercises” series)

- App Website: <https://ymaa.com/publishing/apps>
- Go to: Videos - Standing Analysis - 1st Piece

More Info –

<https://www.qigonginstitute.org>

<http://www.instituteofintegralqigongandtaichi.org>

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/qigong>

A woman with her hair tied back is sitting in a lotus position on a boat. She is wearing a grey t-shirt and white pants. Her hands are in a mudra position, resting on her knees. The background is a sunset over water, with a blurred shoreline in the distance. The text 'Style of Meditation' is written in a white, italicized font above the word 'LOVING-KINDNESS', which is in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font.

Style of Meditation

LOVING-KINDNESS

Loving-kindness meditation helps you let go of both self-judgment and the judgment of others. It recognizes that our relationships can be messy, and uses the skill of visualization to reduce hostility and anger.

It's usually structured in four parts – sending friendly wishes to loved ones, to ourselves, to those we feel neutral about, and to those we don't get along with. The practice can also release oxytocin, which is a brain hormone that helps increase feelings of calm and well-being.

Instructions:

- Find a quiet place to sit, and take a few slow, deep breaths.
- Visualize a close friend or a loved one.
- Send that person some friendly wishes – may you be happy, may you be healthy, may you be safe, may you be loved.
- Return your focus to your breath.
- Then, send those same wishes to yourself – may I be happy, etc.
- As you say these words to yourself, feel their effect on you.
- Visualize someone you feel neutral about, perhaps a work colleague or a bus driver.
- Send them the same friendly wishes.
- Visualize someone who challenges you or with whom you don't get along.
- Send that person the same friendly wishes.
- Repeat the process for as many people as you like.
- Close by taking some slow, deep breaths.

Duration: Aim for 10 to 30 minutes per day, for at least a week.

Benefits –

You might notice feelings of warmth and lightness immediately after meditating. With consistent practice, it can also reduce feelings of anger and jealousy, improve compassion and generosity, deepen relationships, and boost self-esteem and self-worth.

When Things Go Off Track –

It's normal to feel uncomfortable during this type of meditation, particularly when directing wishes to people we don't get along with or to ourselves. Like most things, this requires practice, and those uncomfortable feelings will lessen with time.

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Smiling Mind App (Try the "I Wish for You" track)

- App Website: <https://smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app/>
- Go to: Programs - Adult - Mindfulness 204 - I Wish for You

Download the Simple Habit App (Try the "Kindness" track)

- App Website: <http://www.simplehabit.com>
- Go to: Meditate - Energize & Empower - Kindness

Download the Headspace App (Try the "Kindness" pack)

- App Website: <https://www.headspace.com>
- Go to: Discover - Packs - Happiness - Kindness

More Info –

<https://www.tarabrach.com>

<http://www.emmaseppala.com/research/>

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com>



Style of Meditation

YOGA

As with Qigong, there are many forms of yoga meditation that can be performed while sitting, standing, or moving. A common form is sixth chakra meditation, which involves focusing your attention on the “third eye” (or the space in the center of your forehead). This is where the pineal gland is located, which is said to be the source of our intuition and helps us gain insight and balance.

Instructions:

- Find a quiet place and sit comfortably.
- Close your eyes and take 3 slow, long breaths.
- With your eyes closed, look upward toward the center of your forehead (the “third eye”).
- Slowly count backward from 100, keeping your eyes focused on the third eye.
- When you have finished counting, sit quietly for a few more moments.

Duration: Aim for 10 to 30 minutes per day, for at least a week.

Benefits –

Yoga meditation helps clear the mind so you feel calmer and more focused. You might feel less stressed immediately, and with consistent practice it can help reduce fatigue, improve concentration and balance, and boost your intuition.

When Things Go Off Track –

The process of “looking” at your third eye may cause slight eye strain. If you notice this, open and blink your eyes a few times; relax your face, neck, and shoulders; and return to the practice when you feel ready.

Modern Meditation Tools –

Download the Gaia App (Try the “Sixth Chakra Yoga Practice” track)

- App Website: <https://www.gaia.com>
- Go to: Search - Sixth Chakra Yoga Practice

Download the Insight Timer App (Try the “Opening Your Third Eye” track)

- App Website: <https://insighttimer.com>
- Go to: Explore - Opening Your Third Eye

Download the Mindfulness App (Try the “Mindful Standing Yoga” track)

- App Website: <http://www.mindapps.se/themindfulnessapp>
- Go to: Search - Mindful Standing Yoga

More Info –

<https://www.gaia.com/lp/content/how-to-awaken-your-third-eye/>

<http://www.meditationiseasy.com/meditation-techniques/trataka-the-meditation-technique-of-third-eye/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lilly-barels/third-eye-blind-a-guided-_b_4298334.html



Overcoming Common Obstacles

You Get Distracted

Gently nudge your attention back to your breath, and notice the sensations of touch, taste, smell, and sound in your body.

It Feels Unnatural

Be patient with yourself. Developing a new habit takes time, and the more you do it, the more natural and easier it will feel.

You Forget or Procrastinate

Set a reminder and schedule in this new habit at the same time each day. Try linking it to another habit (e.g. making coffee, brushing your teeth).

It Feels Like Too Much

Think of meditation as a light and playful thing to do – something that's a treat for your mind and body, and a rest for your brain. Then commit to doing one minute. If it feels good, keep going.

It Feels Repetitious

Regular practice is how we learn skills. Repeating the process lets our mind build the skill of meditation so it feels effortless and natural. You can also experiment with different types and durations until you find your best match.

You Fall Asleep

If you feel tired while meditating or worry about falling asleep, slightly open your eyes and gaze softly at a spot just in front of you.



Conclusion

With so many styles and methods of meditation available, you're sure to find one that suits you. Experiment with the different types until you find your favorite, then develop a regular habit that fits your lifestyle.

If you want to learn more, seek out a meditation teacher or group in your local area and attend some sessions. Not only will this deepen your practice, it can also provide extra support and a sense of community.

And remember, as with most things in life, consistency is key. Build the habit of regular meditation to enjoy its many benefits.

Whole Life Challenge

With just a nudge (and a little bit of effort), you can have the life you want – happy, healthy, active, energetic, and connected.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

The Whole Life Challenge is a 6-week health and wellness game that focuses on The 7 Daily Habits.

THE 7 DAILY HABITS

Throughout the Challenge, you'll practice the habits every day – Nutrition, Exercise, Mobility, Sleep, Hydration, Well-Being, and Reflection – with the ultimate goal of incorporating them into your life. They'll work together to help you become happier and healthier.

WANT TO PLAY?

You can register to play the next Whole Life Challenge here:

<https://www.wholelifechallenge.com/join-the-challenge/>

LET'S CONNECT

We use social media to share our popular blog posts, motivational quotes, and information on the upcoming Challenge!

Connect to get your daily dose of inspiration and motivation.



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