



# Thoughts on Meditation

I have tips to help you get started.

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## Are You Curious About Meditation?

I guess that you've probably heard about meditation, its different practices, and the various health and mental benefits of meditating; there is a good reason people believe meditation is a good practice. It's been in the news frequently, there are plenty of books, apps, audio recordings, and classes about meditation out there, and you may have become curious about this ancient technique that's making a comeback in modern times.

If you think that meditation is some complicated, esoteric, fancy/schmancy activity done only by people in long robes, sitting on mountain tops; I can tell you that meditation, in a sense, has an image problem. Anyone can do it and it can be done in lots of places when people are not engaged in operating any kind of machinery. I do a simple form of it, and I don't consider myself all that odd. I have actually done it in a doctor's office.

Years ago, I was overweight, by a lot. A side effect of that was that my blood pressure got way too high.

When I started losing weight, my blood pressure went down, but every time I went to the doctor's office, I would get anxious, and my blood pressure would be recorded as higher than it normally was.

I have since learned that this is common, and it is called *White coat syndrome*.

Who knew? I didn't. I was bothered that my blood pressure was going into my medical records higher than I knew it was normally.

I decided to engage in a brief bit of meditation in the doctor's office, sometimes when I was sitting in the room, waiting for the nurse, to help me calm down and lower my blood pressure.

I will admit that this did not work immediately, but after about three visits, the doctor took me off the blood pressure medication.

That was about three years ago now.

I cannot promise that will happen for you, but I do believe that meditation can help you in other ways.

Do you get nervous before tests or interviews?

Do you find yourself getting angry or anxious and wish you could calm yourself?

Do you simply wish you had a simple activity that would help your day and other activities be smoother and less anxiety-provoking?

I would suggest you give meditation a try. It is one of the cheapest activities that can benefit you. It does not cost a penny.

*[Well, OK. You did pay for this guide, but that is all you need. You can buy other things, but you do not have to do that unless you want to.]*

You can do it, as I said, just about anywhere, provided you are not operating machinery, and that includes driving. You can,

however, have a brief period of meditation **BEFORE** you start driving on a busy or long route.

Disclaimer: I am no one special. I do not have any degree or special training in this. I just know some things about meditation and want to share them. If you decide this is helpful and you like the practice, do check out offers from others. You have to make your own judgment about its effectiveness for you. I am not, and cannot be, responsible for any impact or reaction meditation has on you.

OK?

Fair enough?

Let's explore what you can do to learn more about meditation and most importantly, how to give it a try.

## **Learning More About Meditation**

The internet is a great place to start looking for more information about meditation. You'll find plenty of information about meditation, its long history, the various forms of it, and, of course, some direction and instructions for getting started. This isn't a bad place to start if you want more than what I will share. You'll get the basics and enough information to dip your toes in with a simple meditation practice.

You can also find a lot of great books about meditation. Head on over to Amazon, your local bookstore, or the library and pick up a book or two on meditation. There are also some great apps out there with guided meditations. Search for meditation in your phone's app store.

There are lots of books and apps. I will suggest a few at the end of this. None of the books or apps will be appropriate for everyone. Each individual needs to find those items that feel “right” and comfortable. What works for your friend or significant other may or may not work for you.

You can find some simple guided meditations online, such as audio recordings and the like. Another great option is, of course, listening to one of the apps at the end of this guide. They are a great source of guided meditation, and the apps will help you increase your meditation time as you go along. They are a great starting point.

I encourage you to investigate meditation and give it a try. It's a wonderful way to combat stress, improve your quality of life, and do something positive for your mental and physical health. Try it and see if meditation is right for you. If you don't particularly enjoy guided meditation, try chanting, transcendental meditation, or breathing meditation. There are so many different traditions and practices out there. If you keep an open mind, I'm sure you'll find the one that's right for you.

## How To Start Meditating

The simplest form of meditation that I know of, and the one I will discuss, is to become aware of your breath.

Getting started with meditation is a lot easier than you may think. There isn't any special equipment you need to buy or

classes you should be taking. While buying a book, a guided meditation audio recording or an app for your smartphone are certainly options, you don't even have to do that to get started. I'll share everything you need to know to get started meditating right here in this guide.

The only "equipment" I suggest is a comfortable, but not *too* comfortable chair and, maybe, a kitchen timer, or the timer on your phone.

Start by getting comfortable in a spot that's as free of distractions as possible. You want to sit down either on a chair with your feet firmly planted on the ground or sit cross-legged on the floor. If you sit on the floor, you'll be more comfortable if you sit on a cushion. It's important that you can sit comfortably for several minutes in whatever position you choose and that you're keeping your back straight. Slumping may make you sleepy while you meditate, and bad posture may cause you discomfort after a while.

Before we start with the actual meditation, let's get back to distractions. In the beginning, you want to eliminate as many of them as possible. Choose a quiet spot where no one will interrupt you. Turn off the ringer on your phone and close the blinds if you think it will help to create a calm and soothing space. You won't always have to go through all this trouble to meditate because, after a little practice, you'll be able to do the little meditation exercise I'm about to share with you anytime, anywhere. Like any new skill, meditating can be a little hard in the beginning. It sounds simple enough, but it's easy to get distracted. That's why

it's important to set yourself up for success by cutting out any distractions you can.

You can set a timer if you wish. I would suggest trying this for 15 minutes. Once that is done, it is done. That is your first attempt. Do it again at some other point in time. You do not have to meditate for hours. Once you get more comfortable with this, you can meditate for just a few minutes.

Here's how to meditate. Sit down, close your eyes, and focus on your breath. Notice how the air flows in and out of your nose and mouth. Try to think of nothing else. This is the hard part and something that takes practice. Start meditating for a few minutes here and there and increase the time as you move along. Don't judge yourself when your thoughts stray. Keep bringing yourself back to the sensation of the breath anytime you notice that you're thinking of something else.

You may find it difficult to just concentrate on your breath. You will, I guarantee, find that you will have lots and lots and lots of thoughts flowing through your mind.

I would suggest that you simply deeply inhale for a slow count of four, hold your breath for a count of six, and then exhale for a count of eight.

I have found that this particular technique helps me focus on what I am doing, not the thoughts trying to fill my mind.

You will still get the random thoughts. Just acknowledge them and let them go.

I am sure you have been in situations in which you have “listened” to other people and let those comments go if you even “hear” those comments. Maybe you sometimes do that with people at work, your children, and/or your significant other. 😊

Do you ever have a conversation with someone, and the television is on? You probably either watch the television program and only “half-listen” to the other person or listen to the person and not the television. This proves you can ignore the thoughts in your head and just let them pass on. Do not focus on any of them. Simply count as you inhale, hold your breath, and exhale.

That’s all there’s to it. Getting started with meditation is simple, but like any new skill, it takes practice. Be patient with yourself. Be kind to yourself. Stick with it and keep practicing these new meditation skills. You’ll be glad you did.

You can vary the timing, focus on one spot on the wall, or perhaps a candle flame.

Giving your mind a chance to calm, without all the incessant thoughts, will, in turn, help you calm.

## Establishing Strong Meditation Habits

Creating new habits isn’t easy and getting into the habit of meditating regularly is no different. Yet taking the time to establish this habit of daily meditation has so many benefits that



carry into all aspects of your life. You'll feel calmer and more collected. You'll be able to concentrate better, show more patience, and live in the moment. Meditation is even good for your health and can help reduce stress. In short, making meditation a habit is a very good idea.

Here are a few tips to help you get there.

### **Make It Part of Your Routine**

It's much easier to create a new habit when you make it part of your daily routine. This is why meditating first thing in the morning works so well. Your daily meditation becomes part of what you do to get ready in the morning. Try meditating after you get out of the shower or even before you get out of bed in the morning. Set your alarm to go off 10 minutes earlier and start your day with a short meditation session. Since it is part of an already established routine, it will quickly become a habit.

I have discovered that if I am engaged in a lot of "mind work", such as grading student assignments, and I am aware I am getting tired/bored, I will meditate for a few minutes. That is often enough to allow me to resume grading.

### **Stick to the Same Time and Set an Alert**

If including your daily meditation practice into an existing routine isn't an option, make a new one. It's helpful to stick to roughly the same time each day when establishing a new habit. In the beginning, you may find it difficult to get into the swing of things so set an alert on your phone to remind you to meditate.

Another helpful tip is to commit to this new meditation habit for 30 days. Check them off on a calendar and do what you can not to miss a day. At the end of the 30 days, you will have started to establish the new habit, and sticking to it going forward will be much easier. You can use my habit tracker for that. [This is found at the end of my email messages.]

### **There's an App for That**

Last but not least, consider using a meditation app. You can find them in the app store for your favorite mobile device and most of them are free to try. The basic version may be just what you need to start establishing the meditation habit. The apps keep things interesting with new guided meditations for each day and let you track your progress. It will also remind you to meditate with an alert on your phone. Give it a try and see if using an app helps you establish a strong meditation habit.

# TOP TIPS

Meditation isn't just for self-help followers anymore - it has gone mainstream. People have widely accepted that meditation is a powerful tool and can help you no matter what your pursuit is. If you are having trouble getting into the habit, or you want to perfect your technique, then I suggest you follow one or all of these nine tips:

## **1. Start Early**

While you can meditate at any time of the day, there are a few reasons the morning might be the best. First, when you meditate early, it ensures you don't skip it later because your day got busy. Secondly, it is an excellent way to motivate yourself for the day ahead. If you know you have a busy day, this can help you get started in a calm mood.

## **2. Start Small**

So many people start to meditate and then give up. They get frustrated, find it too hard, or miss too many days. Start small! You don't have to become a Zen master overnight. Meditate when you can, for as long as you can, and whenever you can. Five to ten minutes a day is fine. Eventually, it will become a habit.

## **3. Make it a Routine**

If you are still struggling with meditation, make it into a routine. If you practice meditation at the same time each day, it will be easier to ingrain as a habit. Try tying it into existing routines as well.

#### **4. Find the Technique That Works for You**

There are several different meditation techniques available. The key to making it a regular habit is to find the one (or more) that feels the most natural and comfortable for you. This step will make it much easier to stick with meditation.

#### **5. Keep It Simple**

Don't get caught up in "wrong and right" when you are meditating. Keep things simple. Even closing your eyes and focusing on your breath for a few moments is better than nothing.

#### **6. Try a Guided Meditation**

Some people need a little more structure if they want to make something a habit. Fair enough! If you are one of these people, you may find that a guided meditation is easier to follow. You can find many free, guided meditations on YouTube.

#### **7. Create the Right Atmosphere**

Once you start making meditation a habit, you can fine-tune things by creating the right atmosphere. Having a clean, organized, and comfortable area to practice meditation will ensure you reap the maximum benefits.

#### **8. Eliminate Distraction**

Creating the right atmosphere includes eliminating distractions. Make sure your area is quiet and turn off your phone. If you live with friends or family, let them know how important it is not to disturb you. You can even meditate outside if you have a peaceful area around your living area.

#### **9. Embrace Technology**

It might seem weird to embrace technology when it comes to something as spiritual as meditation, but it makes sense. YouTube and other sites have free guided meditations. *Headspace* and other apps help make meditation a habit. Something as simple as a phone reminder can help remind you it is time to meditate.

Give it a try.

What do you have to lose?

# ACTIONABLE STEPS

1	2	3
<p>Take 2-3 minutes today to clear your mind, close your eyes, and focus on your breathing. This action might not seem like much, but it is meditation</p>	<p>Go to YouTube and try to find a guided meditation that speaks to you. You can narrow your search by focusing on different meditation topics.</p>	<p>Schedule meditation into your week. Take some time to schedule meditation each day in your planner. Try your best to get five days in a row.</p>

# FURTHER READING

I do NOT specifically recommend any of these. These are just a sample of what you can find on Amazon. One of these may be absolute gold for you and useless for someone else. I suggest you do a little research and try some free items first. If you have a Kindle, some of these are free with Kindle.

**1. Just Sit: A Meditation Guidebook for People Who Know They Should But Don't**

<https://www.amazon.com/Just-Sit-Meditation-Guidebook-People/dp/006267286X/>

**2. Practicing Mindfulness: 75 Essential Meditations**

<https://www.amazon.com/Practicing-Mindfulness-Essential-Meditations-Everyday/dp/1641521716/>

**3. The Daily Stoic: 366 Meditations**

<https://www.amazon.com/Daily-Stoic-Meditations-Wisdom-Perseverance/dp/0735211736/>

**4. The Headspace Guide to Meditation And Mindfulness**

5. <https://www.amazon.com/Headspace-Guide-Meditation-Mindfulness-Minutes/dp/1250104904/>

**6. Practical Meditation for Beginners**

<https://www.amazon.com/Practical-Meditation-Beginners-Happier-Calmer/dp/1641520256/>