

the spirit portal



Learn to Meditate – Session 1

Meditation & Posture

Key ingredients for a Great Meditation Posture



Tree like, strong & grounded base

Cushions supporting your bum, back,
& knees if they are up too high.

Back is straight yet supple and comfortable

Allowing the weightiness of your body
to drop into your sit

Posture that maintains alertness and receptivity

Comfort is a friend!

For a Conducive Meditation Session...

- Either **sit on the floor** cross legged & supported by cushions,
- or **on a chair** with soft padding and back support.

Feet should touch the ground fully
when sitted on a chair to stay grounded.

Avoid lying down as your body thinks its getting ready to sleep and its easy to trigger off just that! ZZZzzzzz....



When cross legged you can either choose the *full lotus position*

with your hands resting in the middle and on top of each other



- yet this lady might need a cushion under each knee -

Or ... you can choose the subtle variation of your hands resting gently on each knee.



- Again more cushions under the knees for those who want to -

Beanbags are great for meditation as they hug your whole body



and adjust around your shape in a perfect, luxurious way :)

Adjustments

Feel free to adjust and move your body before starting your practice, it's the best way to work out what works best for you.

It can often take some time to find what position suits us the most and it is normal for the body to rebel on 20 minutes of sitting still, especially at the beginning of your practice.

Don't let that put you off, just be patient with a period of adjustment until you find what posture your body prefers.

Simplicity

Having said that, on each week we encourage you to aim and ***lessen your movements*** as you progress into meditation practice,

as continuous external movement can also be a way of resisting to concentrate and go deeper into our practice.

And by the way ... nobody expects you to do this !



Image by Beni Ishaque Luthor

Creating Conducive Conditions for Practice

*“ Meditation is not about shutting off
the hustle & bustle of life, but making peace with it “*

YET we think It's helpful that...

whilst learning and until you get a good grounding of the practice,
you create a conducive environment that is going to help you make
the most of your meditation sit.

*Besides... by minimising external distractions, it is easier to spot
the internal ones! No?*

Things to do that will help your focus...

- Switch off your phone.
- Notify others in your home that you will be unavailable for the next 30 minutes or so, so that you don't get distracted.
- Set up a personable space-altar of inspiration that supports your intentions in meditating, i.e a candle, a flower or an image to support your connection.
- Keep a notebook near by in case you need to make notes or write down any reflections once you come out of your sit.
- Have a glass of water for before or after your sit.
- Keep an extra layer of clothing by you, for warmth and cosiness or for changes in temperature.

Perfect!

Body Scan



scanning...

When

We always start from our head at the top and finish with our feet.

We simply place our awareness, focus and attention to the different parts of the body...

feeling any physical sensations, textures & energies, simply acknowledging what is there presently.

* *Body scans offer us the perfect opportunity to slow down*

*gradually and
practice.*

gather ourselves, before we start our

- *Body scans are like a **warm up exercise** and a great **ice breaker** in meditation. As the mind starts to bring its attention on the external, we are slowly gathering ourselves by gradually focusing on our internal experience ...*
- *A body scan can **help us stay grounded** through the meditation that is to follow.*
- *It is like paying our respects to our body and preparing ourselves for the practice and the magic to begin.*

Attitude in Meditation practice

To help you understand what we actually do in meditation, I like to use the **analogy of the ocean and its waves**.

Picture this.....



You are standing by the shore, facing the big wide ocean ...

In its totality, the big ocean is a metaphor for your big, expanded and relaxed mind. The mind you access in deep meditation.

The small waves are your small mind with all the chatter and thoughts, at times pleasant, at others not so much.

As a meditator, you are standing by the shore relishing and enjoying the big wide ocean (your big mind),

whilst witnessing the smaller waves (the small mind) expressing themselves and eventually surrendering into the big mind...



image by Beni Ishaque Luthor

Just like the small waves dissolve into the big ocean, so *our mind's noise **also has a natural capacity** to surrender itself to a bigger, wider space of higher consciousness....*

a place where noise simply ceases to exist...

In our busy modern lives

we somehow unlearned that surrender...

The aim of meditation is to help us remember that vital function of surrender...

*So in other words we're aiming to not attach to
the small mind chatter and all it carries with it in your life...*

As you see the waves break in front of you without touching your feet, similarly you observe and notice your thoughts by letting



them wash away..

Simply surrendering your every thought to a bigger space within your being, without getting hooked into their story...

Just like that, notice the thoughts that arise and **choose to let them go.**

To do that, simply **chose to identify with the big ocean**, the expanded mind, **instead of the small waves**, the everyday mind.

*And allow the small mind to wash away & surrender to
the big mind..*

THIS is the aim of Meditation



The 3 stages of Mindfulness Meditation



Stage 1

After taking a couple of deep breaths, we allow our normal breathing to take over and take us into our practice. Whilst breathing, we mark each of our out-breaths with a number starting from 1 all the way to up 10, one number at a time and consecutively. When we reach 10 we start again from 1.

Stage 2

At this stage we drop the counting and simply deepen our concentration by noticing the breath as it comes in and out of our body. We simply let our breath be the anchor of our awareness.

We develop an interest in the breath itself, whilst still retaining our awareness and focus on it. We feel the textures, energies and sensations in our body whilst we are breathing.

Stage 3

At this stage, we continue our natural breathing, yet we're taking our concentration and awareness of the breath even deeper by making note of a physical point in our body, internal or external, where our breath is felt. It could be the tip of our nose, back of the throat etc.

We allow that spot to be the focus and object of our attention for the rest of this session, letting everything around the breath, simply fall away.

Remember....

At stage 1 of the practice

If you find yourself forgetting where you are in the counting
simply start from number 1 again,

If you find yourself having exceeded number 10
simply start from number 1 again.

As a basic rule and at ALL stages of the practice

ANYTIME you get distracted by ANYTHING whilst meditating,
simply notice it, accept it and without dismissing it,
bring your awareness back to your breath.

This is not intended to punish or discourage you!

It simply acts as an effective reminder that the aim of practice is for your awareness to stay focused and absorbed into your breath, and the counting of numbers is there to remind you that and bring you back into track.

If in any doubt at any time at what to do in meditation....

FOLLOW THE BREATH!

Be Intrigued by it

Absorbed in it

Love & Enjoy it

Play task for the week



Build or maintain a regular and consistent meditation practice and keep a key highlights diary to record reflections & observations on your practice if and as they come up...

It's up to you how long you meditate for ...

Why do I say that?

Well, if I was to ask you to meditate for 20 minutes and you don't then you are just going to spend your mental energy judging yourself on not doing as you were suggested.

And that is not the point....

Remember, you are your own boss here.

However as a guideline, between 15 - 20 minutes is a good start for week 1 if you're a beginner and need a structure to work with.

Also know.... better to do some meditation than do none.

The first week we like to keep things simple...

You are mainly aiming to enjoy your sits and practice your attentional muscle of shifting your awareness from distractions to the breath.

What to Notice...

- General concentration levels
- Depth of breathing
- General emotional and mental quality in each sit.
- How connected you feel within your body.
- Be aware of sensations, energies, physical nuances.
- Coming out of your practice take 2 or more minutes to ground yourself.

And don't forget to have FUN whilst at it!

Learn to Meditate – Session 2

Meditation & the Mind



image by Beni Ishaque Luthor

This session's AIMS:

- To engage and meditate on the mind's activities
- Identify the abstract mental activity taking place
- From abstract mental activity to specific mental activity
- Understanding impressional descriptions

- From impressions to stories and storylines
- From small mind to Big Mind
- Observing the 'ocean' – not getting wet

THE M I N D

When Meditating...

We treat our mind like an unfriendly force, or an unruly child that we wish to discipline. **JUST** for the purpose of meditation.



Helpful qualities: The mind is useful and helps us make decisions, be discerning and make progress in life.

We 're lucky to have the capacity to think and act logically.



Unhelpful qualities: The mind can often distract us with its chatter and as a result we often stop being present in the moment.

Also we tend to believe all bunch of stuff the mind tells us, not all of which is true.

Aim of Meditation: to quiet down the chatter, **silence the mind** and access a calmer, wider space that lies underneath.

Then all the mind's helpful qualities can really shine through!

Meditation is NOT a time to be used for thinking or for making plans.

Meditation can eventually help us access the mind's helpful qualities and eliminate the unhelpful ones.

Dealing with Mental Distractions

Mental distractions in meditation can be things like ...



Thoughts from the day

Memories

Replays of the day's events

A conversation we had with someone

A shopping list we need to compile

and the list goes on....

Lies the Mind can tell us...

We are NOT good enough

NOT creative enough

NOT working hard enough

NOT good looking enough

NOT tall enough

NOT clever enough and so on!

The point is for us to develop our discriminating wisdom in knowing what's **constructive criticism** and what **down right judgement.**

The **tone, energy** and **quality** of the thought will give you a clue!



Constructive Criticism..

I Though not the best presentation have given, I did cover some good points that I needed to get across and the client seemed intrigued by some of the proposals.



Judgemental Thinking..

That was the worst presentation ever! I totally failed, im such a loser!

I should have prepared much more, but I was too stupid to think clearly.

Feel the difference?

See what difference these 2 points of views and approaches can make?

It is easy for the mind to give us the harshest interpretation ever, and one of the purposes of meditation is for us to notice where that takes place and soften our edges with our awareness...

Again with this week's meditation session, consider anything you might need to set in place or bear in mind so that you meditate with ease and comfort.

This is part of your...

Creating Conducive Conditions for Practice

Body Scan

We will again start our session with a body scan, always starting from head all the way down the body and ending with your feet, legs or base.

Body scans can take anything from 5-7 minutes, just take what you need to allow the dust to settle in order to become present in the space ready to start your meditation sit.

Meditation Guidelines

As usual we follow the **3 stages of mindfulness meditation** as covered on week 1, though for the purpose of this week the focus is on the mind and so we are to incorporate the following reminders throughout the 2nd stage of the practice.

We notice the area around the head and brain
as well as the feelings and sensations around it.

Notice the abstract qualities around the head first,
the less specific and more generic aspects.

Look out for any activity throughout the body that offers...

A sensation,

A feeling,

A vibration,

A texture.

These are the more abstract qualities.

Use your attention & awareness

gently and in a relaxed way,

letting the impressions wash away as they come by and through
you.

Allow that quality of your mind to show you an
impressional description of what it embodies.

Does the Quality of your Mind Feel...

Light or Dark ?

Warm or **Cool** ?

Calm or Busy ?

is there a **Colour** ?

Do you sense a **Texture** ?

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