

Experiencing the Power of Meditation: A Simple, Pragmatic Approach

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So where to begin?

Meditation is usually seen as something that's done once a day for about ten or fifteen minutes then promptly forgotten about. Buddhist scholar B. Alan Wallace equates this to, "*...eating a wholesome breakfast, then snacking on junk food for the rest of the day.*"

What we really want is to imbue our whole day with the positive qualities that our meditation sessions develop in us.

Many teachers and experts recommend a two-part approach. Simply put, this involves **a daily practice (of five, ten or fifteen minutes) and two or three short (one or two-minute) moments of meditation scattered throughout your day.**

It's utterly simple!

1. Your Daily Practice

Your daily practice is your anchor and you will see benefits even if it is all that you do.

Commit to setting aside as much time as you can maintain on a consistent basis.

Generally, early in the morning or before you go to bed works well. You might find starting small with a few minutes and building from there is the way to go. The sanskrit word *ghatika* refers to a period of twenty-four minutes that is supposedly ideal for beginners. This may present a goal to work towards.

Mindfulness of Breathing

This technique is time tested and a perfect meditation for beginners and experienced practitioners alike. It forms the basis of many more advanced Buddhist practices.

- 1. Seat yourself comfortably with a straight spine. Close your eyes and rest your hands in your lap.**
- 2. Take a handful of calm, centering breaths.**
- 3. With each inhalation feel your whole body fill with relaxing warmth.**
- 4. With each exhalation, feel yourself letting go of any tensions.**
- 5. After you have settled, let your awareness rest on the sensations of your breathing wherever they manifest. You may wish to "loosely" follow the inhalation from the tip of the nostrils down into your belly and reverse for the exhalation. In and out. Do not make any demands on yourself.**
- 6. After a while you may wish to focus more specifically on the sensations of your abdomen or on the light touch of each in and out breath against your nostrils. Follow whichever method you are most comfortable with.**

Meditation With a Mantra

Another option for you to consider is repetition of a mantra. This is the technique that Herbert Benson personally studied and recommends.

- 1. As in the first meditation, seat yourself comfortably with a straight spine. Close your eyes and rest your hands in your lap. Take some deep breaths.**
- 2. Choose a word, preferably of two-syllables, that symbolizes your intent to let go for the duration of this session. It could be "Jesus," "Happy" "Peaceful," or any other with which you are comfortable.**

- 3. On the in-breath, gently whisper the first syllable, on the out-breath, gently whisper the second. Alternatively, and if you are breathing through your nose, say it silently to yourself.**
- 4. Rest your attention fully on the utterance of the syllable. If you become distracted, *gently* return.**