



Mindfulness and meditation

Bringing awareness to mind and body, to find greater equanimity in all experiences



What is meditation?

Meditation is a quiet contemplation that has been used for thousands of years in different cultures and is an element of many world religions. There are many types of meditation practices. Mindfulness and meditation has been reported to help people develop an even minded mental state toward all experiences (pleasant, unpleasant and neutral). National Institutes of Health (NIH) Studies suggest that mindfulness practices may help people manage stress, cope better with serious illness and reduce anxiety and depression.

On the following page, you will find more about:

- Metta meditation to help cultivate compassion as well as transform and promote a positive shift in your perception of the world
- Formal sitting practice guidelines to use 15 minutes per session, once or twice per day, to become more aware of thoughts, emotions and sensations
- An informal practice called "STOP" to help in stressful situations and encourage less reactive decision-making

Metta meditation

Metta meditation helps you fill up from within and spill out to others without reservation. Be a part of the flow of the giving and receiving of attention and compassion by using this narrative below. (Repeat each step two or three times.)

- Direct loving kindness and compassion toward yourself. Say, “May I be happy and healthy. May I be free of suffering. And may peace dwell in my heart.”
- Bring a person, or persons, into your mind who is easy to love (can also be an animal companion). Picture them standing before you and say to yourself, “May they be happy and healthy. May they be free of suffering. And may peace dwell in their hearts.”
- Bring a person, or persons, into your mind that you may not know well (acquaintances, work friends, etc.). Picture them standing before you and say to yourself, “May they be happy and healthy. May they be free of suffering. And may peace dwell in their hearts.”
- Bring a person, or persons, into your mind who you do not know but see sometimes. (You may not know their name.) Picture them standing before you and say to yourself, “May they be happy and healthy. May they be free of suffering. And may peace dwell in their hearts.”
- Bring a person, or persons, into your mind who you find difficult to love – maybe an adversary or even an enemy. (Be careful not to judge yourself for having these emotions.) Picture them standing before you and say to yourself, “May they be happy and healthy. May they be free of suffering. And may peace dwell in their hearts.”

Remember, this is not self-indulgent. Always end wishing yourself well and acknowledging the cultivation of compassion. End with your formal sitting practice. Explore your own narrative with a special meaning.

Formal sitting practice

The following are step-by-step reminders for your meditation practice. Each day we begin again, 10 to 15 minutes per session, once or twice per day. If you can do more, please do.

- Begin by adopting a position that is both relaxed and alert
- Take a few deep breaths. Exhale all the air from your lungs
- Become aware of the sensation of breathing and its nurturing quality
- Allow the breath to become natural without manipulating the rate or depth
- Bring your attention to the sensation of breath (rise and fall of abdomen or the air moving through the nose)
- Bring into awareness the thoughts, emotions and sensations. Simply notice without changing anything
- Use breath as an anchor for your attention. Gently allow thoughts to relinquish by labeling them “thinking,” emotions as “feeling” and sensations as “sensing.” If you can identify specific emotions or sensations, use specific labels, i.e. frustration and hearing. As you are able to relinquish the distraction, without pushing it away, gently return focus to the breath without judgment
- When you close your meditation, take a few deep breaths and exhale fully. Feel the sense of peace in your heart and mind. Know that you can access this peace at any time throughout the day. Wish yourself well

Informal meditation: S-T-O-P

We can access peace in stressful situations by using an informal practice called “STOP.” This formal sitting practice helps us to become more aware of thoughts, emotions and sensations as they arise in the body. When we become aware that something is occurring in this present moment, we then can affect our next moment’s experience by responding in a way that will reduce our stress and the stress of those around us. The tendency is to react negatively, but STOP gives us the opportunity to pause long enough to make that decision.

- Stop
- Take a deep breath
- Observe what is occurring objectively
- Proceed with mindful intent

In our formal practice, we continually reinforce the association between the feeling of peace and the full breath. This association becomes stronger over time and you may access that sense of peace whenever and wherever you need it. Consider this a single breath meditation.



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