

# 10 Meditation Tips for Beginners

Do you have trouble focusing? Do you lie in bed at night, thoughts running through your head at a seemingly unstoppable pace? Do you wish there was something you could do to quiet your mind, bring you peace, and help you feel more connected to the world around you?

You should consider meditation!

Meditation has been around for centuries, and is incorporated into almost every major religion as a calming, connecting, spiritual practice. Many people associate meditation with typically Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, or with Christian monks sitting quietly for hours in monastery cells.

While meditation is certainly a part of those religions, you don't need to be religious to practice it. Meditation, on its own, is the act of calming your body and leading your mind to a state of thoughtless awareness. The thoughts and stressors that are running rampant through your brain are neutralized, and yet you're still alert and aware of the world around you.

A recent study in the United States concluded that daily meditation reduced stress, reduced pain, reduced healthcare costs, increased energy, and improved quality of life.

There are so many things in life that are out of our control. Because, most likely, you will never be able to completely rid yourself of external stress, you would benefit from learning to internally calm and control your reactions to stress.

Usually, we try to solve the problem of a "mind gone wild" by distracting ourselves. We turn on the TV, we grab dinner with friends, or we listen to music. We even check our emails and our text messages.

We're generally desperate not to be left alone with our own minds because we often have no idea what to do with them! Luckily, there are several types of mediation that can help you learn to quiet, comfort, control, and love your own mind.

We are going to focus on Mindful Meditation, which is a western, research-based form of meditation derived from a centuries-old Buddhist meditative practice. It is not religious, and aimed specifically at helping you develop the skills of focusing and calming your mind without losing alertness or awareness.

Ideally, mindfulness will help you become more aware of the world around you, and help you enjoy its pleasures. It can help you become more present in your everyday life, and less affected by stress and negativity.

If you've never meditated before, or you've tried it and are looking for more information, you've come to the right place! We're now going to discuss ten different meditation tips to help you in your meditative practice and journey!

### **Tip #1: Include It In Your Routine**

Meditation works best when you make it part of your daily routine. Your brain loves developing habits and routines, and it will become more susceptible to and welcoming of meditation when you schedule it in.

Because we're all super busy, if you don't write meditation into your daily calendar or set a reminder for yourself, you may forget that you're trying to make this a part of your life, and skip meditation for days at a time! This will affect your ability to get used to the practice as well as its effectiveness.

Most people recommend meditating first thing in the morning. The world is a bit quieter in the early morning, and you don't have the stress of the day weighing on your shoulders. There is also less chance of you being disturbed.

Try to wake up just half an hour earlier every single day to meditate. You will hopefully find that you enjoy starting every day full of positive, peaceful energy!

As part of your routine, it's important to find a specific room in your house to do your meditating. If possible, it should be quiet, dark, and comfortable. It shouldn't want to put you to sleep, but you should automatically relax every time you go in there.

Consider transforming a part of your basement into a meditation room, or even a large closet. If you have a spare bedroom, section part of it off for meditative purposes.

If you don't have any extra room in your house, pick either your bedroom or your living room, and push some of the furniture out of the way so that you have a clean, open space to use.

### **Tip #2: Stretch First**

You may be thinking that it sounds silly to stretch before meditating. *I'm just going to be sitting there, why do I need to stretch?*

It's a good question with a simple answer: meditation deals with the connection between your mind and your body. It loosens the muscles and allows you to sit for long periods of time comfortably (which is not as easy as it sounds).

It also helps relax you. Stretching releases dopamine, a hormone that helps you feel happier and positive. By stretching out your body prior to meditation, you are actually preparing your brain for positivity.

**Tip #3: Try Several Positions**

Now that you've found a time and a place to meditate, and you've stretched and prepared your body, it's time to settle into a comfortable meditative position.

There are several ways in which you can position yourself for meditation, and there is no right or wrong posture to assume.

Many people enjoy sitting cross-legged because it helps provide a stable and comfortable base. We sit on the floor with our legs crossed naturally, anyway, so it's not a difficult posture to assume and hold for a long period of time.

Some people choose to squat and balance on their heels, some choose to lie down, and some choose to sit on their knees.

No matter what, your spine should be straight, your chin slightly tucked in, and your shoulders held back.

If sitting on the floor or a carpet is uncomfortable for you, find a large pillow to sit on. Many people even purchase meditation pillows for this exact purpose.

Try as many positions as you need to find out what makes you feel the most comfortable. You're going to be sitting still for a little while, so comfort is key. Meditation is meant to relieve pain and stress, not cause it!

Adjust yourself as needed until you feel you've found your favorite position in which to meditate. Now you can begin!

**Tip #4: Focus on Your Breath**

Once you've found your ideal meditative posture, sit for a moment just breathing in and breathing out. Allow yourself to find an easy rhythm for your breathing. Now focus on it.

In order to quiet your mind and release it from external thoughts and stresses, the easiest thing you can do is focus on something else. Instead of focusing on a television show or your smart phone, sit quietly, and focus on your breath.

Think only about when you breathe in and when you breathe out.

Focusing on your breath helps you develop the ability to concentrate and it also releases restlessness and anxiety.

Some Mindful Meditation programs recommend counting after each breath as a way to stay focused. After you breathe out, count one. Then, breathe in and out and count two. Keep going until you reach five, and then start over again at one.

This helps you focus entirely on your breathing and regulate your breathing in a slow fashion so as not to cause your body to hyperventilate!

For the rest of your meditative process, no matter what happens—if you feel uncomfortable, if you feel pain, if you can't focus, if you get distracted—you can always return to the act of focusing on your breath to bring you back to the present.

### **Tip #5: Feel Your Body**

As you breathe in and out, allow yourself to become aware of your body. Feel your heart rate drop and your body relax. Pay attention to your senses...are you smelling things more clearly? Is your hearing advanced?

Don't allow these senses to overwhelm you—if they do, they'll distract you. Just connect your brain with your body and allow yourself to be aware that they are one and will always be one.

Once your mind is quiet, you can focus a bit more on your body. Focus your attention on your feet and then work your way up your body. Include your internal organs, if you are so inclined.

### **Tip #6: Be Aware Of Frustration**

The act of quieting your mind doesn't come easy. If it did, meditation wouldn't exist (or every person in the world would practice it all the time)!

It's very common for beginners to get frustrated during meditation. You may be irritated by external influences or you may be irritated with yourself and your inability to just focus your darn mind.

Know that this happens to everyone when they begin meditation. With the crazy amount of responsibility and external stimuli that the average person has to deal with every single day, it's no wonder that the act of achieving a clear and peaceful mind is such hard work.

Acknowledge the frustration, and then let it go. Focus on your breathing for another five or ten counts. Trust that the frustration will go away if you practice enough.

It's just like training your body to run a marathon. If you suddenly tried to run ten miles, you wouldn't get frustrated if you weren't able to do it on the first try! You would realize that you need to stretch, practice, and train until you develop the skills to run for a long time.

The same concept applies to your brain and your ability to meditate. Think of your first few times meditating as practice. If you don't get it right away, don't despair! You'll get it eventually. Practice makes perfect.

### **Tip #7: Use Candles and White Noise**

While you might think that you should close your eyes during meditation, that's actually not often advised. Only the most advanced can close their eyes.

Because mindful meditation is about clearing your mind while remaining aware, it's important to still be able to see your surroundings and, therefore, remain aware of their existence.

Many people recommend that beginners light a candle when meditating. Candles can give off relaxing scents, they can create incredible ambiance, and they give you something to focus on. If you're having trouble simply focusing on your breath, try turning down the lights and focusing on the flicker of a flame.

If you live in an apartment building, or a place where noise might be an issue at any time of the day, you might want to consider getting a meditation CD or a white noise machine. These can help you ensure that you won't get distracted by external noise during the meditation process.

You can also use them (on a different setting) to help you sleep better at night!

### **Tip #8: Pick A Designated Length Of Time**

There is no specific amount of time required when practicing meditation. The most advanced people can meditate for days at a time...which seems completely mind-boggling, right?

Don't worry—you don't have to sit still for days!

Because sitting still and focused is actually harder than it may seem, try starting out meditating for about ten minutes at a time every single morning for the first week. See how you feel. By the end of your session, are you energetic and ready to start your day or are you squirming by minute eight?

Whenever you feel comfortable meditating for ten minutes at a time, try increasing your time by another five minutes. Then meditate for fifteen minutes at a time for another couple weeks, and then increase your time by another five minutes.

A great goal to try and work up to is a half-hour meditation session every single morning. No pressure in terms of when you get there, though! It could take you a couple months and it could take you a couple years. As long as your practicing meditation for a specific amount of time every single day, you should be reaping the benefits.

**Tip #9: Meditate With Others**

Yes, meditation is directed toward inner peace and self-exploration. However, the coherence and energy that you feel from the presence of others in the room makes it a completely different and often more powerful experience.

For some people, meditating with others is easier because you feel more connected. You know that the silence you're experiencing is the same silence your neighbor is experiencing. You know that you're all focused on the same goal, and you all have the same intentions.

Many people choose to meditate with family members or loved ones because it helps them establish an even closer connection.

Meditating with others also forces you to push your boundaries of meditation. Have you been stuck meditating for fifteen minutes at a time, unable to push yourself to a full twenty? Sign up for a meditation class that requires students to meditate for twenty minutes at a time. The energy and presence of your classmates might help push you to the next level!

**Tip #10: Enjoy And Feel Grateful**

Meditation is about achieving inner peace and connectedness with your body. It should be an overall pleasant experience, and one that you look forward to each and every day.

To help associate the practice of meditation with positive feelings, take a few minutes after each session to think about how much you enjoyed it, and how grateful you are for the ability to control and quiet your mind. Feel free to get up, stretch out, cool down, and think about the other things you're grateful for in your life, as well!

I hope you found these tips on meditation helpful, and I sincerely hope you will try and incorporate the practice into your daily routine. You should start feeling the benefits in no time!

For more information on how meditation can help improve your health, your self-esteem, and your general awareness of the world around you, be sure to check out my newsletter!

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