

A Simple Guide to Meditation



With any experience you have, there seems to be two things involved. First, there's what you are doing or what's going on around you - the sunrise, people shouting, putting on your t-shirt. The second thing, which we bring to every moment of our lives, is the state of our minds. For example, you might feel so low that you don't notice the beauty of the sunrise. Or, in contrast, perhaps you're feeling calm and balanced, so the noise of people nearby arguing doesn't bother you.

Meditation is about putting our minds, and our hearts, in the best possible place so that we can live happily with other people and with ourselves, wherever we are. There are benefits: from sleeping better to not feeling as wound up. But meditation's really about seeing clearly into the nature of being human, and in that understanding, coming to live more easily with who you are and with the people around you.

How to do it

1. Prepare your space

Take a minute to tidy your space and open a window. If you can find something from the natural world – a feather, flower, or small stone – place that on a surface near you.

2. Find a comfortable seated position

Experiment with the positions pictured here and choose one that's comfortable. Sit with your back straight and chin tucked in slightly. Gaze downwards at a spot in front of you. Your vision may go out of focus; it doesn't matter. The hand position shown (left hand on top) helps to connect up energy circuits in the body.

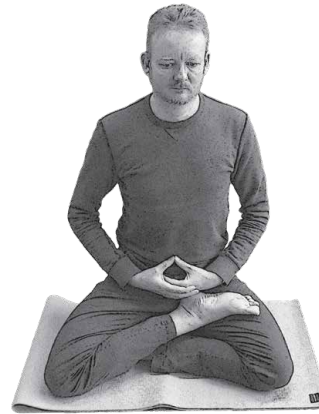
3. Focus on the breath

As you sit, remain still and turn your attention to your breath. You don't have to alter how you are breathing – your breath is normal and natural. Remain curious and alert to it, perhaps noticing how it feels as it goes into the nose and throat, how the belly and chest expand as the breath comes in and contracts as it goes out. Is the breath smooth? Shallow? Deep? Rough? The task here is to experience the breath, not *think* about it, and experience each breath anew.

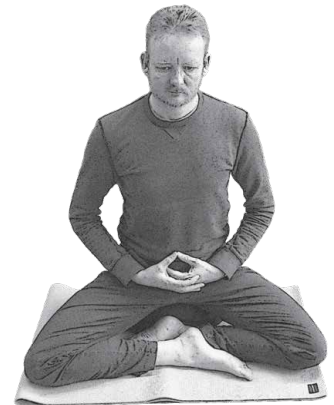
4. Count the breath

With this awareness of the breath, you can begin counting. Breathe in and count 'one'. Breathe out and count 'two'. Keep going to ten (five complete breaths) and start again from one. We do this to help focus the mind and keep our attention from wandering, but you can simply sit and 'be' with the breath if you prefer.

If you have a timer, set it for five minutes. Do five minutes for five days, then ten minutes for five days, and build up to 25 minutes.



Foot resting on thigh
(*half lotus*)



Cross legged
(*easy seat*)



Kneeling, knees wide



Sit towards edge of seat,
feet fully on floor

Distractions

Don't worry if your mind wanders off. Gently bring it back to the count of 'one', without giving yourself a hard time. The mind will try to distract itself from remaining focused through restlessness, sleepiness, doubt, wanting things (including a focused mind!), getting fed up or cross. Stick in there through these distractions. They are normal and not separate from meditation, and each time you bring yourself back to the counting and the breath, you are strengthening your mind. With patience, the distractions play themselves out, and the joy of their absence is well worth your effort, even if they come back again.

**“The best way to prepare for the future
is to live each moment grounded in the present.”**

Prisoner, HMP Lewes