

How to Meditate

1. The Set Up

- Quiet place where can sit, stand, or lie down for 2 to 30 minutes on a daily basis.
- Pick a posture that is both relaxed and alert with spine reasonably straight.
- If sitting, head is as if a string at its top is tied to the ceiling.
- Eyes cast 45 degrees downward and unfocused or closed.
- Hands resting comfortably on legs or in lap.

2. The Lead In

- Take two or three **large** cleansing breaths. Feel the diaphragm move up and down with it.
- Call to mind a pleasant, heart-felt emotion of gratitude, kindness, or love – perhaps by thinking about a happy time, being with your children, a loved one, a pet. Recall the feeling of this moment, not the event itself.
- Do a body scan from feet up to top of head and relax all muscles. Tongue, eyes, jaw, neck

3. Three Types of Meditation (Remember the goal to stay both *relaxed* & Alert.)

A. Focused Meditation (For beginners or when mind is jumping around or falling asleep)

- **Follow the Breath** – Bring your awareness to the sensations of breathing. Don't try to control the breath; let it be whatever it is. Sense the cool air coming in and the warm air going out at your nostrils – the chest rising and falling. You may want to softly count your breaths counting to four and then start over; or, try counting slowly 1 2 3 on the in breath and 3 2 1 on the out breath. It is normal for the mind to wander, and when it does, just return to the breath. Be gentle and kind to yourself. Do not try to stop your thoughts. Much of the benefit of meditation is from the coming back to the present moment – more thoughts allow more coming back. See if you can stay attentive for ten breaths in a row.
- **Or Say A Mantra** – Quietly to yourself. Christian version: on in breath, MA RAH, and on out breath, NA THA. Zen version: on in breath, OM KA KA KABI SAN, and on out breath, MY AE SO AH KAH.

B. Awareness Meditation (For seeing what your mind is up to and that you also have an observer within you). Can also be done outside of meditation.

- When doing focused meditation, and a thought comes up, observe it and label it.
- Is it about the past or the future (thoughts are never in the now). As thoughts arise, what is the trend? Mostly regrets or angers or what I should have said/done in the past or mostly worries, anxieties, and preparations for the future? About me versus about others?
- Is this a thought about security/ comfort, or esteem/approval, or power/control?
- Are there recurring thoughts about the same issue? If so, what is behind it?
- What percent of time am I in my thoughts versus living fully in the present?

C. Unfocused Meditation (More advanced, for deeper states of being with your Being)

- Do the Lead In from above and with the complete body scan.
- Now, instead of following your breath or observing your thoughts, just gently let them go and return to the present.
- Or, after the body scan, try to be aware of your entire body, all at the same time. This is hard, but keep on trying. Then, extend your awareness out into the room, extending out to other people in the room and to the space of the room – joining all of yourself with all of your surroundings in the present, while remaining both relaxed and alert.