



# The Art of Meditation 2.0

*Everything you need to  
begin a fulfilling practice*

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## Dedication

To everyone who believes that life comes from a place outside of the thinking mind.

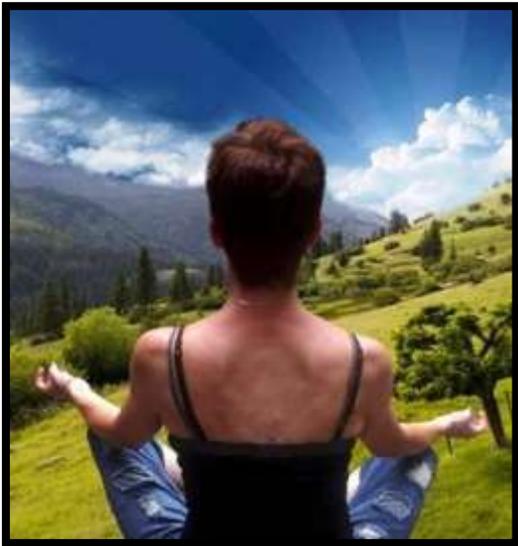
To the artists, dreamers, and those just trying to get through another day.

*Special appreciation to Jason, Angelo and Elyse. I'm a better me because of you.*

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## Introduction



Entrenched in mysticism, meditation is a profound art form that is exceptionally simple, yet deliciously complex at the same time.

If you are interested in the history, it is thought that formal meditation began well before 3000 BC in India. This reflective practice was originally included in a system of Yoga that was passed from guru to guru through word of mouth.

It took many years before this highly revered system was recorded on paper or parchment, or released to the rest of the world for edification.

As meditation began to mature in India, it also began to develop roots in Buddhist and other Middle Eastern religious and spiritual practices. The Christian form of meditation, which would come many years later, is more commonly known as contemplative prayer.

While meditation can certainly deepen any spiritual practice, it is not a religious pursuit and it is not “owned” by any specific dogma. Instead, meditation is a system developed to unify the body, mind and spirit. It is a pursuit toward total self-knowledge, and it does not matter what your spiritual beliefs are, or are not.

For those of us who meditate regularly, the benefits are very clear. It feels good! It helps us live better, healthier, happier lives. We think better and loved ones like us better because we are calmer and more effective in every aspect of life.

The benefits of this gentle practice affects all levels of the physical, emotional and mental systems. While those particular benefits can create deep meaning and fulfillment in life, they are not as important as the fact that meditation is so important - **it could quite literally save lives.**

That's a bold claim for sure, yet there is truth behind it!

For further verification, ask your physician or someone who meditates regularly.

### **What is Meditation?**

Meditation is any activity that focuses your awareness.

Focus on what you may wonder? It does not matter. It could be a mantra or saying that you repeat over and over to yourself. It could be an object or a picture you gaze upon. Or, it could be your own mind or your breath that you rest your awareness on.

No, not television, but music can certainly be used during meditation if you enjoy it and it helps you.

The bad news is that maintaining focus on anything in particular is an exceptionally challenging pastime. The good news is that there are MANY ways to meditate. This means, you can find a method that is the best for you and we will explore them all. You will learn everything you need so that you can create an enjoyable meditation practice for yourself that will bring you all the benefits available through this inspiring art.

Ultimately, no one else can tell you the best way to meditate. You will find the meditation techniques that work best for you by trial and error. When you find what fits, you will find a life-enhancing, and possibly life-changing pursuit that will improve every aspect of your being.

## Why Meditate?

You may already know why you want to start to meditate. Perhaps your doctor suggested it as a way to relieve stress or lower your heart rate. There are literally hundreds of benefits to be gained. Here are just a few:

- Increases grey matter concentration in the brain
- Regulates Moods
- Decreases depression, anxiety and other behavioral health challenges
- Improves psychomotor vigilance
- Enhances ability to generate gamma waves in the brain
- Reduces alcohol, substance abuse and other forms of self-medication
- Improves focus, attention, and ability to work under stress
- Improves information processing and decision-making
- Increases mental strength and resilience
- Increases emotional intelligence
- Increases pain tolerance
- Reduces pain better than morphine
- Improves memory and self-awareness
- Helps allocate limited brain resources
- Improves visuospatial processing and working memory
- Increases awareness of your unconscious mind
- Enhances creativity
- Significantly reduced risk for mortality, myocardial infarction, and stroke.
- Reduces blood pressure
- Decreases inflammatory disorders
- Decreases cellular-level inflammation
- Prevents asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease
- Helps treat premenstrual syndrome and menopausal symptoms
- Helps manage the heart rate and respiratory rate
- Reduces metabolic syndrome

- Creates a state of deep rest in the body and mind Increases feelings of compassion and decreases worry
- Decreases feelings of loneliness
- Reduces emotional eating

### **So where do you start?**

One part of creating your own meditation practice will be to determine what the best time is to meditate.

Please don't try to do this while driving or operating machinery!

Other than that, there are no hard rules with what time is the best to meditate.

You might find that quiet times of the day are the best to begin with. Some of us choose meditation as a lifestyle and practice it continually throughout the day. You may choose that path in your life as well, but at first choose at least one specific time during the day to begin.

Even one minute of deep meditation a day will show significant benefits, so do not sweat it if you feel pressured for time. As meditation becomes more important for you, you will find more time to practice.

Another question many beginners have is where to meditate. You may choose to create a sanctuary for yourself in a room or corner of your home. Sanctuary areas are nice, but not necessary. You can meditate at home, at work, in your bathtub, in your bed, on your couch, on the floor or in a park. Try to meditate in different environments and see what is most fulfilling for you.

Now that you know the why, what, when and where of meditation, take a few deep in and out breaths. Allow yourself to fully experience each breath. Feel

the air coming into you, softly and naturally into your belly and then slowly and naturally let it back out.

Let your thoughts go here, there, everywhere, you do not have to mind them right now. Just return to your breath. Do this as long as you like. Repeat as often as you like.

This is the most basic form of How to Meditate. From this point, you can become the creator in developing your own art of meditation.

## The Art of Stillness Meditation



The most typical image of stillness meditation has a person sitting cross legged on the ground. Their hands may be in a prayer position, or in resting on their knees and their eyes are usually closed. That is an accurate image of how many people choose to sit in meditation, but it is not the only way to do it.

Some people prefer to lie down to practice stillness meditation and others will prefer to sit up in a more comfortable position on a chair. Having a straight body posture (sitting or lying down with a straight spine) and feeling comfortable are the only important points to consider when you are trying out what position will work best for you.

Stillness meditation practices are some of the more challenging types of meditation for many of us due to their very nature. We as humans are simply out of practice of being still. At the same time, this form of meditation is the most powerful practice for dissolving inner blocks and transforming the false understanding you may have of yourself.

I typically recommend a beginner start with three minutes per day of some form of stillness meditation practice. Repeat this twice a day if possible. That may not seem like much time at all, but even one minute a day of complete awareness can work miracles.

With stillness meditation, and all other forms of meditation, it is important to remember that this practice is never about forcing yourself. Gentle persuasion is encouraged.

Set three minutes aside each day and try out one the stillness meditation practices in this chapter until you find the one that feels the best for you. You may find several that work and that is great. You can mix them up however you like.

### **Starting with your Breath**

To keep from sounding redundant throughout this guide, please make a note of this now: **Every meditation starts with your breath.**

When I start with my breath I notice how the air feels as it passes into my nose, into the center of myself, filling my belly and continuing into my legs and throughout the rest of my body. I feel how there is a gentle breeze as the air enters my nostrils and how my shoulders or other parts of my body gently move as they accept the air.

With an inhalation, you are nourishing and sustaining yourself. With an exhalation you are releasing toxins from your body. This nourishes and sustains the world around you. Sit still and become present to that in-and-out process of breathing. Allow your breath to slow and deepen into a naturally relaxed state.

### **Mantra Meditation or Centering Prayer**

Mantra meditation can use can be spiritual or secular, it doesn't matter which way you choose. Centering prayer meditation has a higher emphasis on connecting with Spirit or any religious entity of your choice.

Both of these styles of meditation are the easiest methods of stillness meditations. Choosing one or the other to start your practice with will give you somewhere to focus your attention.

A mantra can be a word or a sentence. OM (Oh-MMMM) is a sacred word and is thought to contain the vibration of “ALL”. Take a slow, comfortably deep breath in and then draw the word out through a natural and relaxed exhalation. Allow a deepening of your breath and the word as you settle into your relaxation. Repeat this for as long as you like, from deep in your voice. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the word.

With centering prayer, you may decide to use the name of your religious entity, or words that resonate with you on that level. You may also choose an emotional word to help you center. “Center” could be your mantra, or “I am at Peace”.

What matters most is how the mantra helps you, so choose anything at all that has a meaning for you.

## **Centering**

This is another easier form of stillness meditation, similar to using Mantra, because it gives you something to do. This form also stimulates your imagination and visualization skills. Start with simply relaxing and taking slow breaths.

As you become present to your breathing, visualize that your breath is coming from, and being released, deep into the ground, like tree roots reaching into the earth.

These roots will come from the top of your head down through your spine, down through your hands and feet. Reach deeper into the earth with each out breath, and begin to imagine energy from the earth’s core coming up into your body with each out breath.

Feel how you are connected to the earth and that it is accepting all your stress, worry and other negative feelings. The stress is melted away from the heat of the center of the earth and comes back to you as peace.

Just as your exhalation nourishes the earth, and your inhalation is a gift from the oxygen produced by the trees, energy from feelings creates the same give and take response.

When you release stress, anger, and other negative emotional energies into the earth it acts as nourishment. This energy is then transmuted into positive ions which are then available to you and others. All of that may sound like a bit of a head game for you if you do not have a background in physics.

To put it as simply as possible:

*Anything that exists is made up of measureable energy, including thoughts and feelings. Anything that exists can never - not exist. So something will never turn into nothing, it will only change into something else.*

With this in mind, the energy of your thoughts and feelings exist. You can feel them in your body and they will affect everything and everyone around you. Therefore, using meditation to transmute negative energy into positive energy is an activity that can improve your mind, body and spirit health as well as improve your environment, including those around you.

As you can now understand: Using centering meditation to help release negative energy through your exhalation, and receive positive energy through your inhalation can have life changing benefits. The more you practice, the more you will be able to do this outside of a formal meditation session. This is an especially essential tool to develop if you suffer from anxiety or depression, or through the occasional high stress moments in life.

## **Insight Meditation**

Insight meditation can be done sitting or lying and focuses on the breath, as all the other stillness meditation practices. To practice this style of meditation, breathe slowly and naturally and just watch what comes up.

If thoughts come up, and they will, just notice them without judgment and allow them to pass by while you gently return to following your breath.

Insight meditation is a practice of curiosity in connecting with the part of you that “watches” your thoughts and your senses. In essence, you are watching the watcher without thinking about it, just experiencing it in the moment.

It can be helpful with this meditation if you visualize your mind as a clear blue sky. Thoughts are the clouds that cross through the mind. Some clouds are the fluffy white kind. They float through easily and may be happy thoughts.

Other thoughts are heavier and darker clouds. Those can be worry thoughts and are typically harder to shake. Stay in the clear blue sky and just watch the clouds without becoming a part of them.

## **Guided Meditations**

There are a variety of guided meditations that address many topics that can be listened to and/or watched. YouTube for instance has a huge variety for you to try on for size. These types of meditation are helpful in reaching deeper states of meditation or attaining a specific meditative goal. Some of them are definitely better than others.

While guided meditations can be very effective, they should only be used as an occasional enhancement with other forms of meditation. Your mind will grow much stronger, and your meditation will become deeper if you can rely on yourself instead of being guided.

## Silence

Being silent in meditation, without the mantra's, centering or using guided meditation is an advanced skill. I suggest giving it a try regularly throughout the week, alongside other forms of meditation. This is because it may take some practice until this method seems more comfortable or natural.

You can begin silence meditation by starting with Mantra or centering prayer, then go into silence meditation after the mind calms down a bit. Sitting down after doing Yoga can also help your mind/body system warm up to sitting in silence.

You will want to make sure to turn off all noise, or at least as much as possible before you begin to sit in silence. You can lie down or sit down, whichever you are most comfortable with and just be in the quiet, with your breath.

You will inevitably hear sounds, just let them pass.

Your mind will decide to think, allow thoughts to pass. Do not strain or struggle with this, just gently return to a place of silence and start with about one minute at a time.

If you can sit in silence of the mind for one minute, that is an excellent feat even though it may not sound like long.

Once you feel comfortable with one minute of silence, increase the time slowly. It may take a long time to feel strong for even one full minute. The longer you practice though, the better it gets. Eventually it will become easy for you and you can then continue on to longer time periods.

## The Art of Movement Meditation



Many people love the ease and flow of movement meditation. Incorporating movement into your meditation practice can add depth that is not available with being still. When moving, we have something to focus on that allows an awareness of the present moment.

Movement meditation also incorporates the mind and body connection in a way that creates a much greater sensitivity to how our bodies relate to the space it inhabits.

### Walking Meditation

Walking meditation uses the act of walking as a meditative tool. Start with simply standing and connecting with your breath. Move your head into alignment, centered over your heart and stretch upwards through your sides and ribcage. Relax your shoulders. Root your feet firmly into the ground and center yourself into your body.

Then, walk. Keep your steps slow and deliberate. Allow your body to move how it feels the most natural. If your arms or hands feel awkward, hold them in prayer position or place them to cover your area between your heart and stomach.

Become aware of your feet as they move, one in front of the other. Ask yourself how your feet feel moving and how they feel on the ground.

As you walk, you can continue your awareness up throughout the rest of your body. Balance the outward experience and inward experience. Focus on your breath and what you see, without thinking about it, simply look.

There are many things you can notice when you are meditating and walking, at the same time, challenge yourself to consistently return to your breath and how your body feels moving on the earth.

### **Labyrinth Walking**

Labyrinth walking combines walking meditation with a creative, intuitive and visionary practice of going from the outer self into the inner self, and back into the outer. There are more than 2,000 labyrinths in the United States today. You can locate one at Labyrinth Locator (Just type that into Google), or create your own.

Finger labyrinths have also become a popular substitute for creating a similar meditative practice. You can use the following sample to experience the meditative quality of this on your own. You can use your finger, or a pen, but try to do this with your non-dominant hand as it takes more focus.



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