

## Easy ways to learn to meditate

People have used meditation for thousands of years in their quest for inner peace and harmony. All major religions use it in their teachings to help gain spiritual enlightenment. Meditation improves concentration and focus and brings about an inner awareness that we otherwise fail to see. It's also helpful in allowing us to overcome vices such as drugs, alcoholism and smoking and improve our health and lifestyle. Clinical studies have shown that meditation can help gain weight control, reduce migraines, insomnia, panic attacks, stress and anxiety to name a few conditions.

You don't have to be religious or have a lot of time to meditate. It doesn't matter what age or level you're at. There are a thousand different ways to meditate, but it all starts with relaxing the mind and emptying it of all conscious thought. The mind is then given a focus and all concentration is on that focus, and nothing else. Novices may be able to focus for a minute or two before the mind starts to wander. If possible, gently bringing it back to the focus will allow you to meditate a little longer. If it's hard to concentrate, then take a break and try again.

Meditation should be fun. Starting off with a few minutes a day is the key to not getting discouraged. Fitting in your 5 minute sessions should not be hard. Most beginners will look for a suitable daily practice time, usually in the mornings or before going to bed. Once you have decided on a time, the next step is finding a suitable place to meditate. While a separate room would be ideal, in the real world that's not always possible. A suitable place can be anywhere you are assured you will not be disturbed and the noise level is kept to a minimum. You can decorate this place with candles, cushions and a focus object such as a statuette or a plant. But this is not a necessity, only something that may help create a relaxing ambiance in which to meditate. The same goes for music. While calm and soothing music may help some to relax, for others, it can only serve to break concentration. If you do not have a quiet place at home, then it's easy to find a suitable place outdoors - maybe a park bench or a quiet gazebo? Or how about under a tree or on the grass? Make sure you wear loose and comfortable clothes, preferably in cotton or natural fibers.

There are a number of postures used in meditation and you may want to try all or some of them to find one which suits you best. The most common are the following:

**Seated posture:** You can sit on a stool, chair or bench, with your back upright and your head and neck in alignment. Your hands rest lightly on your legs/knees and your feet are firmly planted on the floor.

**Kneeling posture:** Kneel on the floor with your knees together and toes almost touching. Hands rest gently on your thighs. A cushion may be used to sit on, to ease the pressure.

**Sitting crossed legged:** This is also known as the lotus position. Sit on the floor and cross your legs, feet tucked under your legs. Hands rest on the knees.

**Lying down position:** Lie on your back with your feet slightly apart and your hands resting on the ground beside you, palms up. This position though, is not necessarily the best for beginners as there is a tendency to fall asleep as you meditate.

One of the easiest meditations is to count the breath you take. You need to be completely relaxed and focus on an object or point in front of you. Breathe normally for a few seconds. Then, as you continue to

breathe, focus your attention on each breath you inhale, and the one you exhale. Feel the air going into your body mouth, throat, chest and lungs and then out. Start with 5 minutes and try building it up to 20 minutes.

Meditation is simple and the enormous benefits which can be seen from day one, is what will encourage you to continue on your path to success.

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