Try Meditation to Relax and Find Inner Peace

by David Tillman

Meditation is a way to shift your attention from the outside world to the silence within you. Meditation allows your mind and body to rest and rejuvenate. Often, after meditation one feels more connected to God, yourself, other, and nature. You may experience a sense of inner peace during and after meditation.

Whether you have practiced meditation for years or are just beginning, try this simple meditation practice.

Before beginning meditation:

- Find a quiet place. Ideally, a place where you will not be disturbed for 10 to 20 minutes.
- Turn off, or mute, your phone if you can.
- Have access to a watch or clock to time your meditation.
- Sit upright and comfortably in a chair. Allow your head to be able to move.
- Put your feet on the floor and your hands in your lap.
- Set your attention to having a good meditation experience.
- Select a positive word or short phrase that will be used in your meditation (like love, peace, one, om, I am loved, I am lovable, or ?).
- Read through the entire "Begin meditation" below before beginning your meditation practice for the first time.

Begin meditation:

1) Close your eyes if that is comfortable for you to do.
2) Take a breath in, hold it for a couple of seconds, and breathe out. Become mindful of your breath.
3) Take another breath in, hold it for a few seconds, and breathe out. Your breath sustains your life.
4) Take another breath in, hold it for a few seconds, and breathe out. Share gratitude for your breath.
5) Begin by easily and effortlessly repeating in your mind the positive word or short phrase you have chosen. Start by thinking your word or short phrase with each breath or whatever is comfortable to you. Your mind will naturally find a way of repeating your word or short phrase. From one repetition to another, you may experience changes in the rhythm or speed of repeating your word or short phrase. The pronunciation of your word or short phrase may change; shorten or elongate. Begin the process and then effortlessly allow your mind to naturally go where it goes.
    a) When you notice that your mind has wandered to another thought, just easily and effortlessly bring your attention back to repeating your word or short phrase. Having thoughts is a natural part of meditation.

b) If you feel tired or fall asleep, just rest. Lie down if you have the time to rest. When you feel ready to continue meditation, sit up in a chair or bed, and easily bring your attention to repeating your word or short phrase. If you took a nap and need to go, consider this meditation complete. No problem. Today you need rest more than meditation.

c) If you are interrupted, if possible, come out of your meditation slowly (1 or 2 minutes). Deal with what you need to do. As soon as you can, return to your meditation, take a few breaths, and begin effortlessly repeating your word or short phrase. If you cannot get back to meditating, that is ok. When you can, find a few minutes to close your eyes, take a few breaths, relax your body, then open your eyes, and get back to your daily activity.

6) Continue meditating and easily repeat your word or short phrase. When you realize you are on another thought, easily bring your attention back easily to your word. Let go of expectations.
7) Meditate for 10 or 20 minutes. Maybe, start with 10 minutes and increase the time to 20 minutes over time.
8) When you think the time is up, open one eye or eyes slightly to check your watch or clock. If the time is not up, just close your eyes and continue your meditation. Some meditation times will go fast and others slow.
9) When your meditation time is up gently stop repeating your word or short phrase. Wiggle your toes and fingers as you prepare for activity. Continue sitting for two or three minutes before opening your eyes. If you get up too fast, you may feel a little roughness. If that happens, just sit down again, close your eyes, and relax for a couple more minutes before opening your eyes.
10) When your meditation is done, it is time to go into activity and not dwell on the meditation experience. It is like taking a shower. After we take a shower, we feel clean and refreshed. When we go into our day's activities, we do not dwell on our shower experience. Like this, after meditation, we often feel more alert and rested, which we enjoy throughout the day or evening.
11) Meditate in the morning before breakfast (with food digesting you may experience a less restful meditation). If you can, meditate again before dinner to release the stresses and strains of the day. You will often feel more alert and refreshed during the evening.
12) Studies have found that meditation can improve your health and well-being. If you want to learn more about meditation, do an internet search on "meditation research" or go to tm.org (Transcendental Meditation (TM)) as a place to start your research. There are many different types of meditation, mindfulness, and centering prayer. Find one that works best for you.
13) By meditating over time, you may experience things that do not overwhelm you like before, that you are more relaxed, have improved health, feel less anxious, sleep better, your blood pressure has improved, and you feel more peace within yourself. Everyone's experience will be different. Thanks for meditating!

Optional breathing exercise at the beginning of meditation:

- As you begin, after taking a few breaths, allow your mind's attention to go to the top of your head:
    - Imagine all your stresses and strains of the day moving through your head, through your shoulders, into your chest, down through your legs, and into the floor (or earth) that your feet are on.
    - Allow your face to relax and feel the stresses and strains move down through your body into the floor and be absorbed by the earth below.
    - Bring your mind's awareness to your fingers and feel the stresses and strains move up your arms, into your chest, down your chest, through your sexual organs, legs, feet, and into the earth.
    - Bring your attention to your heart, feel the heart pumping blood throughout your body. Feel the stresses and strains of your heart leaving down your chest, into your legs, and into the earth.
    - Likewise, bring your attention to your stomach, then your sexual organs, then your legs, and finally your feet. Each time let the stresses and strains move down through your body, through your feet, to the ground, and into the earth below. The earth is big enough to hold our stresses and strains.
    - Notice with each breath how relaxed you have become.
    - Start repeating your word or short phrase – go to step 5 above under "Begin Meditation."

Meditation Process Recap:

- Sit comfortably in a quiet place,
- Set a time for your meditation (10 to 20 minutes) and have a watch to check the time.
- Choose a positive word or short phrase to use for meditation (like love, peace, joy, one, om, I am loved, I am lovable, or ?)
- Close your eyes if you can (minimize distractions)
- Begin to relax your mind and body with each breath you take (3 - 5 breaths)
- Begin easily and effortlessly to repeat your word or short phrase in your mind.
- During meditation, if you realize you are thinking another thought, effortlessly bring your attention back to repeating your word or short phrase.
- When you think your meditation time is over, open your eyes slightly and check your watch. If the time is not up close your eyes and go back to easily repeating your word or short phrase.
- When your mediation time is up, keep your eyes closed for 2 -3 minutes to come out of mediation slowly. Wiggle your toes and fingers and then open your eyes.
- Enjoy your day or evening. Hopefully, you are feeling more alert, rested, and peaceful.

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