



MEDITATION
101

INTRODUCTION

What is meditation?

Meditation isn't about becoming a different person, a new person, or even a better person. It's about training in awareness and getting a healthy sense of perspective. You're not trying to turn off your thoughts or feelings. You're learning to observe them without judgment. And eventually, you may start to better understand them as well

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the ability to be present, to rest in the here and now, fully engaged with whatever we're doing in the moment.

It's meditation practice, not meditation perfect

There's no such thing as perfect meditation. Sometimes your focus will wander or you'll forget to follow your breath. That's OK. It's part of the experience. What's most important is to meditate consistently. It's one of those things where the journey is more important than the destination.

The mind can be a weird place

It takes time to get comfortable with your mind. There might be setbacks along the way but that's part of meditating. Keep practicing. You're doing great just by showing up



Step 1: Before you get started

Before you start, you need to take care of a few practicalities.

When are you going to do it each day?

When are you most likely to be undisturbed?

How will you even remember to do it?

The first step is committing to a regular, daily practice. Taking 10 minutes out each day shouldn't be difficult, but it's easy to get caught up in everything that's going on.

Try to make it a regular part of your schedule. Create a space to sit at the same time each day. Mornings seem to work best for most people, but find a time that works for you.

And lastly, wear whatever you like, although we would recommend wearing loose fitting clothing if possible



Step 2: Get settled

Find a quiet space where you can relax. (easier said than done we know)

Sit comfortably in a chair with your hands resting in your lap or on your knees.

Keep your back straight – sitting at the front of the seat might help.

Your neck should be relaxed, with your chin slightly tucked in.

Commit to practising for the full time you've set aside, whether you find the session easy or difficult, this will help to train your mind to continue through tough sessions



Step 3: Breathe deeply

Defocus your eyes, gazing softly into the middle distance. Take five deep, audible breaths, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. On the last exhalation, allow your eyes to close



Step 4: Check in

Take a few moments to settle into your body.

Gently observe your posture, and notice the sensations where your body touches the chair and your feet meet the ground.

Feel the weight of your arms and hands resting on your legs. Acknowledge your senses: notice anything you can smell, hear or taste and sensations of heat, cold or wind



Step 5: Scan your body

Slowly turn your mind inwards.

Scan your body from head to toe, observing any tension or discomfort.

Don't try to change what you find, simply take note of it. Scan again, although this time notice which parts of the body feel relaxed. Take about 20 seconds for each scan.

Now turn your awareness to your thoughts. Notice any thoughts that arise without attempting to alter them. Gently note your underlying mood, just becoming aware of what's there without judgment. If there's nothing obvious, that's fine, too



Step 6: Consider the 'why'

Pause for around 30 seconds and consider why you're sitting today.

Recognise any expectation or desire you've brought along, and let it go.

Spread the love: take a moment to consider the wider effects of being mindful today. Feeling calmer helps you feel better – which in turn has a positive knock-on effect for people you encounter during the day, Become aware of this ripple effect.

Nothing to achieve: before you continue in the session, remind yourself that there's no "thing" for you to do here – your only job is to sit for the full session, but beyond that there is nothing for you to do in the normal sense of the word. All you have to do is step back and let it all unfold in its own time and own way



Step 7: Observe the breath

Bring your attention to your breathing. Don't make any effort to change it, just observe the rising and falling sensation that it creates in your body.

Notice where these sensations occur – be it your belly, your chest, your shoulders, or anywhere else.

For a few moments, focus on the quality of each breath, noting whether it's deep or shallow, long or short, fast or slow.

Begin silently counting the breaths: 1 as you inhale, 2 as you exhale, 3 on the next inhalation, and so on, up to 10. Then start again at 1.

While doing this, it's completely normal for thoughts to bubble up. You don't need to "do" anything – just guide your attention back to the breath when you realise the mind has wandered off. If you can remember the number you'd counted up to, start again from there, or simply start from 1 again.



Step 8: Allow your mind to be free

Spend 20-30 seconds just sitting. You might find yourself inundated with thoughts and plans, or feel calm and focused.

Whatever happens is completely fine. Enjoy the rare chance to let your mind simply be



Step 9: Prepare to finish

Become aware once more of the physical feelings: of the chair beneath you, where your feet make contact with the floor, your arms and your hands resting in your lap.

Notice anything you can hear, smell, taste or feel. When you're ready, slowly open your eyes



Step 10: Take it with you

Before standing up, form a clear idea about what you're going to do next, like brushing your teeth, making a cup of tea or watching some T.V.

It's so easy to just jump up off the seat and lose the calm and spacious quality you've just created.

Try to carry this awareness with you to the next activity. Touch base: throughout the day, find small moments to remind yourself what it felt like to have that clarity and focused attention.

You don't need to do the whole exercise – just take a couple of deep breaths, notice how you feel, and observe any areas of tension

Other techniques for beginners

Body scan

Simply bring your awareness to one part of your body and notice any sensations that are going on for you there, without judgment. Continue moving through each part of your body until you have “scanned” the whole body

Progressive muscular relation

Similar to a body scan, you run through each of your body parts. However, with this technique you squeeze the body part as hard as you can before allowing it to relax completely

Breathing techniques

Sama Vritti (equal breathing) - inhale and exhale for equal counts

Anuloma Viloma (alternate nostril) - place your finger over one nostril and inhale deeply, hold the breath at the top while switching to hold the other nostril, then exhale through the opposite nostril and repeat

Ujjayi (ocean breath) - constrict your breath to the back of the throat while forcefully exhaling through the nostrils to create an ocean-like sound

Bhastrika (breath of fire) - make your exhale much more rapid to quickly deflate the abdomen

Udgeeth (chanting breath) - use your exhale to chant a sound e.g. om

“Meditation is like a gym in which you develop the powerful mental muscles of calm and insight.”

– Ajahn Brahm

