

How to Start Meditating

The word “meditate” can have many meanings and look very different from person to person in practice. This guide is intended to give a practical, general starting point for any person who has heard of the benefits of meditating and would like to learn how, but doesn’t know where to begin. Here we share basic tools, strategies, and advice to get started!

Breath

Don’t try to “calm your mind.” Instead focus on your breath. I find it helps to breathe in to the count of three and breathe out to the count of five, over and over. You can even visualize your breath a particular color, such as loving pink, and breathe that loving pink oxygen deep into your lungs; with every “in” breath, feel your body absorb more and more love. I also like to imagine I am breathing in calm, and then breathing out calm back into the world. You can breathe in peace and breathe peace back out into the world. You can breathe in healing, joy, confidence, strength, etc.

Sitting

How you position your body while meditating is a choice based on comfort, healthy posture, and personal preference. Personally, I sit while meditating to avoid falling asleep in a lying down position. If you’re sitting in a chair, keep your feet flat on the floor and your spine straight. If you’re sitting cross-legged on a cushion, the important thing is to have your knees below your hips so you are not straining your spine. Relax your shoulders and arms letting your hands rest on your thighs. Palms down is a more grounded position, palms up is a more receptive position, or you could place one hand on top of the other in your lap; simply choose what feels best to you.

Eyes

Decide what you are going to do with your eyes. If you want the experience to be more body-based, close them. This way you can feel and notice sensation within your body, and you can also focus on that area between your eyebrows and see if you get any visual experience from your “third eye.” If you want to feel more anchored in the space you’re in, keep your eyes open. To keep from being visually distracted, I recommend focusing on an object such as a candle flame, tapestry, or oracle card.

Time

Meditation is not about length, it is about frequency; just like you don’t get strong by lifting one giant weight one time. Try and meditate regularly fifteen minutes a day. You really don’t need to meditate longer than that! Create a committed routine. David Ji, author of *Secrets of Meditation*, recommends not pinning your meditation to a time on the clock, but instead trying RPM (rise, pee, meditate) or RAW (right after work) or any other sequential timing that works for you.

Thoughts

Thoughts will come and go as you meditate. Thoughts are like waves rising and falling in the ocean. Be an observer of the waves, do not ride the waves. When you notice you are riding a wave, congratulate yourself for noticing, and bring your focus back to your breath. If you forget to return to your breath and remain involved in your thinking, no problem. Sometimes some organization and reflection of your thought needs to happen before you feel the freedom to let the thought go.

Final Tips

- During meditation you might experience something unusual, such as a vision or a sensation within the body. This is normal. Although meditation may feel like you are just sitting and doing nothing, many physiological and spiritual responses are taking place.
- Let go of meaning. Don’t get distracted with the meaning of any thought, feeling, or sensation. Trust that the meaning will take care of itself.
 - You are perfect. Whatever happens during your meditation is perfect! Do not judge the experience. Every meditation is like a snowflake, unique and never to be repeated. There is no “wrong” or “right” with your meditation, it simply “is.”
 - Enjoy! Don’t get too serious. This is a lighthearted practice, so have fun.

