



Guide to Meditation

Payal Khanwani

What is Meditation?

Meditation is the art and science of becoming more present to what is happening in the “Now”. Meditation is a powerful tool for training our minds, to awaken us beyond our limited conditioned mind and habits. It is the skill of becoming more mindful and awake to what is real and what really matters. This is something we learn through a seated practice, but this capacity for awareness helps in all spheres of our life from personal to professional.





Why should I meditate?

It helps with stress, anxiety, and & positive behavior change. Research shows it makes our brain stronger & resilient. I helps us find focus, calm, grounding & clarity amidst our modern busy lives. The altered states of consciousness that can be achieved with various meditation techniques help us tap into our own deepest & highest potential. This is central to not only living with less suffering & more wellbeing but also to thrive in all spheres of life.

Attitude of Practice

Intention and attitude is the key to approaching a daily practice. Let this not be another thing on our to-do list. Let's approach it with friendliness and sincerity, to really wish to connect to our innate capacity of clarity, peace, strength and wellbeing. Sometimes we have an expectation of how the meditation experience "should" be. Truly there is no "good" and "bad" experience of meditation. There is no "right" or "wrong". When we allow the experience to be as it is - it creates trust in the practice will lead us towards our intention whatever it may be. Let us keep an attitude of curiosity, kindness & self-compassion.

Creating a Daily Practice

Time of the Day

Morning as you wake is a preferred time because our mind is not clouded and is naturally in a state of calm after a good night's sleep. Set a time of 10-45 minutes that is available to you. You can also pick any time of the day that works for you and you can commit to. You can also pick a time in the morning and evening (twice a day) for a shorter sitting time

Creating a Space

Ideally its good to create a space that is exclusive to your sitting practice. It can be a on your bed as you wake up or a meditation corner(or room). You can also create an altar with candles/essential oils/flowers/pictures or anything else reminds you of what you love. These are not necessary at all- just a choice

Posture

Sit on a chair, cushion, or kneel as upright and balanced as possible. We need a sense of alertness yet relaxed openness in our posture. If you need a back rest, take one. But making sure we feel tall in the spine. Intentionally relax areas of tension. Let the hands rest on the knees and lap. Close the eyes. Take several deep breaths to consciously relax the face, shoulders, chest and belly. Feel a sense of softness yet relaxed alertness in the body

Intention Setting

It is helpful to start a practice with connecting to our intention for our daily practice. It may be different each day or perhaps the same for extended periods of time as we move through the ebb and flow of life situations. Set an intention of good health, wellbeing, forgiveness, compassion, gratitude, freedom - whatever it may be for you that day. Connect sincerely to what matters to you and what draws you to meditate. You can even choose to dedicate the practice to some one or something.

Practice

Find a suitable comfortable seated position. Either with the back resting against a back of a chair or cushion. Lets try and keep the spine long. Keep the rest of the body relaxed. Close your eyes. Lets start to bring attention to our breath. Consciously take a few breaths in and a few breaths out.

Lets take this opportunity to set an intention for today's meditation. Whatever it might be for you today. Perhaps it's better health, peace, more energy. Whatever it is for you today. Remember, whenever we set an intention, we are subtly re-inforcing a mental habit.

Lets do a quick body scan to see if you holding any tightness anywhere in the body. If you do notice any tightness, see if you can soften in those parts.

Coming back to the breath. Keeping your attention on your breath. Inhale & Exhale. Follow your breath. Observe where do you feel the natural breath. Either in the nose, belly or chest. Or you may feel the whole body breathing. We are simply noticing without trying to change the breath.

And sooner or later you may have realized that your mind has wandered off. If you notice any distraction of thought/physical- bring the attention back to the breath with an attitude of curiosity & kindness.

Be aware of your inhales and your exhales. Notice the pause between an inhalation & exhalation. And then the pause between exhale & inhale.

For the last minute, just be present with the breath & sensations of the body. Let us end this practice by inviting inner peace & calm.

Breathing in, I am calm

Breathing out, I smile.

Notice how are you feeling. Notice your body, notice your mind.

Simply acknowledge yourself for taking this time out for practicing presence. And whenever you are ready, open your eyes and ease back into your day.

