

Meditation Techniques

For Calming and Centering

Using the breath is a universal aid to meditation. Observing the breath gives the mind something to do, something soothing and always present. You don't have to go out and buy it, and then remember to have it with you, this breath. It's always there with you, so you can practice meditation at the stoplight, in the grocery store line, or at seated at home. Just remember that it is the mind's job to consider things from all angles and it has a happy habit of wandering off to do that. You just lovingly retrieve it, again and again, like a sheepdog rounding up the family toddler with exquisite care, back to the breath.

Begin by just getting comfortable with a big deep inbreath and outbreath. That should begin to become a signal to your body and mind to center and relax. Do it a couple of times, if needed and then begin to just observe the inflow and outflow of your breathing. At the nostrils, there is a sensation of air. In the body there is a change in posture and in the chest as we consciously breathe. Watching the breath is simply a training of the mind by the spiritual will to become a better instrument, more honed, one that can contemplate higher thought. It creates new and beneficial brain chemicals, ones that help us to choose a more peaceful path. **It teaches the mind that it can choose a focus of consciousness.**

Meditation can be done in a chair, on the ground on a pillow, even lying flat, if necessary. 10 to 20 minutes is a good start. The more you do it, the more quickly your brain settles into a happier, calmer state. Remember to just keep coming back as you wander off.

For Raising the level to Love

Once you have convinced your body to sit happily for 15 - 20 minutes, you can begin to use the quieted mind to contemplate the most lovely of all thoughts, Love. You use the breath, breathing in and out of the heart area, in the center of the chest. You imagine a loved one there in front of you, and you send them lots and lots of loving feelings. You appreciate all the wonderfulness that they are, you remember their virtues and love them all the more. You bless them. When this loving feeling starts to fade for them, choose another person, place, pet or even a special thing and love them. It can go on for as long as you choose, but 20 minutes of this meditation twice a day is a wonderful loving foundation for a spiritual renewal.

Being Loving causes us to move higher and higher on the levels of consciousness. Lovingness and appreciation is a different energetic vibration than intelligence. Not better or more right, just a bit higher in energy. It makes us stronger and more creative, more compassionate and more satisfied. The Master said, "You shall love your neighbor as you love yourself." So one of the more moving and insightful meditations is to do the loving feelings toward yourself. It is the experience of being in love, because you find yourself in Love. Again, 20 minutes is a good goal for this meditation.

For Healing

The Healing Meditation is Vipassana, done quite consciously as a clearing, or cleansing technique. The mind's awareness of the body is swept downward, off the arms and legs as if a sweeping by the eyes or by the hands. It can be done slowly or quickly, over and over again. If the area of pain is on the extremity of a limb, the mental sweeping must not be done down to it, but from it, the area of pain, downwards off the limb. In other words, don't sweep energy down a limb to an area of pain, you want to move energy away from it. Remember, energy and consciousness are interchangeable. As your consciousness moves over the surface of the body, in order from top to bottom, energy follows it.

Keeping the mind moving over the body, down and off the limbs, over and over again, which is the practice of Vipassana in some traditions. The more intense the focus on the body, the more sensations that will be noticed, and released, **if just observed**. Keep the awareness moving as consistently as possible, and the result will often be to move out the congestion of energy that was causing the difficulty.