

How to Meditate

By Joan Sotkin

Get Ready for the Journey

You didn't arrive at your present life position suddenly -- you have been slowly moving toward it all of your life. As a result, you can't expect to move to a new state of consciousness in a few days or weeks. It is like going from California to New York. You can't get onto a train in California and pop instantly over to New York. You have to ride through Kansas, Ohio and a number of other states. You may even decide to stay in Kansas for a while. It is your choice as to how far you want to go. The same is true when moving from one state of consciousness to another. You have to pass through various stages before you reach your destination.

What You Need

When you go on a journey of consciousness, pack lightly and leave your past behind. All you really need to take with you is a positive attitude, faith in your future and a strong desire to change. Anything else you drag along is extra. Slowly but surely, your past is going to fade away as you approach new horizons. There may be some bumpy roads and some stormy weather along the way -- these are part of the process. But as you work through each challenge, you'll come out stronger than before -- more sure of yourself and your ability to take care of yourself.

You have the power of The Universe within you, and you can accomplish anything you want if you set your mind to it.

The Vehicle

Travelling into higher realms of consciousness requires a vehicle for the journey. Meditation is a time-honored technique that can take you into infinite dimensions of consciousness.

Many people say, "I've tried to meditate, but I just can't seem to do it." They seem to think that in order to meditate, they have to completely quiet their mind. Quieting the mind comes as a result of meditating over a long period of time, but any time you are looking within, you are meditating. There are many meditation methods. Some are passive and others are active -- not in the physical sense, but in the sense that you actually do something during meditation. All of the meditations that you will find at this sight will help you develop spiritually.

Create a Space

First, prepare a space to use on a regular basis for your meditations. Doing this conditions your mind to relax and ascend to other dimensions. In time, just sitting in your meditation space will immediately relax you.

Your meditation space can be a separate room or small area in your home where you can sit with your eyes closed for at least a few minutes each day. Choose a clean, quiet place away from all distractions where you can sit on a chair or on the floor. If you use a chair, choose one that allows you to keep your back as straight as possible. If you sit on the floor, you may want to lean your back against something so that you can keep it straight. If you are too sick or weak to sit up, you can lie on your bed, but sit as soon as you are able.

You will need a shelf, table or surface of some kind. If you are sitting on the floor, an inverted carton or wooden crate will do. Place any, or all, of the following items on the surface that you choose:

- A plant or flowers
- An incense burner
- A candle
- A picture of someone who inspires you
- A picture of yourself
- A rock or some other object from a place in nature that you enjoy

- Anything you want that makes you feel good or that you feel the urge to use.

I often hold a quartz crystal or gemstone when I meditate and I keep a selection of them on my altar. I believe that these treasures from Mother Nature help to amplify the energy of our Inner Being. This makes it easier for us to travel deep into our consciousness and connect to our True Selves.

Don't be in a hurry to create your meditation space. You might want to start with something as simple as a candle. Let your intuition guide you. Be patient and wait until you get a strong urge to add something. When you get the urge, follow it.

Getting Started

For a few days just sit quietly in your space for five to ten minutes. This will help establish your energy. Before you sit, light a candle and/or some incense, if you like. Eventually, lighting the candle or incense will signal your brain that it's time for meditation.

Fold your hands gently in your lap and close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths. Then just sit. If you have never meditated before, you will probably feel as if your mind is just a jumble of thoughts. Don't try to stop the thoughts, just watch them. Imagine that you are on the bank of a river and that your thoughts are the river going by. Don't try to stop the river, just watch it. Within a week, you will see the river begin to slow down. You may become impatient, or even bored. That's okay. If you find yourself complaining, just watch the thoughts pass by.

Do this for 5 to 10 minutes.

You may find that you fall asleep because you are so relaxed. In the beginning that's okay. Eventually, you will be able to stay awake. If you're afraid that you will miss something if you fall asleep, set a timer for 20 minutes. Doing this allows you to relax and forget about time.

A Basic Meditation

The Watching-the-River Exercise is an excellent way to quiet your thoughts. You can either stay with this exercise or move on to something else, such as the basic meditation described below or any of the other meditations that will be appearing on these pages. All of these can help you on your journey to higher consciousness.

I highly recommend that you begin each inner session with the following meditation. It serves the purpose of placing you in the energies of The Light, which can be protective.

Sit in a chair with your back straight and ankles crossed or in a comfortable cross-legged position on the floor. Fold your hands gently in your lap and close your eyes.

Take a few deep diaphragmatic breaths. Then let your breathing find its own level.

Imagine that a beam of rainbow light is entering the center of your forehead. You don't actually have to see anything (although you may), just imagine the presence of a light. Imagine that the light travels down the center of your body and diffuses into all of your cells.

Repeat silently to yourself a few times, I am in The Light, I am filled with The Light.

Do this for 5 to 10 minutes.

If You Resist

At first, it may seem as if you can't fit all of this new activity into your life. Even though we are only talking about ten to thirty minutes a day, establishing a new habit pattern can take time (21 days on average), and you may find yourself resisting. It would be perfectly natural for you to avoid meditation and then feel guilty.

You can eliminate the guilt by telling yourself that there is no hurry and it does not matter if you miss a few days. Even if you meditate only once a week, you have made progress. You are more apt to continue if you take away the self-criticism. No one is judging your performance -- there is no right way or wrong way to meditate -- and no one else cares if you meditate.

You may find yourself saying, "I haven't got the time to spend with all of this." If you haven't got the time to sit quietly with yourself for ten to twenty minutes a day, you are probably too busy or you aren't using your time well. If you are always in a hurry to do the next activity, you're in the future and missing the now, which is where your life is happening.

It is a matter of priorities. If making money and getting it all while you can are the focus of your life, then you probably don't have the time to spend with yourself. But if you would honestly like to find more meaning in life and you hope to feel prosperous, then you will have to slow down and get into the flow of life. The idea is to stop trying to make everything happen and allow your life to happen. The purpose of meditation is to help you build a better life for yourself. If you want that, then somehow you will find the time to do it.

If you have a strong desire to meditate but find that you are really resistant, examine the following reasons that keep people from travelling into their inner world. These happen on a subconscious level, but if they apply to you, you will know.

People are afraid that if they go within and learn about who they are, they won't like what they find. If you never look within, then you will never know who you are, and in a strange way, that may seem safer. It takes a lot of effort to avoid yourself. Many people resort to overeating, eating junk foods, drinking alcohol, smoking, taking drugs, compulsive shopping, overworking and anything else that numbs feelings.

People are afraid of meditating because they instinctively know that, if they connect to their Inner Power, they will have to take responsibility for creating their lives. It is a lot easier to blame God, luck, other people, circumstances and lots of other things outside of ourselves for the problems in our lives. Accepting our own power as co-creators with the Universal Force can be frightening.

If you have a need to be taken care of, the idea of connecting to your Inner Power may frighten you. You may reason that if you use your Inner Power, you won't need anyone else and you'll be alone. People learn at an early age that if they are weak and/or sick, others will pick them up and help them. The thought of health and independence, which many people say they want, can be frightening because those thoughts often create a fear of being alone. The reasoning is, if I am sick, other people will be there for me. If I am healthy, no one will notice me.

In reality, that's not what happens. Healthy people are like magnets and they draw in others. When you are healthy, you will get to pick and choose the people with whom you want to spend time. If you are resisting the meditation experience or finding lots of reasons why you can't meditate (time, inability, no quiet place, etc.), then you might want to look at your hidden fears and what connecting to yourself really means to you.

Breathing

Breathing is essential to life and when you breathe properly, it can help you clear your mind and reach higher states of consciousness. Although breathing is an instinct and everyone does it, most people don't breathe correctly. Many people develop bad breathing habits and as they age, their breathing becomes shallow and incomplete. Bad breathing habits not only contribute to ill health, but they also keep you from realizing your full potential. When your system is denied the oxygen it needs, it can't function properly. Learning to breathe properly will help you both physically and with the inner work we'll be doing.

To check your breathing:

Stand with your feet together and arms at your side. Close your eyes.

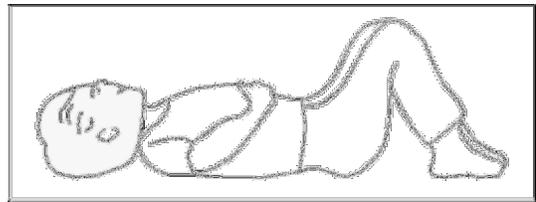
Take a deep breath through your nose. Observe yourself as you breathe. Take notice as to whether you're expanding your chest or your abdomen as you inhale.

Exhale.

If you're breathing properly your abdomen will expand when you inhale and contract as you exhale. Breathing this way allows your lungs to fill properly. If your chest expands and your shoulders rise during inhalation, your breath is incomplete.

Belly Breathing

Belly breathing can help you relax any time you are tense. When you feel anxious about something, just close your eyes and take 5



to 10 deep breaths. Deep breathing can also energize you. When you are feeling tired or drained, do a few belly breaths. If you are breathing from your chest, I strongly suggest that you retrain your body to breathe properly, which means breathing from your diaphragm or belly.

Lie flat on the floor or on your bed. Take a few deep breaths and feel yourself relax. Place one hand on your abdomen. Take a deep breath through your nose. As you inhale, let your abdomen push your hand out.

As you exhale, feel your hand go down. Do this 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath. Breathing this way will probably feel strange at first, but with practice you'll become accustomed to it. Try to do belly breathing every day. A good time to do this is when you get into bed at night, when you first wake up in the morning and/or any time you want to relax.

Candle Gazing

Meditating will help you develop discipline and concentration, two valuable skills that are found in successful people. Candle gazing is an exercise that can help you learn to concentrate. It will also accustom you to sitting quietly and focusing on something other than your outer world. If possible, do candle gazing in your meditation space.



To do this exercise, place a lighted candle at eye level about two feet away from where you are sitting. Focus your gaze on the flame of the candle and just watch it. Try not to blink your eyes, but don't force them to stay open. Continue to watch the candle flame for 5 to 10 minutes. If your gaze wanders, slowly bring it back. As you do this, be aware of your thoughts without trying to change them.

Some Guidelines

Try to meditate every day in your meditation space.

Aim at meditating at the same time every day. In the beginning, you may skip some days as you begin to develop the meditation habit. Don't be hard on yourself if you do. It's okay -- there is plenty of time. When you first start these inner activities, you aim for three times a week.

Establish some rituals to signal your subconscious that it is time to connect. Lighting a candle, burning incense, doing some breathing exercises, sitting quietly in a chair in your meditation space -- these are all activities that can be part of your ritual.

Don't have any expectations about your meditation; don't go into meditation with any preconceived ideas about what is going to happen.

Be patient with yourself. Just like anything else you might be learning, meditation techniques take time to develop. Enjoy the process as well as the results.

Don't be afraid to try meditations that you create. Most of the meditations that you will find in this book are ones that I developed during the past fifteen years and they work for me. You may discover others that work better for you.

If your mind wanders when you are meditating, gently bring it back.

More Meditations

Letting Go Meditation

This meditation is a combination of an ancient Zen Buddhist technique and bio-feedback. It's an excellent way to connect to your internal world. I've done this meditation for so many years that it has become a signal to my body to relax. Within a few seconds after I take a deep breath and begin the meditation, I'm in a state of deep relaxation.

Here's how to do it:

Start with the Basic Meditation, which I'm going to repeat here.

Sit in a chair with your back straight and ankles crossed or in a comfortable cross-legged position on the floor. Fold your hands gently in your lap and close your eyes.

Take a few deep diaphragmatic breaths. Then let your breathing find its own level.

Imagine that a beam of rainbow light is entering the center of your forehead. You don't actually have to see anything (although you may), just imagine the presence of a light. Imagine that the light travels down the center of your body and diffuses into all of your cells.

Repeat silently to yourself a few times, I am in The Light, I am filled with The Light.

Do this for a minute or two.

After you feel connected to the light, take a deep breath. Then turn your attention to your jaw. Observe how it feels. Do you feel tension or is it relaxed? Does the right side feel any different from the left? Do you feel any pain or discomfort? Don't try to change anything. Just observe until it changes.

If you wait long enough, there will be a change. It may be very subtle, but it will occur.

Once you feel a change, wait a few seconds, then say to yourself, "My jaw is relaxed." As you say this, imagine that you're letting go of some of the tension. As you imagine your jaw relaxing, say to yourself, "Let go, let go." Keep repeating this phrase. When you think your jaw has relaxed, let go again. And again. Do this for about two minutes or more. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back.

Repeat the process with your shoulders, solar plexus (the center of your abdomen under your rib cage) and the center of your chest, which is your heart chakra. At first, you may not feel much, especially if you're generally out of touch with your feelings.

You can use this meditation to scan your entire body, going from your head down to your toes, stopping to observe each body part. You can spend as much or as little time on each part as you want. Sometimes I spend 15 minutes or more in one location. At other times, I scan my entire body stopping only for 30 to 60 seconds at each location.

From this meditation you can understand the concept of awareness preceding change. You'll also see that change happens as a direct result of awareness. This meditation technique will help you develop your internal powers of observation, which will help you get in touch with your thoughts, beliefs and emotions. If you can describe what you are feeling in your physical body, then you'll be able to define your emotions.

Peace, Love and Joy Meditations

To begin each of the following meditations, sit in your meditation space and do the Basic Meditation. After you are connected to The Light, do any of the following.

I AM PEACE MEDITATION

Imagine that you're sitting on the banks of a calm lake at dawn. The sun is just coming up on the horizon and a light mist is rising from the water. You can hear a variety of birds making their morning sounds.

Feel the peacefulness of this place. Feel the quiet. As you do, repeat to yourself, "I am Peace." Each time you say the word peace, try to feel it.

Do this for three to five minutes.

I AM LOVE MEDITATION

Imagine that in the center of your chest is a giant opening in which you can see a vibrating pink light. Imagine that you are sending the pink light to someone you love. It can be a parent, child, friend, lover or a pet. Imagine that the pink light enters them in the center of their chest. As you do this, repeat to yourself, "I am Love. "

As you do this, feel yourself generating the feeling of love from your heart.

Experience the sensation of love as you repeat to yourself, "I am Love."

Do this for three to five minutes.

After you become familiar with this meditation, you can use it in other ways. You can imagine that you're sending the pink light to someone with whom you are having relationship problems. It can be a person at work or in your personal life. Every time you do this exercise, you are adding love to your energy field and it will help you move into a more positive state of consciousness.

I was taught to do this exercise anytime I was in a crowd. I would sit on bus benches at rush hour and practice beaming love to everyone who passed by. I highly suggest this if you want a mood boost -- it feels terrific.

I AM JOY MEDITATION

Think of a time in your life when you experienced great happiness. It doesn't matter how far back in time you have to go for the memory. Develop as clear a picture as possible in your mind's eye. If you don't experience anything visually, that's fine. Your memories may all be on a feeling level. Since that's all that matters for this exercise it doesn't matter if you don't actually "see" anything.

Once you have a clear happy memory, travel into the feeling. Feel the joy as it fills your heart and spreads throughout your body. As you do this, repeat to yourself, "I am Joy."

Do this for three to five minutes.