

**Hannah:** Meditation is the art of inner listening. For some it is daily reflection as a method of contacting the divine source of all life. Today, we will introduce you to the most simple and universal practices of meditation, which come from the great spiritual tradition of mindfulness or of a real presence in our lives.

**August:** Dr. Jack Kornfield, in *Meditation for Beginners*, speaks of an ancient African tradition I found to be enlightening. In a small village in Africa, that he once visited birthdays are not established from conception or from birth, but instead from the moment when the thought of having a child arises in the mother's mind. For thousands of years, many cultures have given tremendous respect and time to the art of knowing one's own thoughts and feelings.

**Hannah:** We all sense as we take the time to quiet ourselves the possibility that our lives could be lived with greater compassion and wakefulness. To meditate is to support that inner knowing and allow it to come forth in our lives.

**August:** There are many types of concentrative meditation. Some use a candle flame, an image, or a sacred prayer, but all have a single focus serving to quiet the mind. To make the mind still, leaving the world behind. However, when finished with a concentrative meditation we sort of come out of our caves and back into the world where coursework, clinical work, and sometimes even professors re-introduce the complexities of life and life is again difficult for us.

**Hannah:** The art of mindfulness, which is what we'll work with today, uses the process of life itself as the subject, as the focus of the meditation practice. We'll use our breath and our bodies, the sounds and the feelings within us, our hearts and our minds, all of the stuff of our life as the place to focus. We'll begin simply, by coming here to this moment to become aware in the simplest way of what is in our hearts, our minds, and our bodies.

**August:**

1. We ask you to find a stable and comfortable posture, so you can become aware of your body at this point. Outside of this classroom, you may choose to squat on a cushion, sit on the floor, or simply sit in a chair. Today we'll stay seated in our chairs unless of course you wish to sit on the floor, with feet flat on the floor. We're attempting to achieve a sense of stability, comfort and ease. Let your body rest comfortably on the earth as if you are being supported by the chair in such a way that you can sit still for a number of minutes without the body being in conflict.
2. Sit up relatively straight without being rigid. Sit with dignity, if you will, half way between heaven and earth, in order to open yourself to be more aware of the human life that each of you have been given
3. Allow your shoulders to drop and your hands to rest easily anywhere that is comfortable. To meditate is not to fight with oneself, so you want to be able to sit really comfortably and with ease. If you become uncomfortable it's okay to move. After all, there's enough difficulty in life without adding more with meditation.
4. Once comfortable allow your eyes to close or if you choose leave them open slightly but downcast so you are not looking around the room.

**Hannah:** Now the purpose of beginning awareness is to cultivate a presence or mindfulness and compassion and to do that most simply we will connect with our own breath and our own bodies. In that sense we will start with an awareness of the present moment because the present is really all we have. For example if Love is important to you, the only place you can really love someone or something is in the present. Loving in the past is a memory, and loving in the future is fantasy. To be really alive, to really love someone or something, and actually any and every experience must take place in the present. To connect with ourselves is the essence of meditation. James Joyce wrote somewhere in one of his books that Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body. Many of us live disconnected from our bodies and breath and to stabilize, to connect ourselves with our lives again, we begin in the most universal way by becoming aware of our breath.

**August:** Having now found posture that is stable and comfortable with your eyes gently closed or relaxed and slightly open but not looking around the room, begin to pay attention to your body, allowing it to relax and you begin to notice sensations that are here as you pay attention. If you notice any obvious areas of tightness or discomfort you can soften them by gently contracting the muscles and relaxing them as you exhale the any tension. Let the eyes and face be soft. Let the shoulders drop and the hands rest easily. Let the belly be soft and the breath be natural.

Let yourself just rest for a moment, being aware of what you notice here as you feel your body as you rest on the earth.

As you sit quietly you will notice there are different thoughts and feelings and sounds that rise and pass, including my words. Let the sounds and thoughts arise and pass easily, like waves in the ocean. Let your mind and heart be soft, open, and at peace.

**Hannah:** Notice the waves as they come and go and simply be present with the feelings and the experiences that pass each moment as you sit quietly.

In this space of a kind and relaxed attention, let yourself become aware of the fact of your breathing. In the midst of the thoughts, sounds, and feelings that come and go you can sense your life breath. You can sense the feeling or the sensation of this rhythm of breath. It might be cooling in the nostrils or tingling in the back of the throat. You might feel the breath as the movement off the chest or the rise and fall of the belly. Let the breath have a natural rhythm and as you feel it, rest your attention in the breathing. Sense the breath carefully.

Focusing on the breath is our beginning. It is a way of connecting the mind, heart, and body here in the present. If helpful you can take one or two deeper breaths and feel what place in the body the breath is most apparent to you. And even if the breath is quite soft see if you can let your attention become careful matching the softness of the breath and notice the coolness or the tingling, the movement or the vibration, the expansion of the belly. Notice whatever you can of the breath and rest your attention in it.

**August:** As you feel each breath let there be a sense of relaxation both a presence and alertness and at the same time an easy resting in the sensation of breath.

**August:** After several breaths you will probably notice that your mind wanders. After several breaths, often a wave of thought or feelings or sounds will come and carry you. As soon as you notice this wave you can acknowledge it very simply, “there’s been thinking, imagining or sound” and release it. Let it go when you notice it, coming back gently and directly to feel the breath again.

**Hannah:** After a few breaths the wave of thought or sound may again carry your mind off. The mind will wander. As soon as you notice that the mind is wandering, gently let go and return back to feel the next breath when you are able. No judgment. No evaluation. It’s like training a puppy, “stay,” you put your mind on the breath and in a few breaths, like the puppy, the mind wanders away. You pick the puppy back up and put it down. “Stay.” Be gentle. There’s no reason to beat the puppy and no reason to judge yourself. It is the gentle training of learning to come back and be here, one breath after another, to center yourself in the breathing

**August:** Each time the heart wanders or is distracted bring it back to the breath quite gently, over and over again, learning just to relax and be awake and present here.

**Hannah:** If you have difficulty feeling the breath you may take one hand and place your palm on your belly so that you feel the movement of the belly in the flat palm of your hand. Resting your palm there you can feel the natural rhythm of the breath. As the breath opens and expands, let your hand and belly together then become the focus of breath for this time. The life breath, the universal breath, can calm us and center us. Return back to it again and again.

**August:** Now we will end the meditation with a soft ringing of the bells.

Let your eyes open. Bring your attention back to the room, here. This is the first beginning. It is a beginning of practice and like any art it takes time to practice meditation.

**Hannah:** Before beginning an open discussion on today’s meditation, I’d like to leave you with this thought. It has been said that all one needs to meditate is a cup of understanding, a barrel of love, and an ocean of patience. All that is necessary is a willingness to come back again and again to sense what is here, over and over.

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#### Common Questions:

1. **I feel tightness in my chest, tightness of breath. Is that okay?** People might feel the breath is being controlled as they pay attention to it. This is quite natural. When you notice it, all that is asked is that you simply relax. Try to let the breath move easily and even if there is still a feeling of tightness, try to let the tightness be there with an easy mind and an easy heart.

2. **My mind wanders a 100 times in 10 minutes, a 1000 times. Will this every stop? I mean am I doing it correctly?** It is natural that the mind wanders. After all, it has been doing it for however old you are. It's a natural part of what minds do. The art of meditation is to see the wandering of the mind, and in that moment, when you acknowledge it, just to come back again, to bring the heart back a thousand times, like the training of puppy.
5. **My breath gets so soft. Should I speed it up or make it deeper so I can feel it?** The idea is actually to refine our attention so we can listen more deeply and feel what's there naturally in our bodies. So if breath is soft, try to let your attention get to be equally careful to match the softness of the breath, to notice it's beginning, it's end, it's coolness, the space between. Become interested in the breath as it moves within the body.

After finding the breath we expand the field of awareness to include all the energies and sensations of the body. We may experience ease, tightness, pleasure, itching, and sometimes pain. All of these can be included with the same kind of attention and respect as we develop for the breath. We often feel what the business of our lives has kept us from noticing. You will at times feel tension in your shoulders, jaw, back, belly or some part of the body that is painful. Why? Why should we feel these things when trying to meditate and relax? What happens as you sit and become still is the areas of tension that we carry and accumulate in our lives become revealed to us. All of a sudden certain places can become warm or tight. Again, what's necessary is to allow that opening of the body to happen in the same field of mindfulness and in the same spirit of attention, recognizing that what happens is not a problem but a kind of healing.

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### **AN EIGHT-POINT PROGRAM BY EKNATH EASWARAN**

#### **1. MEDITATION**

The heart of this Eight-Point Program is meditation: half an hour every morning, as early as is convenient. Do not increase this period; if you want to meditate more, have half an hour in the evening also.

If you can, it is a good idea to set aside a room in your home to be used only for meditation and spiritual reading. After a while that room will become associated with meditation in your mind, so that simply entering it will have a calming effect. If you cannot spare a room, have a particular corner. Whichever you choose, keep your meditation place clean, well ventilated, and reasonably austere.

Sit in a straight-backed chair or on the floor and gently close your eyes. If you sit on the floor, you may need to support your back lightly against a wall. You should be comfortable enough to forget your body, but not so comfortable that you become drowsy.

Whatever position you choose, be sure to keep your head, neck, and spinal column erect in a straight line. As concentration deepens, the nervous system relaxes and you may begin to fall asleep. It is important to resist this tendency right from the beginning, by drawing yourself up and away from your back support until the wave of sleep has passed.

Once you have closed your eyes, begin to go slowly, in your mind, through a passage from the scriptures or the great mystics which you have memorized for use in meditation. I usually recommend the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi to begin with:

*Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love;  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
It is in dying [to self] that we are born to eternal life.*

While you are meditating, do not follow any association of ideas or try to think about the passage. If you are giving your attention to each word, the meaning cannot help sinking in. When distractions come, do not resist them, but give

more attention to the words of the passage. If your mind strays from the passage entirely, bring it back gently to the beginning and start again.

When you reach the end of the passage, you may use it again as necessary to complete your period of meditation until you have memorized others. It is helpful to have a wide variety of passages for meditation, drawn from the world's major traditions. Each passage should be positive and practical, drawn from a major scripture or from a mystic of the highest stature. A beautiful selection from the world's religions can be found in "God Makes the Rivers to Flow, Passages for Meditation", selected by Eknath Easwaran (Nilgiri Press, 1982).

The secret of meditation is simple: we become what we meditate on. When you use the Prayer of St. Francis every day in meditation, you are driving the words deep into your consciousness. Eventually they become an integral part of your personality, which means that they will be an active force in your life, sowing good will in your thoughts, your relationships, and in all your actions.

## 2 REPITITION OF THE MANTRAM

A mantram, or Holy Name, is a powerful spiritual formula which, when repeated silently in the mind, has the capacity to transform consciousness. There is nothing magical about this. It is simply a matter of practice, as all of us can verify for ourselves.

Every religious tradition has a mantram, often more than one. For Christians the name of Jesus itself is a powerful mantram; Catholics also use *Hail Mary* or *Ave Maria*. Jews may use *Barukh attah Adonai*, 'Blessed art thou, O Lord,' or the Hasidic formula *Ribono shel olam*, 'Lord of the universe.' Muslims repeat the name of *Allah* or *Allahu akbar*, 'God is great.' Probably the oldest Buddhist mantram is *Om mani padme hum*, referring to the 'jewel in the lotus heart.' In Hinduism, among many choices, I recommend *Rama*, which was Mahatma Gandhi's mantram.

Select one of these mantrams that appeals to you deeply. Then, once you have chosen, do not change your mantram.

Otherwise, as the nineteenth-century Indian mystic Sri Ramakrishna puts it, you will be like a person digging shallow wells in many places; you will never go deep enough to find water.

Repeat your mantram silently whenever you get the chance: while walking, while waiting, while doing mechanical chores like washing dishes, and especially when you are falling asleep. You will find that this is not mindless repetition. The mantram will help to keep you relaxed and alert during the day, and when you can fall asleep in it, it will go on working for you throughout the night as well.

Whenever you are angry or afraid, nervous or worried or resentful, repeat the mantram until the agitation subsides. The mantram works to steady the mind, and all these emotions are power running against you which the mantram can harness and put to work.

## 3. SLOWING DOWN

Hurry makes for tension, insecurity, inefficiency, and superficial living. It also makes for illness and heart disease. To guard against hurrying through the day, start the day early and simplify your life so that you do not try to fill your time with more than you can do. When you find yourself beginning to speed up, repeat the Holy Name to help slow you down.

It is important here not to confuse slowness with sloth, which breeds carelessness, procrastination, and general inefficiency. In slowing down we should attend meticulously to details, giving our very best even to the smallest undertaking.

## 4 ONE-POINTEDNESS

Doing more than one thing at a time divides attention and fragments consciousness. When you read and eat at the same time, for example, part of your mind is on what you are reading and part on what you are eating; you are not getting the most from either activity. Similarly, when talking with someone, give that person your full attention. These are little things, but taken together they help to unify consciousness and deepen concentration.

Everything you do should be worthy of your full attention. When the mind is one-pointed it will be secure, free from tension, and capable of the concentration that is the mark of genius in any field.

## 5. TRAINING THE SENSES

In the food we eat, the books and magazines we read, the movies we see, all of us are subject to the dictatorship of rigid likes and dislikes. To free ourselves from this conditioning, we need to learn to change our likes and dislikes freely when it is in the best interests of those around us or ourselves. We should choose what we eat by what our body needs, for example, rather than by what the taste buds demand. Similarly, the mind can be said to eat too – through the senses. We need to be very discriminating in what we read and what we go to see for entertainment, for we become in part what our senses take in.

## 6. PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Dwelling on ourselves builds a wall between ourselves and others. Those who keep thinking about their needs, their wants, their plans, their ideas cannot help becoming lonely and insecure. The simple but effective technique I

recommend is to learn to put other people first – beginning within the circle of your family and friends, where there is already a basis of love on which to build. When husband and wife try to put each other first, for example, they are not only moving closer to each other, they are also removing the barriers of their ego-prison, which deepens their relationships with everyone else as well.

## 7. SPIRITUAL READING

Our culture is so immersed in what the mass media offer that it is very helpful to balance our outlook by giving half an hour or so each day to spiritual reading – something positive, practical, and inspiring, which reminds us that the spark of divinity is in all of us and can be released in our own lives by meditation, prayer, and daily practice. Just before bedtime is a particularly good time for this kind of reading, because the thoughts you fall asleep in will be with you throughout the night.

## 8. SPIRITUAL ASSOCIATION

When we try to change our life, we need the support of others with the same goal. If you have friends who are meditating along the lines suggested here, you can get together regularly to share a meal, meditate, and perhaps read and discuss your spiritual reading. Share your times of entertainment too; relaxation is an important part of spiritual living. This eightfold program, if it is followed sincerely and systematically, begins to transform personality almost immediately, leading to profoundly beneficial changes which spread to those around us.

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### A BASIC MEDITATION EXERCISE

1. Sit it with an alert and relaxed body posture so that you feel relatively comfortable without moving. (You can sit either in a straight-backed chair with your feet flat on the floor or on a thick, firm cushion three to six inches off the floor.)
2. Keep your back, neck, and head vertically aligned, relax your shoulders, and find a comfortable place for your hands (usually on your knees).
3. Bring you attention to your breathing. Observe the breath as it flows in and out. Give full attention to the feeling of the breath as it comes in and goes out. Whenever you find that your attention has moved elsewhere, just note it and let go and gently escort your attention back to the breath, back to the rising and falling of your own belly.
4. When you can maintain some continuity of attention on the breath, try expanding the field of your awareness “around” your breath and around your belly to include a sense of your body as a whole.
6. Maintain this awareness of the body sitting and breathing, and, when the mind wanders, bring it back to sitting and breathing.

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### Suggested Steps to Effective Meditation & Prayer

- 1) Be still mentally. By act of "will," put duties and problems out of your mind. "Be still and know that I am God," is the primary prerequisite to effective meditation and prayer.
- 2) Affirm God's presence. Meditate upon God's love and guidance, and address Him in loving adoration.
- 3) Confidently ask God's help. Ask Him to take all fear, tension, selfishness and worry from you, that you may have an open, unbiased mind and rightly meet the problems of today.
- 4) Thank Him specifically for each blessing, His presence today, and always for His love.
- 5) Ask that weaknesses be removed and forgiven. Name these weaknesses specifically, such as: jealousy about (of)..., worry over (about)..., resentment of (about)..., self-will in such-and-such a situation today....
- 6) Confidently ask God to help you understand and completely surrender your will to His. Wait, quietly, for a moment that you may be ready to receive His directions.
- 7) Ask God to use you as His servant, and direct you in carrying out His will. Wait, quietly and patiently, for directions. He will, in His own time, and in the best way, direct you and answer your prayers. Jot down any thought that comes, however silly-seeming; it may come clear later as a "nudge," or insight into His directing you.
- 8) Pray and wait. The answer will come when you are ready to receive it - "Now, later or not ever!" When answers simply do not come, help yourself with questions honestly answered. "God, what would You have me do, where would You have me go, what would You have me say and to whom?" "Is something blocking me from God (or from another person)?" Do you have a wrong to right? Something to be thankful for? Something to pray about? Someone to pray for? A neglected duty? Someone needing help? An experience advantage or

new thought to share with someone in need of encouragement? Anything in spiritual literature, a daily reflections book or a prayer book that might give me an answer for today?

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### **A Suggested Program for Meditation**

Here are step-by-step directions that can help you find the way

At a recent AA meeting, we discussed the Eleventh Step, and one of the questions raised was "How do I meditate? What do I do?" I would like to propose one answer to the question. It is a simple, easy plan of meditation. Here it is:

#### **Preparation for Meditation**

For about ten or fifteen minutes, read some material that deals with the habit, virtue, or principle that you want to meditate on. This proposal rests on the assumption that you want something to "chew" on during the time of deliberation. Food is as necessary for the mind as for the body. Or, as they sometimes say, "You always have a better chance of getting something out of your head if you first put something in."

#### **Meditation**

1. Turn your mind to God by:

a. Expressing belief in His presence.

God is keeping the booze away from you today, so He must be nearby. The Big Book was written to help you find a God who will solve your alcoholism. In fact, the first four chapters of that book clearly demonstrate that God can be found if He is sought. And the Eleventh Step suggests that an excellent place to find Him is in meditation.

b. Thanking God for blessings received.

An old-timer used to say, "Think and thank. If you're really grateful, you'll never get drunk." Abraham Lincoln claimed, "Most people can be just about as happy as they want to be." You can get a start in happiness by counting your blessings - not just the big ones, like a new house or a narrow escape from death, but the so-called little ones that you take for granted, like good health. You can be sure you're grateful when you want to express your gratitude by helping other alcoholics.

c. Asking God to help you to meditate.

An AA saying suggests that you "Let Go and Let God." It means that God can and will do something for you. All He needs is your permission.

Your permission is God's commission. There is nothing more natural than for a child to ask its parent for help. So be yourself and act childlike.

2. Apply your mind to the consideration of the desired habit, principle, or virtue by:

a. Dwelling for a few minutes on some passages of the preparatory reading that are pertinent to its necessity, advantages, importance, desirability, and effect on your life.

b. Calling to mind some instances when you practiced the subject of your meditation.

c. Looking back on some examples of the desired trait as practiced by a person you highly esteem.

This individual may be either a real person or a character in a novel, play, movie, or TV show. Many claim that good example is highly contagious and that imitation is the first offspring of admiration.

3. Make a decision to practice the desired habit, principle, or virtue by:

a. Marshaling the reasons that drive home the necessity for making the habit, principle, or virtue part and parcel of your spiritual life.

b. Asking God to help you practice the subject of meditation.

c. Making a resolution to practice the habit, principle, or virtue.

The resolution should be present, particular, and efficacious. The resolution is present when there is a determination to enforce it on the same day that it is made. The resolution is particular when it is concentrated or focused on a single habit, virtue, or principle, like self-restraint, and not spread thin, like a general decision to be good. Finally, the resolution or decision should be efficacious or have clout. That is, there should be a strong determination to practice the habit, principle, or virtue at specific times during the day. A meditation without a resolution is good, but a meditation with a resolution is better.

4. Follow up.

Successful men and women in any walk of life have the knack of closely watching themselves and their business. And the business of meditation is no exception. The Big Book notes that a "business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke." Hence the need for a regular or daily check on the products of meditation. AA even suggests that "when we retire at night, we constructively review our day." Did you practice the habit, virtue, or principle on every occasion visualized in meditation? In what instances did you fail to carry out your resolution? Did you backslide into the contrary of your good resolution? What conditions, persons, or circumstances, helped or hindered the practice of your resolution? Determine to take corrective measures for tomorrow.

After making your survey, thank God for progress - any progress. Even if you practiced the habit only once, that's progress.

*Anonymous, California*

AA Grapevine, April 1974

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### A GUIDED IMAGERY MEDITATION

Guided imagery is a very easy thing to do. At first, you may need quiet and seclusion. But those who use it often are able to practice it no matter where they are or what they are doing. Many have been amazed at the insights they've gained by doing this exercise. I recommend it to those who are searching for some form of meditation, either in its entirety or using the parts that seem best for you. I find it most beneficial when done within the first few minutes of waking up in the morning, before the mental chatter begins, although it can be done at any time. - Barefoot Bill

Sit someplace comfortable, with both feet flat on the floor and uncrossed. Keep your back straight and do not lean back in the chair. If this is not comfortable for you, sit in whatever position IS comfortable for you. Rest your hands comfortably on your lap with both palms facing up. With each hand, touch the tip of the thumb with the tip of the forefinger.

Now close your eyes. Relax and feel at peace, with no worries, no fears and no concerns. Inhale deeply and gently through your nose, filling the lungs, and then the stomach like a balloon, almost to the point where it hurts. Then exhale slowly through your mouth, pushing out the air gently and deeply with your stomach muscles, again, almost to the point where it hurts. Repeat this procedure four or five times.

Now breath naturally, in an unforced way, focusing your attention on the rhythmic flow of your breathing for 30 seconds or more. Say silently to yourself, "I am relaxed." Then count slowly from ten to zero, feeling your body become more and more at ease with each number passing. Notice your back and shoulder muscles loosen, and even notice your butt sinking into the seat. Try to clear your mind of past and future thought, just be here and now in the moment. Now go a little deeper and focus your attention on your heartbeat for 30 seconds or more. Say silently to yourself, "I am VERY relaxed, physically and mentally."

If at any time you find yourself distracted from the meditation, simply and unemotionally bring yourself back to the silence. If thoughts come into your mind, simply observe them as if you were watching a cloud in the sky floating by, looking at these thoughts as if you were a distant observer, uninterested and uninvolved.

#### Image #1

Think of a place where you feel very comfortable, safe and serene. Perhaps it's by the ocean, or a lake or river, a sunny meadow, a mountaintop, watching a beautiful sunset from a boat; perhaps it's in a vacation home, a childhood getaway spot, a fondly remembered room, or even an imagined setting. Visualize yourself at that place. No one is with you. You feel warm and secure in these surroundings. It's one of your favorite places. Take it all in for 30 seconds or more. Notice the sights, the sounds and the smells.

Now you're becoming aware that there is another presence with you. A wonderfully loving and non-threatening presence that you somehow understand is there to be of service to you. Perhaps it's the person you feel the most loved by, or maybe its God, or Jesus, or Buddha, or Moses, or a favorite animal in nature, or maybe even a special relative or friend who has passed away. Choose whatever form you wish that presence to take. Smile at them, even hold them if you wish, let them know that they are special to you. Spend some time just being with them for 30 seconds or more. Now think about a problem that disturbs you, or a difficult decision you need to make. Ask this presence for guidance in dealing with it. If you have no pressing issue, simply ask them if they have some wisdom to pass along to you. Then quietly listen for answers. Do this until the interaction begins to fade.

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#### THE ART OF MEDITATION

One -, Five - & 10-Minute Solutions: Quick escapes to focus your mind and soothe away stress.

By LINDA SHELTON

1 min. - Quiet your mind to gather momentary calm. Sit with your eyes closed; inhale for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts.

5 min. - Before sleeping, slow and deepen your breathing as you visualize your body relaxing from head to toe.

10 min. - Take a mindful walk: Meander and stroll, bringing all of your attention to the beauty of your surroundings.

If you're searching for a cure for stress and anxiety, look no further than your own mind. The calming mental practice of meditation is a powerful tool; practiced regularly, it can induce a state of awareness, serenity and well-being.

Meditation is more than a mental vacation; it's a proven antidote to daily tension. When you extricate yourself from what is happening externally by turning your complete attention inward-even for a few minutes-you become more attuned to your thoughts, which in turn brings clarity, energy and vitality to your entire being.

The following simple brain games will enable you to flex your mental muscles, improve your concentration and revive your spirit. This is what total fitness is all about.

If you've never meditated before, here are tips to get you started:

Find a place you can be comfortable, either sitting or lying down. Experiment to see what works best.

Avoid distractions. Turn off the TV and take the phone off the hook.

Close your eyes.

Breathe slowly, expanding your rib cage, allowing the air to fill your belly: don't breathe shallowly from your chest.

Try to stop thinking. If thoughts do come up - as they likely will - observe them without getting involved. Instead, concentrate on your breathing, a visual image or a mantra.

### 10-minute meditation

Try this easy-to-do breathing practice to help you find a conscious peace of mind.

First, get comfortable, either seated or lying down, and close your eyes. As you begin to breathe rhythmically, imagine your body relaxing. Inhale fresh, clean oxygen; exhale negativity and tension out. With each breath, imagine your entire body letting go. If you have trouble staying centered, picture a beautiful place such as a beach to focus your mind. Imagine the smell of the air and water, feel the warmth of the sun and the sand around your body. Now begin with your feet: Clench your toes and release them a few times, then let them relax. Move up your body in the same fashion - tense and release your legs, hips, hands, arms, spine, chest and neck. Let the tension melt from between your eyes and soften your mouth. If you notice any particular knots of tension, "breathe" into these spots as you exhale, allowing them to unwind. Once your body is completely relaxed, you'll notice it's easier to quiet the mental chatter that comes with constant stimuli and tension. Rouse yourself out of this space slowly: it's a place you'll want to return to again and again.

### less than 10:

#### one-minute respites and five-minute breaks

Use these easy techniques to get a quick energy boost, focus your mind and release stress.

Say "om": Chant a mantra (such as "om" or "God" or another repetitive word or phrase like "love" or "peace") to quiet your mind and get you focused in the zone.

Breathe easy: Inhale and exhale through your nose, creating a rhythmic pattern that lengthens progressively. Inhale for four counts, exhale for four counts; then inhale for five counts, exhale for five counts, and so on.

Move and repeat: Along with your breathing, repetitive movement like walking, jogging, swimming or yoga can be used to induce a meditative state.

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### Heart Healing Meditation

by Doreen Virtue, Ph.D.

Here is a powerful healing meditation to help you lose your fears about love and to cleanse your heart chakra. You may want to tape-record this meditation with soft background music, so you can easily listen to it once or twice a day.

1. With your eyes closed, and in a comfortable position, take two or three very deep, cleansing breaths.
2. Visualize a beautiful cloud of emerald green light surrounding you. As you breathe in, you take this healing energy into your lungs, your cells, and your heart. Concentrate on your heart a moment, as you allow the emerald-green light to cleanse away any negativity that may have caused you to feel pain.
3. With a deep breath, be willing to allow the light to carry away any fears you may have about love. Be willing to release the fear of feeling love. You need do nothing else except breathe and hold the intention to heal yourself of the fear of love. Just be willing to be healed, and God and the angels will do everything else. Take another deep breath, as you become willing to release the fear of being loved, including the fear that if you are loved, you could be manipulated, tricked, used, abandoned, rejected, persecuted, or hurt. With another deep breath, allow all of these fears from any lifetime to be lifted and carried away.



4. Now, allow the light to cleanse you of any fears you may have about giving love. With a deep breath, be willing to release the fear that if you give love, you could be controlled, abused, deceived, betrayed, maimed, or hurt in any way. Allow all of these fears to be lifted completely, and feel your heart expanding to its natural loving state.

5. Allow yourself to release any old unforgiveness you may be harboring toward those who seem to have hurt you in a love relationship. Become willing to release unforgiveness toward your mother ... toward your father ... toward other parental figures ... toward your siblings ... toward your childhood friends ... toward your adolescent friends ... toward your first love ... toward those whom you dated and loved ... toward anyone you lived with or married.... Allow all of your hurts and disappointments associated with love to be cleansed and fully carried away. You don't want the hurt, you don't need it, and with another deep breath, it is lifted to the light where it is transmuted and purified. Only the lessons remain, and the pure essence of love contained within each relationship, since that is the only thing that was ever eternal and real within each of your relationships.

6. Now, with another deep breath, allow the light to cleanse you completely. Be willing to release any unforgiveness you may hold toward yourself connected to love. Be willing to forgive yourself for betraying yourself, for ignoring your intuition, or for not looking out for your highest interests. Give yourself a hug, either in your mind or with your arms. Reassure your inner self that you will never again engage in self-betrayal.

7. You now commit to following your intuition and discernment, so you could never be or stay in any relationship that would hurt you. Fully release the unforgiveness for any mistakes that you think you may have made in any relationship, including your relationship with yourself. And with another very deep cleansing breath, feel yourself healed, whole, and ready to enjoy the love that is the truth about who you really are.

As we lose the fear of love, we become more aware of the rich range of feelings that are part of our human experience.

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### **The Perfect Breath**

#### **Purpose:**

A partial list of benefits to practicing the Perfect Breath Technique on a regular basis includes enhanced ability to effectively produce visualization and mental imagery; better oxygen circulation; improved digestion; increased energy; general relaxation; improved sleep; decreased physical and emotional pain; reduced fear and anger; a reduced effort of the heart; lengthening of life; and a pathway to feeling and using the Universal Energy.

#### **Application:**

The Perfect Breath Technique is used to start the Basic Centering Technique (see below) and whenever you need to relax.

#### **Procedure:**

Breathe deeply and slowly, preferably through your nose, from the diaphragm (just above the stomach), trying to expand this area first as you inhale. You want to imagine filling your stomach with air as if you were blowing up a balloon. After your diaphragm is full, begin filling your chest with a smooth rolling motion, remembering not to release the air in your diaphragm as your lungs fill. If it helps, place one hand on your stomach and the other of your chest while you breathe. As you breathe in, your bottom hand should rise first. When you fill your lungs by "rolling" more air into your chest, your other hand will rise as well. Fill both your diaphragm and your lungs before exhaling through your mouth.

#### **How it works:**

Breathing deeply from the diaphragm first, allows you to take in much more air than breathing through the chest only. This allows you to relax more deeply than a breath into the lungs alone can. Extra air helps you remove stress and "bad" air while life-giving oxygen cleanses your entire body. Concentrating on breathing also helps block out distractions around you.

#### **Additional comments:**

Whenever you think of it, take a "Perfect Breathe" during the day. It is one of the healthiest things you can do for yourself. Program some triggers, such as a ringing phone, to remind you to take this breath. And do it any time you feel the first signs of stress.

### **The Basic Centering Technique**

#### **Purpose:**

To quickly get to a level where you are one with the Universal Energy, for any benefit you desire.

#### Application:

Practice the Basic Centering Technique until you feel a very deep level of relaxation and a sense of oneness with the Universe (the concept of “oneness with the Universe” sounds like quite an accomplishment, but if it helps, think of it as an all-convincing sense of calm). After that, use the Basic Centering Technique to enter a centered state before doing any other meditation technique.

#### Procedure:

While you are seated with your feet flat on the ground, touch the thumbs and the same forefingers of each hand together lightly, palms comfortably toward your face. If a position similar to this is more comfortable, feel free to use it. Take a full, deep breath through your mouth and exhale to release excess tension. Now breathe deeply through your nose (you can use your mouth if necessary), first filling your diaphragm with air (see the Perfect Breath Technique above) and then your upper lungs by “rolling” the air in to a silent count of three. Hold your breath for a count of one and release it through your mouth (or your nose, if you prefer) to a count of three. Repeat the process to a count of five, holding for a count of two and releasing to a count of five. Take a third slow deep breath to a count of seven, hold for a count of three and release it to a count of seven. After this (when you have practiced enough) you will be centered.

Whenever you desire to leave this centered state, tell yourself mentally that you will count from one to five and open your eyes at the count of five, feeling alive, alert, refreshed, and happy. Then count yourself out of this state from one to five.

#### How it works:

By touching your fingers together and facing your palms up, you are creating a closed field of energy that recycles itself. Touching your fingers together also triggers your body and mind, reminding your entire system to relax and preparing you for what you are going to do. Three deep rolling breaths relaxes you enough that you’ll eventually be able to center yourself on command. Besides being a very relaxing technique by itself, taking three breaths also works as a trigger, conditioning your body and mind to immediately relax and enter your level of centeredness. You will be trained to naturally respond to the trigger of the deep breaths by “remembering” the feeling you get when centered. You will begin to reproduce that feeling as soon as you take the first breath.

#### Additional comments:

If you still feel tension after the third breath, keep breathing deeply until you are relaxed. If you ever feel dizzy, stop, wait a few minutes, and try again. It is natural to feel a bit unusual when you start these techniques, but these feelings will subside with practice. After you get a feel for the counting, try not to count but to estimate the time instead. This may help you get centered more easily. After counting yourself out of the centered state from one to five, relax and enjoy what you feel for a few moments before moving around.

Use this “Basic Centering Technique” and think about God. Do not try to force anything to happen, but instead relax and repeat the phrase, “God is perfect, the Universe is perfect, everything makes sense,” over and over, and wait to feel something more peaceful than you felt before. Try to feel the presence of God WITHIN you. This feeling will be one of calm and fearlessness, with a sense of knowing that everything is where it should be for you and everyone else. With practice, you will be able to experience this more easily and will not forget the feeling.

—from “Relax, You’re Already Perfect” by Bruce Schneider

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### **MEDITATIONS FOR BUSY PEOPLE**

When: Every night, last thing before going to sleep. First thing in the morning.

Duration: 4-5 minutes.

#### Step 1: Imagine a Halo

“Sit on your bed and imagine an aura around your body, just six inches away from your body, the same shape as the body...surrounding you, protecting you. It will become a shield. Still feeling this, go to sleep, fall into sleep imagining that aura like a blanket around you, which protects you from any tension entering from outside, from any thought entering you from outside. No outside vibration can enter you. You fall asleep but that imagination will enter the unconscious and becomes a tremendous force and energy.

#### Step 2: In the Morning...

“In the morning, the moment you feel that now sleep is gone, don’t open your eyes: just feel your aura all over the body protecting you. Do it for four to five minutes and then get up.

Step 3: All the Time...

“Taking your bath, having tea, go on remembering this aura energy around your body. Any other time during the day when you remember — sitting in a car or train or in the office doing nothing — just relax into it again.

“This [exhaustion] happens to many people because we don’t know how to protect ourselves. Others are not only there but broadcasting their being continuously in subtle vibrations. Somebody passes by and throws something [energy] at you: if you are receptive and you don’t have a protective aura...and meditation makes one very receptive.

“So if you are alone, it is good; when you are surrounded by meditative people, very good. But when you are in the world, the marketplace and people are not meditative but very tense and anxious, you start getting that energy. After mediation one has to create a protective aura. Sometimes it happens automatically, sometimes it doesn’t. If it is not happening automatically to you, you have to work for it. It will be coming within three months. Anytime between three weeks and three months, you will start feeling very powerful.”

Dance Your Way to God

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### **The Bath Meditation**

Close your eyes to block as much external stimulation as you can. Sit comfortably in your chair. The straighter your spine is, the better. As you try to find the best position to be comfortable, it is OK to experiment. If you start out one way, and then decide in a few minutes that you are not really comfortable, just move.

Most relaxation is based upon breathing. Become aware of your breathing. Take several long, slow, deep breaths, releasing the breath slowly as well. Breathe in at your own pace, feel the energy of your breathing, and breathe out. Do this several times, focusing on feeling and observing only your breath. Search your body for areas of tension or tightness, and relax those muscles. With each breath in, imagine light, love, peace and acceptance. With each breath out, release tension, pain, frustration, fear and darkness. Take the time you need to relax.

Then, imagine that you are sitting beside a warm, welcoming bath. Steam rises from the water, enveloping you in an inviting swirl. You can feel the warmth of the steam. You can smell the special fragrance of this special bath. As you breathe deeply, you can feel the steam entering your sinuses. You can see the mist, and the beauty of the bath environment. You can hear the safe sounds of the water and the environment it is in. Don’t see yourself at the water’s edge. Be at the water’s edge. Enter your visual picture so that you are experiencing the event, rather than just watching yourself experience the event. You are alone and you are safe. The water cannot harm you. The water is no ordinary liquid. It is the water of all resolution, and it has the power to dissolve all your cares, your worries, and your rough edges.

As you sit there beside the bath, feel what aspects of your life and mind you would wish the waters to cleanse. Perhaps it is a difficult or stubborn thought pattern. Perhaps you are burdened by too many obligations. Perhaps you feel hurt from difficult interactions with others. Let yourself dwell for just a moment on all that encumbers you. Then, when you are ready, let yourself step down into the waiting waters.

Feel the warm liquid envelop you and hold you. The temperature is perfect. Let yourself become comfortable, sitting or floating, and imagine the heat and the moisture sinking deep into your being, gently melting all rigid resistance and concern.

You may wish to ask the waters to return you to a healthy, balanced state, no longer over-committed and over-involved in the details of your particular dramas. You may ask the effects of the bath to stay with you, providing you with an ongoing resource that gives you strength, power, and direction to resolve some of your problems. Feel yourself being purified and restored back to your true self. Feel the freedom, the peace, the acceptance. Know that you are healing. Notice how you feel, the degree of feeling clearer or released.

Climb out of the bath and allow yourself to be wrapped in a large comfortable towel, swaddled in its soft folds. Know that this towel is a protection for you, and that this bath can be a haven, to return to whenever you need to be held and renewed.

Pamela Pettinati

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### **Meditation Instructions** **How to Meditate by Yourself**

**Why establish a daily sitting practice?**

Is there suffering in your life? A sense of incompleteness or dissatisfaction? Through meditation practice and study of the Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha), you can reduce confusion and develop inner calm. The result is the ability to

become more fully present with each moment of daily life and to develop a compassionate understanding of how we relate to ourselves and others.

### Part I: How to establish a daily sitting practice

Before you sit: As with all things, start where you are. You have everything you need right now. First, decide to sit each day. Next, plan the time, place and duration for your sitting meditation.

Choose a time: Morning is often best because the mind is calmer than it is later in the day. However, the best time is the time that you can commit to on a regular basis. If one longer sit isn't possible, try two shorter ones.

Choose a space: There is no perfect place. If possible, dedicate a space exclusively to your daily sitting. Choose a relatively quiet space where you can leave your cushion (or chair) so that it is always there to return to. You may want to create an altar with a candle, inspiring photos or statues. These are not necessary, but are beneficial if they help to motivate you.

Choose a duration: As long as is comfortable, plus 5 minutes. This is a general guide, not a rule. Even fifteen or twenty minutes will seem an eternity in the beginning, but that impression will change with time. If you sit each day, you will experience noticeable benefits (e.g., less reactivity, more calm) and be able to increase your sitting time.

Every time you sit: Set your intention: It is helpful to recall at the start of each sitting meditation why you are doing it. Remember that your purpose, to become more open and free, will benefit you and those around you.

Set your posture: Alertness is one of the two essential ingredients in every meditation. Sit on a chair, cushion, or kneeling bench as straight and tall as possible. In the beginning, sitting against a wall can help you learn what a straight back feels like. Around this straight-back position, let the rest of your skeleton and muscles hang freely. Let the hands rest comfortably on your knees or lap. Let the eyes close, bringing the attention inward.

Relax deeply: Openness is the second essential ingredient in every meditation. Once you feel your spine is erect, let everything else relax, hang loose, and soften. Breathing through the nose, loosen the face, neck, hands, and stomach area. You may want to begin at the scalp and move your attention slowly downward, methodically relaxing and softening each part of the body. Please don't skip the step of relaxing/letting go! Consciously releasing body tension will help you open to whatever arises during your meditation.

Choose an object of meditation: Once you've established this alert and open posture, you are ready to decide where you'll place your attention. Useful objects for beginners are:

- \*The breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils.
- \*Other body changes during breathing, e.g., the rise and fall of the chest.
- \*Sounds as they arise from within the body or outside of it.
- \*Other body sensations as they arise.

Whatever object you select, stay with it for at least ten breaths. Even with this effort, your mind will insist on going to its usual places. Make note of this when it happens, and gently lead your attention back to the chosen object of meditation. Your intention and persistence are the key ingredients for cultivating awareness, not the number of times your mind wanders. As often as you need to, check yourself -- "Alert and erect? Relaxed and open?" - and begin again.

The classical objects of meditation: The four objects of meditation that the Buddha outlined in the Satipatthana Sutta are called the four foundations of mindfulness or the four frameworks for cultivating mindfulness. They are:

- 1) Mindfulness of the body (starting with breath).
- 2) Mindfulness of feeling (there are 3 - pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral).
- 3) Mindfulness of mental objects (thoughts and emotions).
- 4) Mindfulness of all dhammas (all phenomena), starting with the 5 hindrances and the 7 factors of enlightenment and proceeding to all the sense and thought experiences that make up human life.

If you are interested in learning more about the four foundations of mindfulness, read *Breath by Breath* by Larry Rosenberg, or *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by Nyanaponika Thera.

A different object of meditation: Metta practice, also called loving-kindness meditation, cultivates both compassion and concentration. The practice uses specific phrases to send loving and kind wishes to (a) yourself, (b) your parents, (c) your teachers or mentors, (d) your family, (e) your friends, (f) neutral persons, (g) difficult persons (or enemies), and (h) to all beings everywhere, without exception. The phrases might be:

May I be filled with loving-kindness  
 May I be safe from harm  
 May I be well  
 May I be peaceful and at ease  
 May I be happy  
 May my parents be filled with loving-kindness  
 May they be safe from harm...(etc.)

To learn more about metta meditation, read *Loving-kindness* by Sharon Salzberg.

Concentration and mindfulness: It will be important as you practice to recognize and balance the qualities of concentration and mindfulness. Concentration is the ability to gather your attention into one place. Mindfulness is pure moment-by-moment noticing. Without some concentration, mindfulness is difficult to sustain. Without mindfulness, concentration bears no fruit. In meditation practice, both are developed gradually.

## Part II: Common issues for meditators

Monkey mind: At first, you may be surprised at how active and uncontrolled your mind is. Don't worry - you are discovering the truth about your current state of mind. Accept and "sit with" whatever comes up. Don't try to change it by force, use patience. Sit up, relax, and gently bring your attention back again and again to the object of your meditation.

It is common to mistake thinking for meditating. It takes practice to distinguish pleasant, dreamy thoughts from having your attention connected to the changing experience of this moment. Staying focused on the body/breath is a good way to stay grounded in the present.

The classical five hindrances to practice are:

- \* Grasping: wanting more (or something different) from what's present right now.
- \* Aversion: fear, anger, any form of pushing away.
- \* Restlessness: jumpy energy, agitation.
- \* Sloth and torpor: sleepy, sinking states of mind and body.
- \* Doubt: a mind-trap that says, "it's no use, this will never work, maybe there's an easier way".

Meditators experience all of these states. During sitting practice, if you notice one of the hindrances arising, it is useful to name it silently to yourself, e.g., "grasping, grasping" or "sleepy, sleepy". If it is strong, try not to pull away from the difficult energy, but bring all of your attention to it. Let yourself experience it fully through the sensations in your body, neither getting lost in it nor pushing it away. Watch what happens without expectations, and when it dissipates, return to the primary focus of your meditation.

## Part III: Sustaining a practice

Here are just a few helpful hints for sustaining your sitting practice:

- \* Sit every day, even if it's for a short period.\* A few times during each day, establish contact with your body and breath.
- \* Remember that everyone wants to be happy, just like you.
- \* Practice regularly with a group or a friend.
- \* If you miss a day, a week, or a month - simply begin again.
- \* If you need guidance, ask for help from an experienced meditator or teacher.

You are traveling a path that has led to clarity and peace for many people over thousands of years. May their efforts support and inspire you.

**L.J. Kelly**, April 2001. Insight Meditation Community of Washington, [www.imcw.org](http://www.imcw.org)

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## Meditation 24X7

There is no doubt that meditating for 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening is extremely beneficial, but what about the other 23 hours and 20 minutes? All meditative techniques have the potential of putting you in the position of being the Witness of your mind's thoughts, your bodily sensations, and your emotional feelings. Here are a few suggestions of what you can do to be at one with the Witness while not "sitting in meditation".

- 1) Before every action, there are words, and before all words, there are thoughts. Make it a habit to Witness your actions, and if you recognize that they are not of a peace-bringing nature, cease doing them. Similarly, if you

see that your words are tension producing, stop them. And then examine your thoughts. If you Witness them being troubling, change them to ones that bring you serenity, or cease them entirely. This can be done by using a meditation technique that you have found brings you peace, or by praying, dancing, physical exercises, or whatever.

- 2) Check your body for physical tension. Make it a habit to stop several times a day to scan your body mentally for areas where you are tense. Command them to relax. You will quickly learn where you keep your tension and when you command that area to relax, your whole body will melt away it's uptightness like chocolate melting in the summer's heat. Similarly, start taking a breath break. All you need to do is spend a minute or two doing a breathing exercise. It can be as simple as just inhaling and exhaling deeply, or it can be a pranayama (breathing) method that has a more complex pattern. This will always produce a calming effect.
- 3) Say a prayer or affirmation several times a day. Something simple like "Higher Power, guide, protect, and bless me", or "I receive and fill with wisdom and love with every breath", can produce uplifting physical, mental, and emotional changes.

What all these have in common is that you are paying attention and are acting instead of just being in a reactive rote mode. Most importantly, you are at one with your Witness, your Real Self. To phrase this in a 21st century, computer age way; when these peace producing actions become your default setting, more and more you increase your potential to live happily ever after.

### I Am

As Popeye said so often and so wisely, "I Am what I Am and that's all what I Am." Prepare yourself for meditation by emptying your body of any tension, your mind of any commentary, and establish an emotional calm. Witness the sensations your physical senses present now.

As you witness what you see, consciously but silently state "What I see constantly changes and only has a temporary reality. This is not real and thus is not who I Am. I Am unchangeable and eternal."

As you witness what you hear, consciously but silently state "What I hear constantly changes and only has a temporary reality. This is not real and thus is not who I Am. I Am unchangeable and eternal."

As you witness what you smell and taste, consciously but silently state "What I smell and taste constantly changes and only has a temporary reality. This is not real and thus is not who I Am. I Am unchangeable and eternal."

As you witness the sensations your skin, muscles, bones, and organs present, consciously but silently state "What I feel physically constantly changes and only has a temporary reality. This is not real and thus is not who I Am. I Am unchangeable and eternal."

As you witness your mind and emotions, consciously but silently state "What I think and the emotions I feel constantly change and only have a temporary reality. This is not real and thus not who I Am. I Am unchangeable and eternal."

Now, drop everything and witness yourself as I Am. Do this unchangeably and eternally and live happily ever after.

### Transcending Karma

Once upon a time, long, long ago, there were 2 holy men traveling together through the countryside. They came upon a beautiful young woman sitting and sobbing by the side of a stream. She said she was afraid of drowning and asked them if they would help her cross to the other side of the water. Without saying a word, one of the monks picked up the girl and carried her to the other side of the stream where he gently put her down. She thanked him and went on her way. The two men then continued their journey. After a while, the monk said to the one who had carried the young woman, "How could you do such a thing? We have taken vows of chastity. It is forbidden to even talk to a woman let alone touch one." The other monk lovingly replied, "When I came to the other side of the stream, I put her down. Why are you still carrying her?"

What have you been carrying around that you should have put down and left behind? Do you still harbor feelings of regret, anger, hate, disappointment, or any other negative adjectives or adverbs that apply, for events, people, or things that are not here, now? Why do you do this masochistic activity?

Life can be equated with a boat ride taking you from one shore to another. As the boat goes across the water, it leaves a wake in its path. This wake represents your past. And just like the wake a boat leaves behind doesn't propel the boat forward at all, your past doesn't drive you towards the other shore. What's done is done if you will be done with it. If you don't face the front of the boat and place your attention in the present moment, you will not be able to avoid running into the icebergs and other potential hazards that could jeopardize your trip through life. Your karma is fulfilled and up to date at all times. Your clinging to the past and fantasizing about the future is what keeps you paying a karmic debt. Simply attend to this moment and witness the path your boat is traveling. This is action free of reaction and further karma.

Relax. Melt into your most comfortable meditative posture. Focus on your breath and feel and witness its entry, retention, and leaving. Let your body establish a comfortable rhythm. Visualize your great grandparents in your mind's eye. See them be born, have events take place in their lives and eventually give birth to your grandparents. Visualize

your grandparents be born, see them have events take place in their lives and eventually give birth to your parents. Visualize your parents being born and see them go through the events in their lives that eventually included giving birth to you. As clearly as possible, without reacting physically, emotionally, or mentally, allow the movie of the events of your life to unfold on the inner screen of your mind's eye. Witness the events as unattached as the monk was who carried the woman over the stream. And just like him, leave your attachments to all the events that have resulted in your being here, now. Know that you are now in the boat ride of your life and that to look back is to reattach to your ancestors and your own karma and all the suffering that clings to it. Look ahead free of karma, enjoy the ride, and live happily ever after

### Filling the Mind to empty the Mind

When you first start meditating and read the ancient literature, time and time again you find the suggestion/direction to empty your mind. Almost all the FDG's (Famous Dead Gurus) indicate this is virtually mandatory to achieve success in meditation. Then you try to do it and find that it is easier said than done. But, as they say in song, "don't worry, be happy" because there are solutions to this non-problem.

One of the best techniques to use when you find it impossible to clear your mind is to fill it to the max. Focus on any object or concept - like an egg or peace - (it is usually considered much easier to focus on an object, by the way) - OK so, let's say you are using an egg as the object - you then think of everything you can that relates to an egg. For example, an egg is oval; it comes in brown or white. It has a fragile shell. It comes from a mother, etc. You then extrapolate on how these characteristics relate to you. For instance, people are sort of oval shaped, come in brown and white colors, our skin is a fragile shell, etc. Whatever you do, keep referring back to the object of your concentration (in this case, the egg). You can also work on how the egg relates to any/everything in the universe. As Einstein tells us, everything in the universe is relative to everything else. So, what eventually has to happen is that you will find that everything you can think about relates to an egg. Way before you get through the first billion things that relate, your mind will surrender, or sort of turn off from fatigue. Being empty, you can and will then fill with the essence of the egg, which is the same essence as you and everything else in the universe.

You may not even need to fill terribly much with a lot of thought. It sometimes happens that you will realize that essence quite quickly. For instance, you may realize that the egg is made of atomic and subatomic substances that have no difference than those that make you up. And so is the entire universe. You are literally star energy and united with all the atomic particles everywhere. There is a wisdom and consciousness that allows the atoms to know enough to merge into molecular compositions and the molecules to unite into more and more complex compositions. The ultimate intelligent composition is the human, for we are blessed with the ability to ponder this holy, miraculous process and unite with the source and maintainer of it.

There are many other methods to fill the mind. One is to answer Zen koans like "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or "What was your face before you were born". These imponderables are unanswerable by mere intellect, body, or emotions, and have been used for hundreds of years as a way to master our mind. Similarly, Sufi tales, particularly those featuring Mullah Nasrudin, as well as Hindu teaching stories, Talmudic tales, etc., that offer levels after levels of understanding that your mind will never be able to fathom.

Another method is to do visualizations. Then, you will be filling your mind with what you choose. For instance, visualize yourself being the person you want to be. A "you" with perfect health, tranquility, wisdom, and self control. And complete mastery of your mind.

Meditation Station (<http://www.meditationsociety.com/>) and other web sites offer dozens of techniques and concepts that are appropriate to use to do more than just clear your mind. Try a few methods, find one (or possibly even a few) that feel right, and persevere until your mind becomes a useful tool, just as your hand or computer or car is. And you will live happily ever after.

### OM

Every vibration has a corresponding sound and everything in the universe has a vibration and thus a sound. Each atom, molecule, cell, object, group of objects, even the entire universe, has its own collection of vibrations and unique sound. When you chant a mantra, you merge with the sound vibration and become at one with the energy wavelength of the object of your mantra. Mantra chanting makes you at one with everyone, everywhere who is chanting that mantra and with everyone who has ever chanted the mantra. All the saints who have ever reached enlightenment through the technique of chanting that mantra connect with you as you connect with the vibration of the mantra. You merge with their essence which has been purified and is holy and you become pure and holy because that divine level of existence vibrates only with holiness, peace, and bliss.

By chanting a mantra, your cells, molecules, atoms, and sub-atomic particles all vibrate in the same wavelength as the mantra. Once attuned with this vibration you connect with everything resonating on that plane of existence. It's like tuning a radio. At first you may get static, but once you are in the right frequency your reception is perfect. Om is the universal sound. It is within every word and within everything. So when you chant Om, you merge with all energy and all forms, from the sub-atomic to the universal, from the most gross to the most divine. And when you are tuned in

perfectly, you will receive holy frequencies clearly and merge and emerge at one with the source of all and live happily ever after.

Many meditation teachers suggest that it is necessary to understand every intellectual aspect of the meaning of the mantra that is being practiced, but just as many others feel that the intellect may tend to confuse and hold back spiritual progress. What both types of teachers agree on is that mantras have the potential to take practitioners to the level of consciousness that transcends the limitations of the mind by a billion-fold. There is an ancient tale that very well shows that true devotion and complete absorption are the key:

Once upon a time in a land far away lived a poor uneducated, mentally challenged man who tended a herd of cows for his master. He happened upon a meditation teacher and was very taken with his calm, loving, gentle and happy nature. He decided he wanted to know that experience first hand. And so he went to the teacher and begged him to teach him a way to achieve the inner peace that radiated so obviously from the teacher. The teacher accepted him as his student but quickly found that the man couldn't understand any of the philosophical points he was making and as a matter of fact couldn't even remember the mantra Om when he tried to teach it to him. The teacher lovingly said, "My oh my, you don't seem to know anything at all, can't be taught, and can't remember anything. You are devoted and sincere in your desire to gain happiness though, so I will try to help you. My son, what do you know?" The man said, "Oh great teacher, the only thing I know is cows. All my life I've spent caring for cows, making sure they graze, are milked, and are kept clean. Yes, for me, everything is cows." "Well, that's alright," said the teacher, "then you know what sound the cows make." "Oh yes," said the man, "they say moo." "Very well then," said the teacher, "for you, moo will be your mantra. All you have to do is say moo continually and you will reach freedom from suffering and know real bliss." So the man chanted moo, moo, moo when he took the cows out to graze and he chanted moo, moo, moo when he milked them, and he chanted moo, moo, moo when he cleaned them. He chanted moo all the time and very soon merged with that vibration, which is Om backward, and reached the highest heights of joyous understanding and lived happily ever after. From this story, we learn that it is virtually impossible to chant Om "wrong". It is, after all, an insentient sound. But the giver of this sound to the universe knows the intention and devotion of the practitioner and that is by what we will be rewarded. It is said that one minute of sincere chanting is superior to a thousand hours of mere sounding of the words. A parrot can be taught to recite a mantra but this will be just mere vibrations in the air. It is the love and worship behind the sound that counts. Technically though, there is a "correct" way to chant Om. It is made up of three letters: A, U, M. These contain all the sounds there are. The A is guttural and comes from the throat. It is pronounced without any part of the tongue or palate in contact. The U sound comes from the middle of the sounding board, the palate. In Sanskrit, the A and U join together to become O. The O sound is vibrated from the navel/ solar plexus area and sent up to the sternum to the voice region, the lips, where the M sound is prolonged and vibrated up to the crown of the head. This vibrating M is felt in every cell of the body and is beamed out lovingly, soothingly, powerfully, to everything, everyone, everywhere. Intellectually and metaphysically, A stands for the physical world perceptible to the senses, the material world. U represents the astral and dream planes, heaven and hell. M is the unknown, deep sleep, and that which is unfathomable to the intellect. Thus Om contains the entire spectrum of sound, words, worlds, and concepts. Om represents the source of all light, love, and wisdom.

There are three ways to do mantras - aloud, silently but while mouthing or humming the mantra, and completely silently within oneself. When done aloud and particularly when done with others, the sound of Om is energizing, calming, and healing. Although it is often encouraged to do your mantra all the time, it would certainly be questionable to consider chanting Om aloud in the middle of a board meeting. Similarly, it may be preferable to do Om silently just by moving your lips if you are in a movie theater. Chanting Om completely silently is considered the most potent method because it is not dependent on having a human voice box, or lips, or facial muscles, all of which are temporary manifestations compared to the billions of years you will be fully at one with Om. It is advantageous to spiritual development to consider the theological, philosophical and mystical aspects of Om while chanting with your physical eyes closed, looking through the third eye, and paying attention to your breath. This may seem complex and complicated, but once in synch, it happens naturally as Om reveals itself, your Real Self, to you.

#### Comic Conscience

99.99% of humankind are only kind of human and hardly kind at all. This is because they are only aware of the input of their senses and their memories and fantasies about this stimuli. Basically everything they do is selfish, self-centered and senseless. To consider this type person a fully developed human would be as inappropriate as calling an acorn an oak tree. And yet, every seed has the potential to grow and eventually flower and bear fruit. To evolve from the limits of an individual, separate, egoistic existence to an eternal, infinite, universal unity is to be truly human.

Now, as you read this, sit comfortably without tension, with attention. In your mind's eye, see yourself as one of the billions of life forces in movement, on the surface of the earth, in the air, in the water, acting and interacting, as the earth itself is spinning on its axis while moving in its orbit around the sun. When you experience this unity of life alive, united with Mother Earth, you have planetary consciousness. See the moon on its route around the earth, just as the planets and their moons orbit around each other as they travel around the sun, which is itself spinning in its orbit. Saturn with its rings, giant Jupiter, with its red eye, all the planets with their many moons, asteroids, comets, meteors, the



whole solar system in movement as the sun takes its 250 million year trip around the galaxy. When you experience this unity of planetary cooperation with Father Sun, you have solar consciousness.

Our sun is one of a hundred billion stars that join together with gravitational attraction and repulsion on their collective orbital journey. Some joining together to form binary solar systems that revolve in unison. Pulsars beaming rhythmic bursts of light across light years of space and time. Stars colliding and exploding. Stars going nova, showering eruptions of neutrinos, gamma, x-ray, ultra-violet and infra-red rays of energy in all directions for billions of miles. Black holes sucking all energy into other dimensions. Clouds of stardust collect to form new solar systems. All part of an intricate yet chaotic dance. When you experience the dynamic perpetual cohesive energy exchange of the Milky Way, you have galactic consciousness.

Billions of galaxies join ours in sharing light, sound, and power as they pass through each other, collide with each other, are pulled into each others orbits, are propelled away from each other, go nova and dissolve, and get absorbed and reform as they orbit the infinite regions of space in an eternal cycle of birth, activity, dissolution, and recreation. When you experience the cosmic events that are going on now, in reality, you maintain a consciousness of them and thus attain the birthright of every human, cosmic consciousness. Once achieved, ever identified with. Never again to suffer from the suffering the concept of being apart from the universe brings. Forever knowing the reality of being a part of the infinite, eternal universe, consciousness of the cosmic brings one to the purpose of all incarnations -- to live happily ever after.

### Affirmations

Our basic state is one of purity, bliss, and awareness. When you were a baby you were in this virginal, joyous condition. The events of your life have caused you to add layers of negativity around this holy state to such a degree that now you suffer more and more and experience the blessed and immaculate in your life far too rarely. You need to add nothing to know the ecstasy that is your birthright. What will let this eternal moment of infinite joy reoccur is the removal of the obstacles to your pure energy connection.

The first step in recovering your perfection is to melt away all your tension. Relax. Witness and feel your breath as it comes and goes. With every exhale, send out a characteristic that has caused you to be blind to your light. With every inhale, bring into your being a divine attribute and feel yourself being purified. Send the energy throughout your body, mind, and emotions.

Exhale fear, inhale courage.

Exhale cold-heartedness, inhale compassion.

Exhale ignorance, inhale wisdom.

Exhale egoism, inhale humility.

Exhale nervousness, inhale tranquility.

Exhale hate, inhale love.

Exhale suffering, inhale peace.

And on and on and on.

Continue until you have nothing else blocking your glory. At the right time, your holy moment arrives. Then, even your affirmations are unnecessary. The silence that transcends all names and forms fills you as you realize your oneness with the source of all breath. Your consciousness fills the universe and you had simply forgotten this, your eternal reality.

You awaken from the dream and live happily ever after

### Love

Use love to purify your heart. We keep grudges, shame, pain, anger, bigotry, and other foul things in our heart.

Love is the perfect antidote. Visualize and feel all the things you love, and all that love you, in your heart. Do you love to garden? See and feel this blessed action of love in your heart and love it. Do you have a friend who loves you?

Visualize and feel that love in your heart. Do you have a friend who you love? Visualize and feel that love in your heart.

Did you ever have your parents' love? Visualize and feel that love in your heart. Do you have children or brothers or sisters who love you and who you love? Visualize and feel that love in your heart.

Fill your heart with love. Displace all negativity with love. Visualize and feel the love radiate from your heart and fill every cell of your body. Visualize and feel the love radiate from you like a beacon - shining your love throughout the universe. Visualize and feel the universe shower you with love. Love the infinite purity of love. Merge with love and live happily ever after.

### Non-Expression of Negativity

One of the hardest "assignments" I give to the students in my class is to try to not say anything negative for a period of two hours on one day of a week, or for a whole day, or if they feel strong and brave, for a whole week. Invariably, this exercise is a tremendous learning experience for everyone who tries it. Reports of astonishment at how often the urge to comment negatively happens habitually are common, as is the feeling of embarrassment at one's own behavior and frustration at being unable to stop it. It's always a lot of fun when the class reports their experiences. Some common

themes occur, such as verbalizing negatively every time you talk to a teenage son or daughter, the impulse to mutter behind their back at a co-worker (especially the boss), and the compulsive snotty retort to a criticizing parent or in-law. Please try this wonderful educational meditation. You will witness yourself acting in ways that will amaze you. Just by seeing your habitual reactivity, you will be on the road to changing for the better. You've spent huge amounts of time and squandered enormous amounts of energy in negativity. As you will learn from observation and objective analysis, it is very rare to have improved any situation by injecting negativity into it. It is much more commonly a stimulus for making things worse.

By doing this exercise, you will be ready to appreciate the wisdom of the concept that before every negative action, there are negative words, and before the negative words, there are negative thoughts. The meditator can interrupt this process by witnessing every action, every word, and every thought. If you can witness the thought, if it arises and you recognize it as negative, you can simply not allow uncontrolled negative words to occur. If you can't stop it on the level of stopping the negative words to come out, at least you should recognize when you are verbalizing negatively and be able to stop yourself from actually acting out negatively.

Be gentle with yourself when you witness yourself being negative. Don't be negative about your negativity. Just observe the behavior, say "Oh, well", and go back to witnessing. Don't allow further inner commentary, comparisons, analyzations, or judgements; just witness. Begin to let "Oh, well", become a sort of shorthand for forgiving and reprimanding yourself and know nothing else is necessary and will needlessly drain you of energy and peace. Just by doing the witnessing, you will be doing many positive things. Most importantly, you will be at one with your Real Self, because that is what, within you, does the witnessing. Any time you are at one with your Real Self, you can be at one with all your Real Self is at one with and that is All Reality, for your Real Self is really at one with everyone and everything. Ultimately, there is only one Real Self and it is within all, everyone, and everything. Secondly, the more you witness your negativity, the less you will be negative. It's sort of like you've been unconsciously stepping on your own spiritual toes and once you realize it, you cease to do it and ever after cease having pain in your foot and tripping and falling on your face spiritually. Anyway, you'll definitely have a few good laughs at how silly your behavior is, when uncontrolled, and start to be less and less negative and more and more at peace. Eventually, you will live happily ever after.

### Forgiveness

There is a high, holy consciousness that loves you very much. It has been gracing you with gifts of love and forgiveness since your conception and continues to do so now. Before anyone, even your mother, your doctor, all the smartest and most powerful people in the world knew, this loving presence had given you the present of life. Just as it did when you were in the womb, this consciousness protects and nourishes you and causes you to thrive. As it gave you the energy to divide from one cell to many, it now allows your billions of cells to act and interact for your well-being. This is a gift of love that ignores all your sins and shortcomings and with every inhale, continues to replenish you with lifegiving energy. If this highest energy demonstrates its loving forgiveness with every breath, it is a travesty for us to not be forgiving of our and others actions.

With every inhale, visualize yourself being filled with loving, forgiving energy. Inhale slowly and deeply and see yourself as being cleansed. Hold the breath as long as is comfortable and send the energy to every cell in your body, from your toes to your scalp. Slowly and deeply, exhale while visualizing every physical, mental, and emotional impurity leaving your body. With every forgiving and cleansing inhalation, retention, and exhalation, see yourself as becoming pure, glowing, whole and holy.

When you see yourself as pure, visualize someone who need your forgiveness and send your compassionate, loving forgiveness to them. Pray for them to attain an awareness of their action and a gaining of understanding of the suffering they have caused. Forgive them in your heart and never carry this with you everafter.

In your minds eye, see someone you've caused to suffer and send them your healing, loving energy. Pray that they realize they are receiving loving energy with every inhalation and that they grow spiritually to where they forgive you and all others who have harmed them. Pray that they learned from the suffering you caused them and thereby gained strength from your interactions. And forever after, be free from guilt about your transgression. You knew not what you were doing and now would never do wrong again. Just as the highest power in the universe forgives you with every breath, forgive yourself.

With every breath, be forgiven and give forgiveness. Do this meditation every moment your have breath and gain eternal loving forgiveness.

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### Keys to Meditation Success

by J. Donald Walters

How long should you meditate? The first rule is, don't be ruled by what others do. What works well for them may not work for you. Accept that in certain ways you are unique. Here are a few general guidelines:

Intensity of effort is far more important than the time spent in meditation.

Never meditate to the point of mental fatigue, strain, or boredom. Enjoy what you do. Enjoy every aspect of your life — not an easy thing to do if one thinks about the aspects individually, but not so difficult if you concentrate on enjoying the inner Self. If you feel joy in meditation, stop meditating when the joy begins to diminish. One rule for right eating is to leave the table a little hungry. Apply this rule to meditation. In that way, you'll always look forward to your next time for meditation.

On the other hand, make an effort to meditate a little longer at least once a week. Gradually you'll break the habit of thinking you can meditate only for short periods. The greatest difficulty, in long meditations especially, is physical tension. Make an extra effort to keep your whole body relaxed, by following the relaxation methods taught in this book. As a general guideline, I suggest you try to meditate at least half an hour twice a day — in the morning after you get up, and in the evening before going to bed. An hour and a half twice a day is better. But if you are a beginning meditator, more than one hour a day may be extreme. It is better to meditate a few minutes with deep concentration than a whole hour absentmindedly. More over, I don't mind bargaining with you! For although five minutes, let's say, isn't much for anyone who has developed a taste for meditation, it may be all you feel you can spend in the beginning. So be it! Think of meditation, if you like, as daily spiritual hygiene. You brush your teeth, bathe, and brush your hair every day: Why not add to that routine five minutes of meditation?

You'll come to enjoy meditating, in time. Then you'll find yourself meditating longer because you want to, and not because someone is nagging you to do so. But if you think you're too busy, here's something to think about: You can always find the time for something you enjoy doing, can't you? In time, you'll wonder how you ever lived without meditating daily. And the answer, of course, will be: You didn't. What you did, that is, wasn't really living.

Be natural in your efforts. Make haste slowly, as the saying goes. Don't force yourself to meditate when you'd very much rather be doing something else.

At the same time, don't stop meditating altogether with the excuse that you have other things to do. Remember, there's only one direction to go that makes any lasting sense: toward your own Self, in superconsciousness. No substitute will ever work for you; it's never worked for anyone. No appointment is more important than your appointment with — not death: life.

Be a little stern with yourself. Success won't come to people who never try. Only bear in mind that tension is counterproductive. In meditation, concentrate first of all on relaxation.

Remember this also: The more you meditate, the more you'll want to meditate; but the less you meditate, the less you'll enjoy doing it.

Another rule: As soon as you sit for meditation, get "down to business." Don't dawdle, as if telling yourself, "Oh, I have a whole hour, so what's the rush?"

Be regular in your hours and practices of meditation. Saying that reminds me of a typewriter I bought when I was seventeen. At the time I also bought an instruction manual that explained the touch system. For a week or two I practiced the exercises in the manual assiduously mastering the system to the point where I finally learned to type quite rapidly. At that time, however, I was so eager to begin using the touch system that I ignored the exercises for learning the numerals. "I'll learn them," I told myself, "as I go along." The result? Today, more than fifty years later, I still need to look at the number keys when I want to use them.

So — be specific in your practices. Don't tell yourself they'll just sort themselves out someday by some process of osmosis.

It is a good practice to meditate at the same hours every day. Routine conditions the mind. You'll find yourself wanting to meditate whenever those hours return. It will be much easier, then, to set all distractions aside.

Stick to your routine as best as you can. To help you in creating one, here are a few suggestions:

- 1) As soon as you sit to meditate, pray for depth and for guidance in your meditation. Pray also for peace for all humanity. Don't isolate your sympathies from others; embrace all in your divine love.
- 2) Chant and/or repeat affirmations, according to your personal predilection.
- 3) Tense and relax the whole body two or three times. Inhale before tensing, exhale with relaxation. This practice will help relax you mentally, as well as physically.

After meditation, don't strip your mental gears by plunging hastily into outer activity. Try to carry the meditative peace into everything you do. To develop this habit, it may help to begin with outward activities that don't involve your mind too much. While doing them, chant inwardly to God. The walking meditation is an excellent practice for bridging the gap between meditative peace and outward busyness. If you can't devote time to walking calmly after meditation, try doing things slowly for a bit, consciously bringing peace and energy into your muscles and bodily movements.

As a focus for your devotion, you may find it helpful to set up an altar in your place of meditation. Include pictures on the altar, if you like, of saints, or of images of God, or of infinite light and space. (You may even find photographs of stars and galaxies helpful, as reminders, of the vastness of space.)

A helpful practice also, if it pleases you, is the burning of incense as a devotional offering. The sense of smell is closely related to the memory faculty. You may recall, for example, catching in some fleeting scent a reminder of some childhood episode that awakened a host of associated memories. Incense, when used regularly in meditation, will help to create meditative associations in your mind, and bring you more quickly, therefore, to inner calmness.

Generally speaking, it is best to meditate in quiet places, and at quiet times of the day. It is also good occasionally, however, to discipline the mind. Don't pamper it. You may even like to meditate, sometimes, in noisy places, as a mental discipline. Don't sit where people will see you and wonder what you're doing. Or, if the place is public, don't sit in such a way as to call attention to yourself. In this case, you might practice looking ahead of you with open eyes. One way of becoming virtually invisible in public is to put out the thought "I'm not here." Send no mental tendrils out to your environment. Rather, put out a vibration of non-being — somewhat along the principle of modern noise-cancellation technology where sound waves are nullified by projecting sounds of an opposite wave pattern. Obliterate "people-consciousness" from your mind. You'll be surprised to how little an extent people notice you. Quite possibly they won't notice you at all: That is, they may see you, but they won't observe you.

Wait two or three hours, if possible, after a heavy meal before beginning meditation. If this delay is impossible, however, or inconvenient, don't worry about it. Obstacles, if unavoidable, should be welcomed: They help to strengthen the will power.

Be more conscious of living in a world composed of energy and vibrations. Remind yourself always that you are not the body: You are consciousness working, through energy, to animate the body.

Above all in meditation, be happy! If you want to experience peace, meditate peacefully. If you want to know love, offer love first, yourself. It isn't that super-conscious states can be created by right attitudes. They don't appear by command performance of the conscious mind, but are the fruits, rather, of right meditation. However, you can hold yourself in readiness for those experiences by placing yourself on their "wavelength," instead of clinging with "scientific objectivity" to opposite states of consciousness.

This article was excerpted from *Awaken To Superconsciousness*, ©2000, by J. Donald Walters.

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### **Six Steps to Meditations in Motion**

1) Create Intention - Spiritual masters point out that whatever we focus on will command our energy, so any activity that is done with the right intent will engage out best energy. Consciously choose to let exercise be your path to spiritual energy. As you begin to work out, it may help to say an affirmation. Here are two: "I am exercising my mind, body and spirit today" or "I invite God to be with me as I exercise my body". Then simply pay attention to the natural rhythm and flow of what you're doing.

2) Breathe Deeply - Many people do not breathe properly. Before exercising, breathe deeply and consciously several times. Feel the air moving into and lifting your body. Imagine that the soles of your feet are receiving energy. Pull your breath smoothly up through your torso. As you exhale, picture yourself releasing toxins of anxiety, fear and impatience.

3) Stay focused - If you let your mind run free it's easy to get caught up in a negative thought process. Bring awareness to what you're doing, whether it's lifting a tennis racket, taking a walk, paddling a canoe, or running 5 miles.

4) Repeat Word power - This will help you stay focused if you concentrate on a word for a positive quality you want to encourage in yourself. One week it may be "compassion" another "love" another week "forgiveness." Silently say your word in rhythm with your exercise. Repetition is one of the most powerful methods of creating continuous prayer.

5) Listen to your body - Sometimes we're stressed without knowing why, which interferes with spiritual connections. Pay attention to the clues your body gives you. Take inventory of your body by asking, "What's happening in my gut? Is my stomach tight or relaxed? What sensations are in my chest? What do I feel in my throat? Is my brain chattering?" Several spiritual writers encourage the physical act of opening your hands. People clench their fists when they're holding on to something and are afraid to "let go." Opening your hands in a slow, conscious way is an act of surrender that shows acceptance and willingness to face life as it is.

6) Extend yourself - Inner power is a state of being, a confidence that you can handle whatever comes in your life. You get that power by reaching beyond your usual comfort zone. The benefits of sports and exercise carry over into other parts of our lives. At the same time, don't push yourself so hard, it becomes counter productive. "God meets us where we are." Occasional joggers do not suddenly enter an Olympic marathon. They prepare and train over a period of time, and so should we.

These six steps can change fitness activities from recreation to personal re-creation. By connecting sweat to the sacred, exercise not only builds the body, calms the mind, and lowers stress - it also becomes a joyful meditation in motion.

"Meditations in Motion - The Joy of Spirit in Exercise" by Barbara Bartocci

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<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7212327572457455864&q=vipassana>

This is a 19 minute interview recorded in Belgium with S.N. Goenka talking about Vipassana Meditation, the meditation practice that I have been working with for over five years now. It is the most profound meditation technique that I have ever experienced and I have worked with many. This podcast is a good introduction to Vipassana Meditation. If you would like to learn more about this and about their 10-day silent meditation retreats please go to the <http://www.dhamma.org> website. There is no official charge for their 10-day retreat, they only accept donations after you complete the retreat. When I did the 10-day retreats it was the single most important thing that I have done for myself spiritually. - Barefoot Bill

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### **Stepping into Love Communion by Paul Ferrini**

If you have trouble connection to God and you essential Self, experiment with the following process of “Stepping into Love Communion” during 15 minutes of meditation each day for the next week.

We enter into Unity consciousness by accepting life as it is right now. To help you enter this state of unconditional love and acceptance, allow yourself to sink into the awareness reflected in the following words:

- A) I CAN ACCEPT MYSELF AS I AM RIGHT NOW.**
- B) I CAN ACCEPT OTHERS AS THEY ARE RIGHT NOW.**
- C) I CAN ACCEPT LIFE AS IT IS RIGHT NOW.**

These words are not affirmations to be mindlessly repeated. They are not magical formulas. They are statements of truth that represent a certain level of consciousness to which you can attune.

Saying these words if you don't believe them is an exercise in futility. So let yourself sink into the consciousness of the words before you attempt to say them. Breathe in the words. Mull them over. Turn them around and let them weave into your consciousness right now. When you feel willing to do what the words say, then they have meaning. So be with them until that willingness comes. That is what it means to attune or to “vibrate with the words.” Then continue:

- A) I AM LOVABLE AND CAN RECEIVE LOVE RIGHT HERE AND NOW.**
- B) OTHERS ARE LOVABLE AND CAN RECEIVE MY LOVE RIGHT HERE AND NOW.**
- C) LOVE CAN BE FULLY PRESENT IN MY LIFE RIGHT HERE AND NOW.**

Let it sink in. When it has, then continue:

- A) I AM THE BRINGER OF LOVE.**
- B) WITHOUT MY PRESENCE AND MY WILLINGNESS TO LET LOVE COME THROUGH ME, LOVE CANNOT BE.**
- C) WITHOUT MY PRESENCE, LOVE CANNOT BE.**

Let this sink in. Breathe into this awareness. Love comes from you, not from someone else. Then continue:

- A) I CANNOT BRING LOVE TO MYSELF OR OTHERS IF MY HEART IS NOT OPEN.**
- B) I AM WILLING TO BREATHE INTO MY HEART AND FEEL IT OPEN RIGHT NOW.**
- C) I AM WILLING TO BE OPEN TO THE HEALING POWER OF LOVE.**

Be in the consciousness of these words until the words dissolve and only their resonance remains in consciousness. Then you will experience the ecstasy of love communion. You might find it helpful to write these words down and carry them with you in your wallet or pocketbook. That way you will be able to use them not just in your formal 15 minute daily meditation, but throughout the day when you are thrown off-center and need to come back into connection with the Source of Love within yourself.

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### **A Meditation on Reconciliation**

In Buddhist monasteries when conflict arises, the monks and nuns are encouraged to undertake a formal practice of reconciliation. They begin with this simple intention: No matter what the hurt within us, we can seek to be reconciled. Even if we cannot or should not speak to the other, we can find the courage to hold reconciliation and goodwill in our own heart. We can do our part toward the healing of the world.

To recite the intention of reconciliation is to willingly plant a seed of reconnection and love in our heart. As we repeat each phrase, we turn our intention to the possibility of restoring harmony where suffering has set us apart. We begin to build a bridge of tenderness to those who have been separated by pain and fear.

Let yourself sit in a comfortable posture. Bring your attention gently to your body and breath. Stay with the breath until you feel settled and present. Then bring into awareness the benefits of reconciliation and healing for all those who have been estranged and set apart.

We begin within the family because the family is where we are most vulnerable and can most easily be hurt. If we cannot be reconciled here, we will never find reconciliation with the world.

Picture each person and group named as you go through this practice. Recite each simple phrase, one category at a time. Feel the distance and pain between them. Hold the tender possibility of restoring love between them. Know that simply expressing the heart's willingness to seek reconciliation turns our life toward peace.

Breathe gently. Slowly recite the following intentions, allowing time to sense the reconciliation of each:

May all mothers and sons be reconciled.  
 May all mothers and daughters be reconciled.  
 May all fathers and sons be reconciled.  
 May all fathers and daughters be reconciled.  
 May all sisters and brothers be reconciled.  
 May all husbands and wives be reconciled.  
 May all partners and lovers be reconciled.  
 May all family members be reconciled.  
 May all employers and employees be reconciled.  
 May all community members be reconciled.  
 May all friends be reconciled.  
 May all women be reconciled.  
 May all men be reconciled.  
 May all men and women be reconciled.  
 May all religions be reconciled.  
 May all races be reconciled.  
 May all nations be reconciled.  
 May all peoples be reconciled.  
 May all creatures be reconciled.  
 May all beings of every form be reconciled.

Unknown

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## TRUE MEDITATION

by Adayshanti

True meditation has no direction, goals, or method. All methods aim at achieving a certain state of mind. All states are limited, impermanent and conditioned. Fascination with states leads only to bondage and dependency. True meditation is abidance as primordial consciousness.

True meditation appears in consciousness spontaneously when awareness is not fixated on objects of perception. When you first start to meditate you notice that awareness is always focused on some object: on thoughts, bodily sensations, emotions, memories, sounds, etc. This is because the mind is conditioned to focus and contract upon objects. Then the mind compulsively interprets what it is aware of (the object) in a mechanical and distorted way. It begins to draw conclusions and make assumptions according to past conditioning.

In true meditation all objects are left to their natural functioning. This means that no effort should be made to manipulate or suppress any object of awareness. In true meditation the emphasis is on being awareness; not on being aware of objects, but on resting as primordial awareness itself. Primordial awareness (consciousness) is the source in which all objects arise and subside. As you gently relax into awareness, into listening, the mind's compulsive contraction around objects will fade. Silence of being will come more clearly into consciousness as a welcoming to rest and abide. An attitude of open receptivity, free of any goal or anticipation, will facilitate the presence of silence and stillness to be revealed as your natural condition.

Silence and stillness are not states and therefore cannot be produced or created. Silence is the non-state in which all states arise and subside. Silence, stillness and awareness are not states and can never be perceived in their totality as objects. Silence is itself the eternal witness without form or attributes. As you rest more profoundly as the witness, all objects take on their natural functionality, and awareness becomes free of the mind's compulsive contractions and identifications, and returns to its natural non-state of Presence.

The simple yet profound question, "Who Am I ?", can then reveal one's self not to be the endless tyranny of the ego-personality, but objectless Freedom of Being - Primordial Consciousness in which all states and all objects come and go as manifestations of the Eternal Unborn Self that YOU ARE.

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## THE PRACTICE OF COMPASSION

City Retreat, Berkeley Shambhala Center

June 18, 2001

### STEP ONE

I'd like you to start with where you already feel compassion. Currently I feel that's the most effective place to start, where you already feel it. I always mention that when Trungpa Rinpoche was teaching about compassion, he would awaken the feeling of compassion, ignite it or awaken it by thinking it of an experience he had when he was a very young boy in Tibet. He looked down from the top of the monastery and saw people stoning a puppy to death, and he couldn't do anything because he was too far away. He said what made the image all the more painful is that they were laughing and having fun doing this. All he had to do was think of that, and then the feeling of the bodhichitta began to flow.

That's where we would start this practice, with what is a second step on the sheet. But we'll start with that as the beginning. You would think of someone in this category. Then you would wish that they could be free of suffering and the root of suffering. Now this is very interesting. Suppose, for instance, I find that when I do this for the animals in the laboratories, it's very straightforward. I just want them to not be in those experiments. I just want them to be out of there. It's completely practical. That might be the situation with what you've been thinking of as well.

Sometimes, though, more frequently as I go through my life, it's psychologically a little more complicated. People often say to me, for instance, when they wish for themselves or a loved one to be free of suffering and the root of suffering, and then they say, I don't know if I really mean that. Then they say, I understand the logic of this. You say, "I learn so much from suffering, I'm not sure I really want myself to be free of this particular anxiety I'm feeling now because I'm out of work, or whatever it might be, because I learn so much from it."

I think it's very helpful, when you're doing this practice for yourself and for others as you move through the list. It might be very straightforward, like the laboratory animals. You just want them out of that situation, and so you know what you wish for them. But at some level we're always talking about the root of the suffering. It's often at the level of psychological distress. For instance, if someone is dying or someone is very ill and I think of them and I wish them to be free of suffering and the root of suffering. Part of that is not wanting them to be in physical pain.

### SPINOFF

Actually the more I do this over the years, I really want them to be free of fear, fear of the pain, fear of all the spinoff from the illness. I want them to be free and I want myself to be free of all this spinoff. Do you know what I mean by spinoff? It's like we're ill or our house has burned down, we've just lost all our possessions or we've lost a loved one or so forth. And if we stay with the raw material, we will find the bodhichitta in there. We'll find the soft spot, the tenderness in there. The open space is in there. However, I wish for myself and all of us to be free of all the resentment and the anger and the terror going on and on and on that we do around everything that happens to ourselves.

Somehow the root of suffering is how we escalate the suffering, how we make the suffering more intense by going on and on and on about it with our habitual reactivity. In some sense, not to get too complicated or psychological, but often what we're wishing for people is that they be free of their fear of what's happening to them, or their depression about what's happening to them, or their bitterness and anger about what's happening to them. You see what I'm saying? Because sometimes what's happening to them, we actually can't, it can't be changed. We might wish that it could be changed, but we're not trying to do this practice to get into kind of wishful thinking or, like, if we just aspire enough that everything is going to be all right. Because in life there's so much not everything being alright, you know. So somehow it's more like . . .

There's this old adage that it isn't so much what happens to us, but how we react to what happens to us, that we're working with with a spiritual path. When we wish for people to be free of suffering and the root of suffering, at some level we're wishing them to be free of all the spinoff. I don't know how else to say it.

Sometimes I call it fabrication or escalating it. Trungpa Rinpoche in this talk that I've often mentioned called "Working with Negativity," it's a chapter in The Myth of Freedom by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, talks about that there's nothing wrong with negativity, but our problem is negative negativity. By which he means, there's nothing wrong with the

essential arising of any emotion or life situation, for that matter. But where it gets problematic is what we make of that, how we make matters worse with how we work with our mind: resentment, bitterness, blame, and on and on. Wishing to be free of that kind of really self-imposed loneliness, self-imposed suffering that we create with our minds. The fact that our house burns down is not self-imposed. The fact that we get an illness isn't self-imposed. What we do with that and how that escalates into such intense misery and feeling of separateness and feeling of aloneness and alienation. This, we do this with our minds. We do it to ourselves. We torture ourselves. So we begin with where it's already flowing. That's step one. And we say, "May this one be free of suffering and the root of suffering."

## STEP TWO

In step two, we do it for ourselves and we say, "May I be free of suffering and the root of suffering."

This is an interesting one, because ideally you just zero in on a place where you're really stuck and where you are driving yourself crazy or where there's a real suffering in your life. And you wish for yourself to be free particularly of making matters worse, this spinoff.

Sometimes you can't find anything. This is rare, of course (laughter). If that's the case, Ken McLeod [see *Wake Up to Your Life*] actually suggests that you think of yourself having a great loss or having an illness, and then wish yourself to be free of that suffering. Personally, I think it's most powerful to really connect with something that's already there and notice the effects of wishing yourself to be free of that particular suffering and the root of suffering.

## ROOT OF SUFFERING

Maybe at this point you don't have a clear idea of what the root of suffering is, and I'll talk more about that. But let's just say, for the purpose of doing this practice this week, think of the root of suffering as this tendency to make matters worse, this tendency to buy into the same old story lines and the same old blaming and the same old resentment mind, bitter mind, judgmental mind, self-pitying mind, whatever it might be. The tendency to make matters worse being the root of suffering. Because, as I say, even if what your suffering is is that you have a genuine great loss, the root of it turning into debilitating suffering is what we do with that, how we spin off from that. Am I making this clear?

## STEP THREE

The third step would be to awaken compassion for a friend. As I said on Saturday, a close friend or family member, so choose one that actually is suffering in some way, has pain of some kind, and turn your attention to them and wish for them to be free of suffering and the root of suffering. If you get into this place of "I'm not sure I really want them to be free of this because it causes it to grow" and stuff, then go deeper. At the level of their depression or their rage or their self-denigration, we would all want for our close friends and relatives to be free of that kind of spinoff.

Try to make it as real as possible and sending compassion by connecting again with the original feeling of compassion, and then directing it toward this individual, and encouraging it by saying the words. And they'll either be a natural feeling there that you might classically call compassion, but some sense of really feeling for them and really wishing, aspiring, longing for them to be free of suffering and the root of suffering. And there's a sense of being there with them at the level of mind training.

Also notice the effect because it may be any kind of feeling of blocking it. Remember what I said. The bodhichitta is there in that feeling of blocking or "I can't do it" or whatever it might be. The bodhichitta is there if you go into it and experience underneath the words. This is our practice.

## STEP FOUR

Then we move on to neutral people. Since we don't know that much about them, I find that when I get to the neutrals that I actually do make up stories about them (laughter), because I don't actually know, although we might think we know. And for the purposes of doing the practice, that's okay.

For instance, the neutrals are just people we don't know, say, in this room or on the streets, who aren't particularly looking like they're suffering terribly. But we turn our attention to them and we say, "May this one be free of suffering and the root of suffering," in terms of making worse for themselves. And we might think, you know, if they've had a loss or someone dear to them is ill or if there's been a catastrophe in their life of some kind, natural catastrophe, the house burning or if there's been a theft or there's anything that would cause suffering, may they be free of the root of suffering, of escalating around this issue. Just wishing, however this happens for you, wishing for them to be free of suffering and the root of suffering.

Then again, notice the effect. That's an important part of the practice.

If it's a free-flowing feeling of compassion, usually you just experience that. Keep saying the words and even saying more words if you want to kind of bring it out more. They often say it's like sunshine on a flower, causing the feeling of compassion to grow and flourish, causing the bodhichitta to flourish and expand.

If you feel blocked, just going into that and finding the bodhichitta there, it may not feel like bodhichitta to you. It may feel like hell to you. I'm telling you, even if you don't experience it as such, just a few seconds of feeling of closedness



is very, very powerful. Pointing you in a revolutionary direction, very unpredictable direction, a very extraordinary and transformative direction.

#### STEP FIVE

Then you do it for the difficult ones. You think of the difficult person or people and you wish for them to be free of suffering and the root of suffering. Now, a very interesting thing often happens here. You can really get into wishing them to be free of suffering, because you think if they could be free . . . basically you want them to be the way you want them to be, you know (laughter). Could they be free of their lousy personality so that I could feel better? (Laughter) This you might call not quite compassion. It's more like justifying your dislike of them by using a compassion practice. And the other thing is, of course, being glad that they're suffering (laughter). Hard to face, but true. When we really dislike people, maybe we're well aware- or maybe we'll get more in touch with it by doing this practice- but there's a lot of rejoicing, almost, about their misfortune. Because basically they hurt you and you want them to suffer too. So you're glad when you hear that things aren't going well for them. And you feel pretty unhappy when you hear that everything is fine for them. Those kinds of feelings come up about people that we find difficult. So, rather than feeling bad about that just notice that that's what happening. Have a sense of humor. Whatever it is, let the words go and notice the effect. Sometimes with difficult people, I find it is also quite helpful to actually imagine different scenarios for them. I have actually cooked up some real genuine compassion for some of the very difficult people in my life by beginning to think of, for instance, something happening to one of their children or something that I know that, if that degree of misfortune happened to them, I wouldn't be glad, that I would really feel compassion for them. So you can use your imagination here if it helps you to feel some kind of compassion for someone who your heart is shut to, a difficult person. In other words, you find the person or people and you encourage this feeling by saying the words, "May they be free of suffering and the root of suffering." And then you notice the effect. Then you expand the whole thing by moving onto the next stage. So we keep expanding it in this way, and just notice what happens.

#### STEP SIX

The sixth step is to have all five there together: yourself, and in my case a laboratory animal, and myself, a close friend or close family member, and a neutral person or people, and a difficult person or people, all together. And see if you can have a sense of sending the compassion to all five. May all of us, this little group, circle that we've become, may all of us be free of suffering and the root of suffering. Sometimes people like to go one by one and just look at each one, or whatever. And again, it goes through the same process of contacting the original feel and encouraging it by saying the words as you direct it towards these.

#### STEP SEVEN

Then you extend it out to all beings.

This is the seven-step practice. I would like you to do that at least twice during the week, because it takes quite a while. And you would sit for a period of time and then you would do this seven-step practice and then you would sit a little bit at the end. And so to do it twice. If once is all that's possible, okay. But at least once. Twice would be better and, of course, more would be better if you have the time.

There are alternate ways you can do it. You can simplify it in any form. But one of the ways its simplified is four steps, where you start where you already feel compassion, then you do it for yourself. So I would say, "May the laboratory animal be free of suffering and the root of suffering," and then, "May I be free of suffering and the root of suffering." And "May you be free of suffering," and you can be anyone you want it to be.

Then "May all beings be free of suffering and the root of suffering." So those four steps. And then the simplest of all, three steps, is "May I be free of suffering, May you be free of suffering, May all beings be free of suffering."

Each day do this practice, but you can do it in any kind of modified form. You can skip any of the seven steps. People often like to skip the five-together step. But you do whatever you want. That will be your homework for this week.

Trungpa Rinpoche

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### MEDITATION AT WORK

While at work, you cannot exercise, but you can certainly meditate and this would help you overcome all the stress and tension that arises due to work pressure. Meditation builds tremendous clarity, helping you make decisions, with much more ease and equanimity.

In the office you can meditate while sitting on your chair, in any comfortable pose. Remember, if the body is not comfortable, the mind certainly won't be at ease. You may set your watch alarm so that you don't stay preoccupied with time while meditating. Also, you may close your eyes partially, so that if something demands your urgent attention, you can adjust more quickly, than if your eyes were completely closed. But if you do not wish to be bothered by external distractions, close the eyes fully – which would be ideal.

Now follow the process of this meditation: Watch your mind, your thoughts as a witness, a non-doer. This process fades away all unnecessary thoughts, bringing you into the 'now', keeping you fresh, joyous, energetic and highly attentive throughout your work time. A few minutes of this process, at regular and appropriate intervals, makes your mind stronger and more productive. You may even have a quick meditation session in your tea or lunch break. Those who have a field job can practice this process while they are traveling.

But remember, it should be performed for the sake of it, and not to achieve any end result. The aim of this meditation is not to accomplish things but to experience them, and while doing so you begin to excel in your work.

Someone once said, "The human brain is a storehouse of potential that can accomplish the most amazing tasks. However, what holds us back are unnecessary fears, doubts and insecurities nurtured by the mind, which happens when we spend too much time in the past or future.

Meditation is an inner cleansing of the mind that rewards us with the 'present', helping us discover our hidden treasures and potential, making us the person we have always dreamt of being and helping us achieve all that we aspire for in life. Moreover, unlike your job, meditation is not goal oriented. Therefore, you cannot fail at it. The only way to fail at it is not to try it at all."

Unknown

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### How to Meditate (The Hamsa Meditation)

There are many ways to meditate. They all seem to lead to the same place, so find one that suits you. Here I describe a classic meditation that is simple and easy.

Mantras: A mantra is a sound, word, or phrase that is repeated to yourself. It could be spoken aloud, as a chant, or silently, as in meditation. Many people think that the best mantras are sounds which have no clear meaning, and are used as a way of displacing your usual thoughts and moving your awareness inward. There are many mantras ranging from words taken from Hindu Sanskrit to Christian scripture (especially when "saying the rosary," where the repetition of the prayer is meditative). If you do not already know of a good mantra to use I suggest you use "hamsa." This is a natural mantra, being the sound that one makes when breathing, with "ham" (h-ah-m) on inhalation and "sa" (s-ah) on exhalation.

### Directions for the hamsa meditation:

Sit comfortably. A quiet place is preferred, but not required.

Close your eyes. Breathe naturally. Sit for about one minute before you begin thinking the mantra to allow your heart and breathing to slow.

Gently bring your attention to your breath and begin to think the mantra, gently and easily. Just let it come, don't force it. Think "ham" on the inhale and "sa" on the exhale. Allow yourself to be absorbed in it.

Allow your thoughts and feelings to come and go with detachment. Don't try to control them in any way. Just note them, and when you realize that you are not repeating the mantra, gently return to the mantra. Do not try to force yourself to think the mantra to the exclusion of all other thoughts. You may experience a deep state of relaxation but it is OK if you don't.

Meditate in this way for 20 minutes (children for less time).

When done, take about a minute to slowly return to normal awareness. Be gentle with yourself when opening your eyes or coming to stand after a meditation. It isn't good for your heart to get up quickly after the state of deep rest that is often a result of meditation. Note: It is OK to glance at a clock to time the meditation. \*\*Don't use an alarm timer.\*\*

I have found the following techniques deepen my experience. You will certainly find your own as well. These techniques are secondary and may be omitted entirely or added later:

Keep your spine straight, head balanced on your cervical column.

Many people like to pray or do visualization after meditating, while still in an altered state. Some teachers of meditation are opposed to this practice while others advocate it. I suggest to do it if it feels right to you. I do.

As a "pre-meditation" preparation, bring your attention to the physical act of breathing. Breathe naturally and, with each cycle of the breath, bring your attention to a different part of your body, paying attention to the changes there as a result of the breathing: the rising and falling of the chest; the movement of your belly; the sensation of the air entering and leaving the nostrils; can you feel any movement of your kidney area? How about your pelvis- do you feel your pelvis tilt at all when you breathe? What do you do between breaths? Is there a pause? If you don't feel these things it is OK, just consider them, one at a time, and move on. (This can also serve as a short "centering" meditation that can be done while waiting for a stoplight to change, or as a short work or study break.)

During meditation your business is simple awareness, nothing else. It is a time to connect to your inner Source and let go of the things and roles we get caught up in: work, parenting, concerns and responsibilities. It may be that your meditation is peaceful, or it may be fretful and full of obsessive thought. Regardless, daily meditation will have a positive effect on your life.

**Benefits of Meditation:** The benefits are unique for each person, but both physiological and psychological balancing is common. Some of the benefits of meditation will be realized quickly, and others over many months, so don't be discouraged.

**When to Meditate:** I recommend that a person meditate twice a day. Before breakfast and before dinner are ideal. (The digestive system often shuts down during meditation, so a full stomach may result in indigestion.) Remember, whatever happens is OK. It's OK to fall asleep or to not become relaxed, OK to laugh or cry, OK to be, or not to be, in an altered state, OK if the mantra doesn't follow the breath as I have suggested, or even goes away altogether. What is important is that you have an *\*intention\** to think the mantra during your meditation. In short, don't try to control it! For 20 minutes, twice a day, **JUST BE!**

**Questions and comments:** The most common question I get when I teach someone to meditate is "What do you mean by 'think the mantra gently and easily'?" My best answer is an analogy. When you read you take the effort to look at the page, to focus on the page and the words. And you *\*intend\** to discern the meaning of the words. That is usually enough and the meaning comes without much effort, yet there is *\*some\** effort involved. Thinking the mantra is similar in that you direct a similar level of effort (which is very little, yet it is there) toward thinking the mantra. You do *\*not\** force yourself, brow furrowed, to think the mantra to the exclusion of all else. Just let it come, and if that is not enough, then encourage your mind to think it with a small effort.

If you are tired when you meditate you may fall asleep. Regardless, do not use meditation as a sleep aid. If you have insomnia, just meditate during the day and the insomnia will probably take care of itself.

"Sitting comfortably" to meditate does not mean cross-legged. If that is comfortable for you, you can meditate in that position. However, sitting with your feet flat on the floor, erect but comfortable in a chair, is just as good. Don't lie down.

I suggest that you re-read this occasionally, it contains lots of information.

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### **CHAKRA MEDITATION (Wheel of Spinning Energy)**

**Close your eyes & turn within. It all begins with the breath. Allowing the breath to bring us to the present moment. Knowing that where we are, God is. And where God is is all the ancient wisdom of every religion and spiritual path. Breathing in and breathing out. Breathing into our channels or wheels of consciousness called charkas. Seven spiritual centers, opening further the energy there. We need balancing, it's like a car & if our wheels of consciousness are out of balance or out of alignment, our driving and interacting is wobbly) - clearing out the channels so we can accept more of Spirit, more of God – the spiritual path moves us to become instruments of God & this is a way of tuning that instrument...**

- 1) The Root Chakra – where we're grounded & supported by Spirit – the center of this Chakra is at the base of the spine – a bright red fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – from back to front, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space – the verb associated with this Chakra is "I am" – it has a sacred sound of "lam" (like Dalai Lama), so let's say that out loud three times – and the process begins**
- 2) Emotionally clearing – the center of this Chakra is in the lower abdomen, two inches below your belly button - a bright orange fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – from front to back, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space – the verb here is "I feel" – allow that space to hold every tear you have ever cried; every tear of sadness, every tear of joy, every tear of frustration & every tear of ecstasy – simply breath into that space – it has a sacred sound of "vam" (like ram), so let's say that out loud three times**
- 3) The center of the next Chakra is in the solar plexus, at the center just below where your rib cage ends - a bright yellow fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – from front to back, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space – the verb is "I do" – this has a sacred sound of "ram" so let's say it out loud three times –I invite you to bring to mind anything that no longer**

serves you; any idea, any past experience or future worry, any relationship, any attachment; anything that no longer serves you simply place it into the center of that yellow fire; perhaps there are a few things; and continue to allow the breathe to fan that fire until that which no longer serves you is completely disintegrated by that yellow fire; say silently “I do eliminate this thing that no longer serves me, it goes back to the nothingness from which it came;” and when you feel complete with that, simply move into the sacred sound of “ram” and let’s say it out loud three times again

- 4) The next Chakra is the Heart Chakra - the center of this Chakra is a little to the right of the heart but just a little to the left of the center of the body - a bright green fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – from front to back, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space – the verb is “I love” – now bring to mind the word forgiveness and the word compassion, in bringing forgiveness and compassion to mind, we have an opportunity to look at, to witness, those places within us of unforgiveness and a lack of compassion, those places of resentment/lack/and separation, any dark ghost that may still be hanging around, and when we’re faced with a ghost that means that there is only one place to go, and that’s back to God – the sacred sound here is “yam” so let’s say that out loud three times – keeping our attention on the Heart Chakra, allowing every breathe to expand the Heart, to expand the “I Love”, every breathe expanding the Heart space – knowing that forgiveness is about one thing, and that thing is self-love, forgiveness is about self-love, so I invite you now to place whatever that ghost is into the space of the Heart Chakra, whatever bitterness, whatever resentment, whatever unforgiveness, especially if it’s something that we haven’t forgiven ourselves for, place it into the green, healing fire of the Heart Chakra, whoever or whatever, see this unforgiveness and say “I love myself in the presence of you”, and when you feel complete with that, simply move into the sacred sound of “yam” three times again
- 5) The center of the next Chakra is in the center of the throat – the verb is “I speak” – it is the center of expression and connection, making a commitment by speaking our Truth - a bright blue fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – from front to back, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space - we sit in the center of our own Truth, right here and right now - the sacred sound is “ham”, let’s say that out loud three times now – know that you are in a safe place, a comfortable place – now, simply concentrate on communicating with honesty and integrity, decide that you will speak out for being true to yourself and speaking your Truth, the speaking that you do comes from the core of your honesty and your integrity, know that you are heard
- 6) Now move your attention to the Chakra in the center of the forehead, a little above the center between your eyebrows – verb is “I see” - from front to back, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space - a bright indigo or blue and red fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – seeing clearly as God sees – we see what is true, we see what is real, we see God - the sacred sound is “om” so let’s say it out loud three times – and now with your attention fully focused on your IN-sight, ask yourself “what is my dream come true?”, and for a moment be in that dream, fully present in that dream, see it in your minds eye, watch it as it plays out, be in it, live it in this moment, and when you fully catch the dream, cap it with the sacred sound of “om” so let’s say it out loud three times again
- 7) And finally, begin to notice the Crown Chakra at the top of your head – a bright violet fire burning, being fanned by the breathe as we breath into that space – from top to bottom, we breathe three cleansing breaths through that space – the verb is “I know” – it’s where we are open to receive inspiration - the sacred sound is simply vibration, God manifesting through us – that sacred, secret place of the Most High, where you come face to face with God Itself, simply allow yourself to sit in that place, face to face with the Love that you are, the Peace that you are, the connection that you are, breathing the sacred moment that you are, for it is in this place of deep connection, from this place of knowing who we are, from this place of seeing the face of God as our face, each of us right here and right now stands on High and Holy Ground, deeply connected to the powerful source that is God, notice that Divine Light moving through you

Now go back to the Root Chakra at the base of the spine, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color red, saying the sound “lam” once out loud – next notice the Chakra two inches below your belly button, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color orange, saying its sound “vam” once out loud – now notice the Chakra just below the center of the bottom of the rib cage, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color yellow, saying its sound “ram” once out loud – next is the Heart Chakra, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color green, saying its sound “yam” out loud once – now the Chakra at the center of the throat, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color blue, saying its sound “ham” once out loud – the Chakra at the center of the

forehead, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color indigo or blue and red, saying its sound “om” out loud once – and finally the Chakra at the top of the head, see it as clear and balanced, noticing the color violet – as we get to the top of the head, all of these colors combine into a beautiful, bright white light, flowing out of your head, throughout your body, completely surrounding you and everyone with beautiful white spiritual light, this is the place that knows peace, say to yourself silently, I know who I really am, and I know who you are.

### Sacred Psalm 119.9

O that my soul would love from its innermost being,  
and give witness to truth in thought, word, and deed!  
For, only then will I see the glorious vision and hear the Voice of the Beloved.  
Teach me the way of discernment that I make choices with integrity.  
In Your steadfast love, may I know the joy of responsibility for all my deeds.  
Give me courage for all the truth, testing, and training, as I choose the spiritual path.  
Breathe on me, O Breath of Inspiration, in the silence of my tranquil heart, infill me with Your wisdom.  
O, that I might radiate the compassion and peace, the truth and beauty of the Beloved!  
Direct my steps, O Holy One, that I may humbly walk with You.

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Today whenever you have some time:  
close your eyes for 5 minutes,  
breathe twice deeply,  
feel your heartbeat,  
watch your breath in and out,  
repeat these 5 minutes whenever you can.

Tishan

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