

# Beginning a Meditation Practice

By Liz Philipose

- Set an intention to become someone who meditates. Set an intention to be still and let everything go. Surrender to the moment of your meditation.
- Start with a commitment to a daily practice of meditating five minutes a day. Set a timer. If you already have a practice, add five minutes to it.
- Incorporate a mantra that keeps you focused.
- First thing in the morning is the best time to meditate. Instead of reaching for your phone as soon as you wake up, sit up, close your eyes, and tune into your breath.
- Apps that assist with meditation include HeadSpace and Insight. Both offer guided meditations that are timed and specific.
- A Youtube channel called Meditative Mind offers a number of recordings that assist with meditation.
- Ideal conditions for a sitting practice include a quiet space away from the phone and computer, and a comfortable seat that enables relaxed alertness.
- You can meditate on anything. While you are washing dishes, walking the dog, driving to work, cooking dinner or gardening, draw your attention to your breath and notice how it comes in and goes out.
- Your breath is the anchor for your attention in meditation. It slows down simply because you notice it, and the mind slows down along with it.
- You aren't trying to get rid of thoughts in meditation. Instead, notice the thoughts and watch them pass by you. Watch them like you watch clouds on a breezy day. Or see them pouring out of you like a waterfall. Be the watcher. Be the one who observes.
- Observe your breath. Inhale. Exhale. Observe the sounds around you. Hearing. Sensing. Observe what comes up in you. Emotion. Feeling.
- Keep bringing yourself back to the anchor. Keep bringing your attention back to your inner world.
- There is a stillness within you that is profound. When you get past the gross movements of the body and the mind chatter, you connect with the stillness within. It is always here for you. It is a matter of clearing the static to tune into it.
- Meditation offers a number of benefits. Greater peace, less anxiety, lower blood pressure, deeper rest, more focus, greater dominion over your attention, less reactivity, a deeper connection with yourself and others, heightened perception, greater compassion, a deeper sense of ease, and a sense of flow. You'll find that everything gets slightly easier and requires less effort when you meditate every day.
- There is evidence that meditation facilitates healing and makes our genetic structure more resilient.
- Meditation is a practice. Like anything you are practicing, some days will be better than others. Yet, if you stick with it, you will experience improvement.
- It takes 21 days to lose a habit, 21 days to acquire a new one.
- Meditation is a training. You are training your attention to withdraw from the external world and to focus on the internal world. Your attention is a muscle.
- Meditation is an act of compassion and kindness. Be compassionate with yourself. Be kind to yourself. Cultivate self-love as you cultivate a meditation practice.
- Books to consult: Thich Nhat Hahn, The Miracle of Mindfulness; Sally Kempton, Meditation for the Love of It; David Guy, et al, Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation; Sharon Salzberg, Loving Kindness Meditation

In Essence,



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