

MEDITATION

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

Meditation is a mind training practice – basically an exercise – to develop calmness and focus. There are many types of meditation some based on concentrating on the breath, some on concentrating on an image and some concentrating on a sound. Some religions include meditation as part of a religious ritual or service but meditation is not necessarily associated with a religion.

WHAT DO I NEED TO MEDITATE?

The only thing you need to meditate is a quiet place to sit.

HOW LONG SHOULD A MEDITATION SESSION BE?

Initially it is difficult to hold concentration so meditation sessions should be short – a maximum of ten minutes although 5 minutes may be enough. Like an exercise, the more often you do it, the easier it becomes – the mind becomes “stronger” and can hold the concentration for longer. When this occurs, meditation sessions can be longer.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I MEDITATE?

You can meditate as often as you like! Like exercise, meditating each day helps to build your concentration. Often people find having a main meditation session each day and meditating for a couple of minutes throughout the day helps them to stay calm.

MORNING OR EVENING MEDITATION – WHICH IS BEST?

It does not really matter if you meditate in the morning or evening! Many people prefer to start the day with a morning meditation session feeling this “sets them up for the day”. Other people prefer an evening meditation session as it helps them to unwind after a busy day. Try both and see what works the best for you!

HOW DO I MEDITATE?

Start off by sitting in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. It doesn't really matter if you sit on the floor or in a chair. If you sit on the floor you can sit cross legged or kneel – whichever is comfortable for you. If you sit in a chair, have both feet on the floor.

Sit with your back straight, shoulders relaxed and hands comfortably placed on your knees or with palms up and fingertips touching. Your tongue should be gently resting on the roof of your mouth. Close your eyes so just a slit is open. Breathe through your nose.

It is best not to lie down as you may go to sleep.

There are many types of meditation. A search of the internet will turn up written meditations you can follow as well as guided meditations on YouTube. In addition, there are books and audio-recordings. Try a range until you find ones that suit you. The following are some meditations you can try.

SOME MEDITATIONS TO TRY

Meditation 1 – While Drying After Shower

After you have had a shower, concentrate on the feeling as you dry yourself. Feel the difference as different parts of your body are dried (e.g. the face more sensitive than the feet). If another thought comes into your mind, put it to one side and continue to focus on the feeling of drying yourself.

Meditation 2 – While Doing the Dishes

While doing the dishes, concentrate totally on the task. Notice how the dish water feels on you skin – warm, soapy or maybe slippery. Feel the difference in texture between a plate and a piece of cutlery. Feel the movements you make while washing, picking something up and placing it down again. Observe the shape and texture of each item you pick up – the sponge, plate or cutlery. Listen to the sounds: water running, the sound of a dish going into water or being placed down again. Notice any smells: food, detergent or maybe antiseptic. If you lose concentration and start thinking of something else, gently return your focus back to doing the dishes.

Meditation 3 – While Exercising

While exercising, concentrate totally on the exercise you're doing. At different times concentrate on each of the following:

- Feel how your body moves in the exercise – the places the arms and legs go, changes in pressure on your feet and changes in your balance.
- Listen to your breathing – does it change at certain times (get faster or slower) or are you holding your breath at all
- Feel the different textures against your skin – the smoothness of a seat, the way your clothes move against your skin, the different surfaces of the things you hold.

If you lose concentration and start thinking of something else, gently return your focus back to doing the dishes.

Meditation 4 – While Eating a Meal

While eating a meal, concentrate totally on the different aspects of having a meal. Observe the way things are laid out: things on the table, the arrangement of food on the plate, the way the plate and cup or glass is placed on the table. Smell the food – notice the smell of the different food and the way they combine together. Taste the food – notice the way each type of food tastes and how they combine together. Feel the movement of lifting the food to your mouth, texture of the food in your mouth and the way your mouth moves during the eating process. Listen to the sounds of the clink of cutlery against your plate, the clunk of the glass on the table. If you lose concentration and start thinking of something else, gently return your focus back to doing the dishes.

Meditation 5 – Candle Flame

Sit with a lit candle in front of you. Concentrate on the flame – just observe it: the colour, height, changes in the breeze. Try not to narrate to yourself what is happening – just observe. If you lose concentration and start thinking of something else, gently return your focus back to the candle flame.

Meditation 6 – The Breath

As you sit quietly, concentrate on your breath. Some people concentrate on the sensation of the breath coming in and going out through the nostrils. Some people concentrate on the rise and fall of the chest or diaphragm. Try not to narrate to yourself what is happening – just observe. If you lose concentration and start thinking of something else, gently return your focus back to your breath.