

An Introduction to Meditation



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In our everyday lives, our minds are full of many things.

If we were to stop and listen, we might hear a string of unconnected thoughts: "What should I buy for dinner tonight?" "Was the boss happy with the project I turned in?" "There is that dental appointment, and oh, yes, the suit at the cleaners."

In an instant, our minds can travel around the world and back. We are often away from ourselves, off on another tangent a million miles away. The practice of returning to oneself is the practice of meditation.

Meditation's purpose differs depending on whom you ask:

- Self-purification
- Deep concentration
- Relaxation
- Self-improvement

Yet most would agree meditation is a way to reconnect to ourselves by learning to listen, observe and stay present. Through meditation, we become aware and mindful, relax ourselves and free ourselves from anxiety and fear. By concentrating on the present, we are free from reflecting too heavily on the past or stressing about the future.

Along with this deep state of relaxation, meditation also results in reduced stress, lower blood pressure, increased immune function, clarity of mind, better focus, improved memory, and a greater sense of calmness and well-being.

How to Meditate

There are numerous ways to meditate, such as sitting meditations, walking meditations, and closed-eye and open-eye meditations.

Some of the different types of meditations include:

- Using "mantras," which are chosen words that you repeat in your mind over and over again
- Identifying the experiences you are having while sitting
- Staring at objects
- Focusing on inhaling and exhaling
- Placing your mind at the center of your body, and allowing your thoughts to drift like autumn leaves falling toward the trunk of a tree
- Creating a mental image, such as your favorite place in nature, and picturing yourself there
- Mentally addressing each muscle in your body, which will cause you to progressively relax and slow down your body

Although all of these methods can be helpful, you will find that trying a variety will help you identify which practice works best for you.

Where to Meditate

It is important to have a special place where you always meditate. Create a meditation place that is quiet and projects an atmosphere of peace and calm, so that you will feel comfortable and will not have any interruptions. Some people like to listen to soft music or nature sounds, while others prefer silence.

So much to do, so little time to do it? If you take care of yourself, you will be better able to handle whatever comes your way.