

Understanding Meditation

by Kirsty O'Callaghan

What is Meditation?

Meditation is a powerful tool for relaxing, healing of the body, mind and spirit and gaining clarity and direction. It has its roots in ancient eastern cultures, but is not reserved just for a spiritual practice.

You can use meditation to consciously focus your minds on positive and beneficial outcomes. In this way you can develop your potential as a person, mentally, physically and spiritually.

Meditating is often used as a practice for a happier life. Generally it allows you to focus your mind and breathe (a great de-stressor), create positive thoughts, visualise or create pictures in your mind and experience a range of feelings, emotions, situations or self awareness activities.

Why Meditate?

Meditation is known to ease suffering and create a better life. Not only can it be used as a very effective spiritual tool (as many have known meditation to be: e.g. prayer or contemplation of the mysteries of life); it has been documented extensively to assist in better health, sharpening your mind, self-awareness, emotional stability, and heal psychological problems.

How do I meditate?

There are many different types of meditations, such as guided, music, breathing, crystals, visualisation, programming thought processes, hypnotherapy, to name a few. You can experience meditations in different forms: CD's, tapes, groups (facilitated by an accredited and/or experienced leader), in a group of friends, books or just sitting back and having time out. Usually starting with relaxation and breathing and then finding what is right for you is a good idea. There is no right or wrong.

When beginning meditation there are some things that are helpful to remember:

- Prepare yourself by having an open mind and being open to new experiences
- Be willing to let meditation change you. At first you may feel these changes, for example being more relaxed, seeing life differently or feeling different about a particular situation, which may feel uncomfortable

- Before any meditation take time to stretch and relax, in whatever way is suitable to you or your situation
- Minimise distractions or interruptions, whether you are meditating for 10 minutes or half an hour
- Make sure you are in a comfortable position, whether you are sitting or lying. It is also helpful to be aware of your clothing; it is too tight and will distract you during your time out
- Be consistent with your chosen meditation practice. Small meditations each day is very beneficial, but you will feel results of any regular meditation practise
- Create a safe space for your meditation that you use often. This could be a particular room, or chair, a part of your garden. By having this same space designated just for your time the benefits will have more impact
- Create a meditation journal, to write down your experiences, thoughts and inspirations. This is very helpful in gaining clarity and forward motion, and also seeing how far you have come

Here is one simple mediation technique that you can try:

Watching your Breath Meditation

Benefits: Reduces anxiety, lowers blood pressure and heart rate, reduces mental chatter, and promotes ability to focus the mind, helps you concentrate on whatever you choose.

Practice:

1. Sit either on a chair or lie on floor. Keep your back straight, shoulders relaxed and if sitting chin parallel to the floor. Close your eyes or lower them and focus about a meter in front of you. Rest your hands gently.
2. Breathe in through your nose, using your abdomen rather than your chest (feeling your lungs and stomach filling with air). Check your posture and relax any part of your body that is tense.
3. Begin counting your breath in and out for four. E.g. in for four...hold for four...then out for four. Thoughts may intervene and when they do, simply let them go and return to counting your breath.

Do this to start with for 5 to 10 minutes, building, as you are ready. You will not only find your stress levels drop but your muscle tone will also benefit.

Meditation has been widely credited with many benefits in adults. What you may not be aware of is that regular meditation with children also provides benefits such as:

- Increases attention span
- Aids concentration
- Has show a marked improvement in studies
- Better use of imagination and creativity
- Brings about a sense of peace, calm and safety
- Problem solving abilities enhanced and allows their minds to be free and active

Meditation can ensure your children have the necessary tools to cope with what life is going to present to them. To teach children to have a solitary space within them will give them a confident sense of who they are.

Try either a guided meditation with your children or playing some soft music. You only need 10 - 20 minutes with a child a couple of times a week to see great results.

You can use meditation in so many different ways. You can calm and centre, live mindfully, heal, get moving, generate love and compassion, solve problems, manifest dreams and connect to whatever your 'universe or divine' is.

Meditation will ultimately teach you to slow down, practice mindfulness, allow you to fully live in the moment and enrich your life and be more productive. Happy Meditating!



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role. The techniques and strategies Kirsty uses focus on a holistic and individual basis; knowing we are all capable of greatness, with the right knowledge, tools and support.

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