

How to Meditate

There are many ways to meditate. They all seem to lead to the same place, so find one that suits you. Here I describe a classic meditation that is simple and easy. I also try to anticipate some questions.

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Mantras

A mantra is a sound, word, or phrase that is repeated to yourself. It could be spoken aloud, as a chant, or silently, as in meditation. Many people think that the best mantras are sounds which have no clear meaning, and are used as a way of displacing your usual thoughts and moving your awareness inward. There are many mantras ranging from words taken from Hindu Sanskrit to Catholic prayer (especially when "saying the rosary," where the repetition of the prayer is meditative). If you do not already know of a good mantra to use I suggest you use "hamsa." This is a natural mantra, being the sound that one makes when breathing, with "ham" (h-ah-m) on inhalation and "sa" (s-ah) on exhalation.

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Directions for the hamsa meditation:

- Sit comfortably. A quiet place is preferred, but not required.
- Close your eyes. Breathe naturally. Sit for about one minute before you begin thinking the mantra to allow your heart and breathing to slow.
- Gently bring your attention to your breath and begin to think the mantra, gently and easily. Just let it come, don't force it. Think "ham" on the inhale and "sa" on the exhale. Allow yourself to be absorbed in it.
- Allow your thoughts and feelings to come and go with detachment. Don't try to control them in any way. Just note them, and when you realize that you are not repeating the mantra, gently return to the mantra. Do not try to force yourself to think the mantra to the exclusion of all other thoughts. You may experience a deep state of relaxation but it is OK if you don't.
- Meditate in this way for 20 minutes (children for less time).
- When done, take about a minute to slowly return to normal awareness. Be gentle with yourself when opening your eyes or coming to stand after a meditation. It

isn't good for your heart to get up quickly after the state of deep rest that is often a result of meditation. Note: It is OK to glance at a clock to time the meditation.
Don't use an alarm timer.

I have found the following techniques deepen my experience. You will certainly find your own as well. These techniques are secondary and may be omitted entirely or added later:

- Keep your spine straight, head balanced on your cervical column.
- Many people like to pray or do visualization after meditating, while still in an altered state. Some teachers of meditation are opposed to this practice while others advocate it. I suggest to do it if it feels right to you. I do.
- As a "pre-meditation" preparation, bring your attention to the physical act of breathing. Breathe naturally and, with each cycle of the breath, bring your attention to a different part of your body, paying attention to the changes there as a result of the breathing: the rising and falling of the chest; the movement of your belly; the sensation of the air entering and leaving the nostrils; can you feel any movement of your kidney area? How about your pelvis- do you feel your pelvis tilt at all when you breathe? What do you do between breaths? Is there a pause? If you don't feel these things it is OK, just consider them, one at a time, and move on. (This can also serve as a short "centering" meditation that can be done while waiting for a stoplight to change, or as a short work or study break.)

During meditation your business is simple awareness, nothing else. It is a time to connect to your inner Source and let go of the things and roles we get caught up in: work, parenting, concerns and responsibilities. It may be that your meditation is peaceful, or it may be fretful and full of obsessive thought. Regardless, daily meditation will have a positive effect on your life.

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Benefits of Meditation

The benefits are unique for each person, but both physiological and psychological balancing is common. Some of the benefits of meditation will be realized quickly, and others over many months, so don't be discouraged.

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When to Meditate

I recommend that a person meditate twice a day. Before breakfast and before dinner are ideal. (The digestive system often shuts down during meditation, so a full stomach may result in indigestion.) Remember, whatever happens is OK. It's OK to fall asleep or to not become relaxed, OK to laugh or cry, OK to be, or not to be, in an altered state, OK if the mantra doesn't follow the breath as I have suggested, or even goes away altogether. What

is important is that you have an *intention* to think the mantra during your meditation. In short, don't try to control it! For 20 minutes, twice a day, JUST BE!

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Common Questions

The most common question I get when I teach someone to meditate is "What do you mean by "think the mantra, gently and easily"?' My best answer is an analogy. When you read you take the effort to look at the page, to focus on the page and the words. And you *intend* to discern the meaning of the words. That is usually enough and the meaning comes without much effort, yet there is *some* effort involved. Thinking the mantra is similar in that you direct a similar level of effort (which is very little, yet it is there) toward thinking the mantra. You do *not* force yourself, brow furrowed, to think the mantra to the exclusion of all else. Just let it come, and if that is not enough, then encourage your mind to think it with a small effort.

If you are tired when you meditate you may fall asleep. Regardless, do not use meditation as a sleep aid. If you have insomnia, just meditate during the day and the insomnia will probably take care of itself.

"Sitting comfortably" to meditate does not mean cross-legged. If that is comfortable for you, you can meditate in that position. However, sitting with your feet flat on the floor, erect but comfortable in a chair, is just as good. Don't lie down.

I suggest that you re-read this occasionally, it contains lots of information.

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Shareware, etc.

Consider this to be "shareware." If you find the information in it valuable please distribute this document in an appropriate manner and make a donation to a worthy charity in stead of payment. I suggest:

Institute for Attitudinal Studies

PO Box 19222

Alexandria, VA 22230

which is a non-profit educational and spiritual organization.

(I am not affiliated with this organization.)

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"Prayer is you talking to God; meditation is you listening to God." -Yogi Amrit Desai

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Namaste,
[Gabriel](#)

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