

The Power of **MEDITATION**



"This Manifesto reveals how meditation will help you unlock your full potential by aligning your mind, body and spirit to work in harmony and balance. You will discover how meditation creates a magical and natural synchronicity between your physiological, psychological and spiritual self. This will facilitate you being in perfect connection with the intelligence and power that resides within you and all around you."



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The Power of Meditation

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

<i>Chapter 1: What Is Meditation?</i>	3
Meditation versus Relaxation	4
Meditation versus Thinking	5
Meditation versus Concentration	6
<i>Chapter 2: How Meditation Works</i>	8
Brain Waves	9
The Physiological Component – Meditation and the Body	14
The Psychological Component – Meditation and the Mind	17
The Spiritual Component – Meditation and the Spirit	24
Creating the Life of Your Dreams	27
<i>Chapter 3: The Road to Better Meditations</i>	29
Pay Attention to Your Breath	29
Be Patient with Yourself	30
“Best Practices” for Formal Meditation	32
Formal Meditation versus Meditation in Action	34
<i>Chapter 4: Different Techniques & Disciplines</i>	36
The Stillness: Focus on a Single (Still) Point	36
The Flow: Focus on a Single (Moving) Point	38
The Centering: Focus on Your Complete Surroundings	40
The Void: Focus on the Absence of a Point of Focus	45
Combining Different Techniques	47
Advanced Techniques for Meditation in Movement	47
The Many Faces of Meditation	49

The Power of Meditation

What Is Meditation?

Chapter 1: What Is Meditation?



If you ask 100 people “What is meditation?” you are likely to get 100 different answers. That's because meditation is used for many different things by many different people. But in general, you can think of meditation as an intentional change in awareness in a quest for a physiological, psychological or spiritual transformation:

- The potential *physiological* transformations from meditation are well documented. Meditation helps the body recover from, and reduce the negative effects of, stress and anxiety; provides a more restful, nourishing sleep; lowers blood pressure; improves cardiovascular function; and enhances the body's natural immune system.
- Potential *psychological* transformations include accelerated healing from past psychological trauma. But its effectiveness as a tool in self-discovery and self-inquiry also makes it a valuable addition to almost any psychological therapy.
- As a catalyst for *spiritual* transformation, meditation is a widely-known way for tapping into the infinite source of all supply and creation. Be it called God, the Universe or any other name, by taking time each day to be silent in the stillness of this connection, advocates feel connected to a place that seems spiritual in nature – a field of pure potentiality where no limits or barriers exist and everything is possible.

Meditation may be the single most powerful tool for transformation we have in our tool belt. However, never forget that it is primarily an experience that helps us find the calm, still, joy of each moment and – by allowing us to remain balanced in the midst of whatever turmoil may be going on around us – lets us enjoy each moment to its fullest.

The Power of Meditation

What Is Meditation?

Meditation versus Relaxation



Relaxation itself can assume many forms; however, it usually involves changing something external in order to increase comfort or remove sources of stress. As good as it can feel to soak in

a hot bath, or curl up in your favorite chair with a good book; the accompanying relaxed feeling is more like a momentary RELIEF than anything else. A temporary relief that may often be a precursor to a nap. The reason for this is that while many people seek such relief from physical and mental overwork, their focus tends to be on external changes and they still engage anxious thought processes. So, even though there may be a temporary feeling of relief, there is no true or lasting sense of relaxation.

Meditation, on the other hand, while it may appear to be a more active process actually transcends the thought process and allows the body to relax more fully. By simply allowing yourself to be a witness or guide **to the focus of your own awareness**, your body and mind get the message that nothing is going on that requires them to be “hyper-engaged” so they are able to throttle back a bit. Where relaxation signals that there is a temporary respite from a struggle, meditation sends a signal that there is no longer a struggle so the body and mind can return to their natural states of functioning. By doing this, meditation is able to offset the effects of stress, both

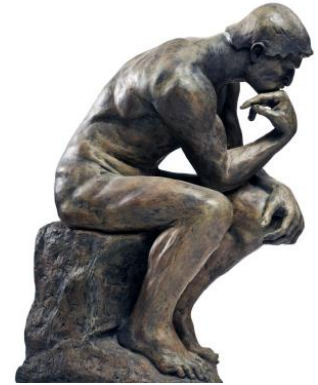
The Power of Meditation

What Is Meditation?

mentally and physically, to a potentially much greater degree than passive relaxation.

Meditation versus Thinking

Thoughts generally consume energy in the process of their formation. Constant thought-activity, especially of a random nature, can fire the mind and even bring on a headache or a feeling of being scattered and overwhelmed. Left



to their own devices, our thoughts will tend toward problem-solving. Our thoughts will zero in on where we perceive there is a problem and work to resolve that problem by presenting different mental scenarios as solutions. This is actually an incredible process. The problem is that we never learned to disengage this process. Our thoughts are always working to find problems and then come up with solutions for us.

Meditation transcends this turbulent level of never-ending thought activity. Most of us never learned to master our own thoughts – we just allowed ourselves to be pulled along by the wild horses in our heads. Meditation takes back the reins on our thought process – reminding us that we are in control of our own awareness – not the other way around. We control where we put our attention and ultimately, what we choose to think. When thinking through a problem can provide a solution, thought is a welcome tool in our tool belt. However, by witnessing and guiding our thoughts through consistent practice in meditation, we become aware that we can

The Power of Meditation

What Is Meditation?

observe our thoughts without being absorbed by them. We become aware of our true selves, our awareness that exists independent of thought. If true intelligence is the measure of our ability to use thinking but not be used by it – then meditation is as crucial to our intelligence as our ability to think.

Meditation versus Concentration



Many people in the west are confused by the difference between concentration and meditation. That's understandable when you realize that so few people know that they are not their thoughts. Remember

Descartes? "I think, therefore I am." According to that line of reasoning, your thought IS who you are. Through meditation, we learn that that is not the case. Then, it becomes clear that while concentration is focused thinking, meditation is focused awareness – and that is a very different thing.

Concentration involves bringing our thoughts to bear on one particular thing, usually in the attempt to find a solution or resolution. Meditation is the total awareness of everything around us, informed by – but not distracted by – all of our senses, thoughts, and feelings.

Adding to the confusion between the two is that a number of techniques of meditation employ concentration techniques in the beginning. However, this is only to help people find that place of

The Power of Meditation

What Is Meditation?

meditation within. After that, concentration becomes like a vestigial organ or a map after you've already found the treasure. Then, meditation can certainly help you concentrate, but you no longer need concentration techniques to find meditation. But more on that later.

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How Meditation Works

Chapter 2: How Meditation Works

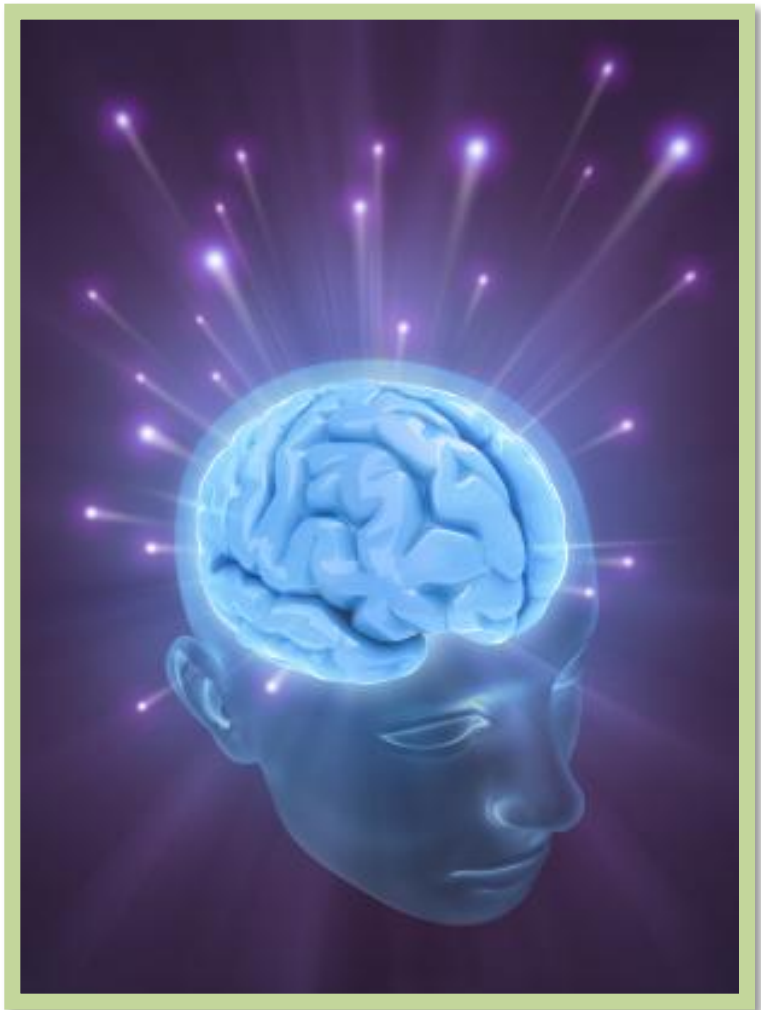
Practitioners of meditation have long credited their practice as contributing to their physiological, psychological and spiritual well-being. However, only recently have scientists in the West confirmed these claims through scientific research and come up with a

possible reason as to

WHY this is the case.

Scientists can now study the electrical activity in the brain and have discovered that certain states of consciousness are connected to certain brainwave frequencies. Coming as no surprise to meditation practitioners, they have found that meditation slows the electrical activity in the brain, resulting in a more frequent brain wave activity that is

associated with healing levels of consciousness.

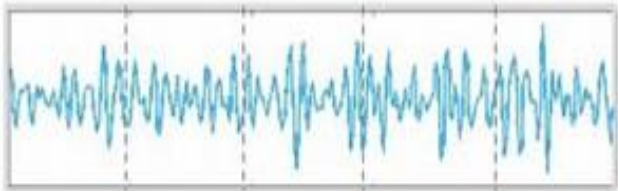

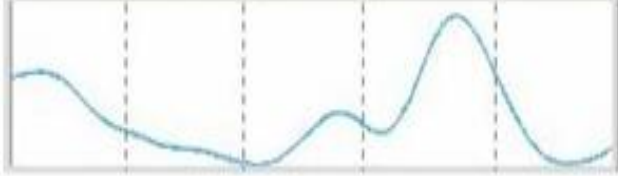


The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

Brain Waves

In neuroscience, there are five commonly-recognized brain wave patterns:

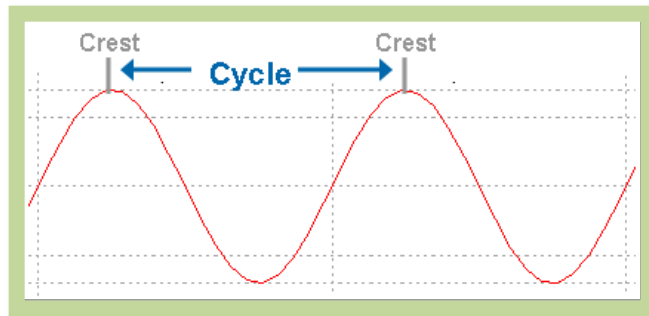
<u>Brain Wave Pattern</u>	<u>Name and Brief Description</u>
	Gamma Waves (40-100 Hz) – Peak Performance <i>Super fast.</i> Indicates higher mental activity (not normal thinking or problem-solving), flashes of brilliance and consolidation of information from all areas of the brain.
	Beta (14-39.9 Hz) – Alert/Working/Stress <i>Waking to Fast.</i> Not conducive to super-learning. This is our day-to-day awake state – the higher end of the spectrum indicates when we are engaged or stressed.
	Alpha (8-13.9 Hz) – Relaxed Focus <i>Eased.</i> Can be induced by meditation, relaxation, or light trance. Indicates increased serotonin production and beginning of access to non-conscious mind. Conducive to super-learning and higher intuitive factors.
	Theta (4-7.9 Hz) – Internal/Integrative Focus <i>Slowed.</i> Can be induced by meditation, dreaming (REM) sleep. Indicates increased creativity and production of catecholamine (vital for learning and memory). Conducive to integrating emotional experiences and changing behavior. Can tap into universal intelligence.
	Delta (.1-3.9Hz) – Non-Focus <i>Very slow.</i> Indicates dreamless sleep or deep meditative state. Human growth hormone released.

But let's back up a minute. What exactly is a brain wave and what does a brain wave tell us about what's happening in our brain? Without getting too technical, let's try for a simple explanation.

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

An electroencephalograph (EEG) is a medical device that is able to measure the electrical activity on your scalp and plot it out in lines that look like waves. That's actually where the term "wave" in brain wave comes from. Electrical activity looks like a wave when you plot it out and the electrical activity produced by the brain is no exception. If you look at the graph of the wave you can pick any point on that wave and then find the next point on the wave where the pattern starts repeating. That fragment of the wave is called a "cycle." For instance, the distance between one crest of



the wave (the top-most point) and the next is one "cycle." When we refer to the "frequency" of a wave, that's just the number of those cycles

that happen in a second (In fact, the Hz designation is short for Hertz, which is the way scientists refer to "the number of cycles per second" or the *vibrational speed* of the wave.) A higher frequency indicates more cycles per second and a faster-vibrating brain wave. A lower frequency indicates fewer cycles per second and a slower-vibrating brain wave.

Some brain waves are seen more often during certain activities so, for the sake of convenience, they are divided into distinct ranges of frequencies so they can be referred to collectively:

The Gamma Waves

- These are the fastest brain waves, found between 40 – 100 Hz

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

- Usually indicates states of peak performance (either mental or physical)
- Associated with higher mental activity (not normal thinking or problem-solving) which includes flashes of brilliance and sudden bursts of insight, as well as moments of extreme focus or concentration
- Some studies have linked these waves with the synchronization and consolidation of information over different areas of the brain

The Beta Waves

- This is the range of brain waves that spans what is commonly thought of as our waking awareness – found between 14 – 39.9 Hz
- Frequencies at the upper end of this range indicate stress, anxiety, panic or self-criticism while those at the lower end are usually accompanied by more feelings of clear-headedness, alertness and creativity.

The Alpha Waves

- These waves, slower than the Beta waves of normal waking awareness, indicate a deep relaxation and are found in the range of 8 – 13.9 Hz
- These waves generally indicate a relaxed and detached awareness where concentration, imagination, learning, memory and visualization are heightened. In fact, super-learning and higher intuitive factors are benefits of this frequency.
- This range is the state of awareness that is the bridge between your conscious and subconscious mind and allows you to become consciously aware and remember experiences from deeper (non-conscious) states.
- Meditation, relaxation or a light trance can induce this type of brain wave activity.

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

The Theta Waves

- These waves are normally only experienced momentarily as you are drifting off to sleep or waking up (this includes the period of REM sleep where dreams occur) and are found in the range of 4 – 7.9 Hz
- Indicates increased creativity and production of catecholamine (which are vital for learning and memory) as well as accelerated healing
- This state of awareness is conducive to integrating your emotional experiences and changing behavior. It is the level of the subconscious that holds some of the deepest programming for our behavior – where we find unconscious or suppressed desires and beliefs.
- It is also the first state through which we can start to tap into a universal intelligence and is often associated with vivid visualizations, creativity, insight and inspiration.

The Delta Waves

- These waves are the slowest frequencies and are normally experienced during deep (dreamless) sleep and very deep meditation –found between .1 – 3.9 Hz
- Increase in growth hormone production and accelerated healing
- This is the realm of the individual and collective subconscious where information is available to our subconscious mind in a way that it is not available to our conscious mind.
- Responsible for our empathetic “hunches” or insights and is often exhibited most strongly in those working in therapeutic environments or helping those who are healing from a trauma.

It's good to remember that our brain does not produce a single brain wave. Our brain activity is always a combination of all of these frequencies at the same time; some frequencies are just stronger than the others at certain times. So there is no “best” brain

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

wave. The healthiest brain activity is when the brain wave that is best suited to the situation becomes dominant while it is needed and then allows others to become dominant as the situation changes.



Scientists are now able to verify that meditation actually changes our brain waves. It encourages a shift from the dominant over-thinking, stress-related brain activity that is nurtured by our fast-paced society, to a more balanced mix that includes our other states of awareness.

By identifying the link between changes in brainwave frequencies with changes in both conscious states and biological responses, researchers are coming closer to understanding the connection between mind, body and spirit. Perhaps it is no coincidence then, that the benefits of an ongoing meditation practice can be classified further into three categories:

1. The Physiological Component
2. The Psychological Component
3. The Spiritual Component

However, whether your interest in meditation stems from your interest in the benefits you will receive in just one of these components or in all of them (whatever you think of as your “goal”) the practice of meditation offers transformation in all of these areas at the same time. How is that? Think of meditation as a room with many doors. It doesn't matter which door you enter, when you get inside the room you can enjoy all the treasures you find there. So

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

even if you are only looking for a way to lower your blood pressure, meditation will inevitably lead you to new opportunities for growth in other areas of your life at the same time. That's just how it works.

The Physiological Component – Meditation and the Body



People from all over the world use meditation to accelerate their healing and, increasingly, physicians prescribe meditation as part of their treatment for a large and growing number of medical conditions.

The most popular reasons that some people are turning to meditation include many issues related to their physical health. Without the use of pharmaceuticals, objective (measurable) health indicators have shown that meditation can:

- reduce stress (includes lowering levels of cortisol, a stress hormone which is also associated with weight gain)
- relieve anxiety and depression and increase emotional stability
- deepen rest – allowing a more restful / rejuvenating sleep
- lower heart rate, blood pressure and cholesterol levels – substantially reducing the heart's work load and providing improved overall cardiovascular function
- substantially improve the flow of air to the lungs resulting in easier breathing (very significant for those with asthma)
- strengthen the immune system
- improve memory and learning ability – and even increase IQ

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

- reduced hospitalization and need for out-patient care
- decreased dependence on alcohol and drugs

Additional studies have also found these benefits:

- Less gray matter in the brain that is associated with the aging process
- Elevated long-term blood flow to the brain
- Increased activity in the part of the brain that controls making decision and the length of attention span



It is probably not surprising with all of these physiological benefits that long-term practitioners of meditation (more than five years) have been found to measure 12 years younger biologically than their chronological age.

But what is it about meditation that actually contributes to all of these health benefits? The answer is two-fold – one aspect is related to the health implications of our modern-day society and one is related to how the brain itself works.

- *The impact of our society on our health*

Our fast-paced, goal oriented, hyper-stimulated way of life has resulted in the higher frequency Beta Waves becoming the dominant brain wave frequency for most members of our society. Beta Waves represent our waking state so they are obviously crucial; however, we tend to be over-stimulated in our society. Everything demands our arousal, our excitement, our fear, our focused-attention with never time to allow the other brain waves room to balance out our brain activity. When we signal our body and mind that something needs our immediate attention,



The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

we are telling it to abandon any non-crucial natural functions and pay closer attention because our survival is at stake. By meditating, we deliberately slow our brain activity briefly in order to allow our bodies and minds to relax and return to a state of rest and healing. Ironically, by removing ourselves from Beta Wave dominance deliberately, we also become better able to focus more fully in those moments when the appropriate brain wave response is the Beta Wave.

- *Meditation takes advantage of how our brain works.*

Our brain is great at trying to make things easier for us. If all we have asked of it is Beta Wave frequencies (to deal with the world around us), then it becomes very good at producing Beta Wave frequencies. And it learns to generate those frequencies very fast and very well. Fortunately, the brain is just as enthusiastic about learning new patterns that we ask of it. The more that we meditate, the more the brain produces brain wave patterns connected to other states of awareness. The more it produces other patterns, the easier it becomes to return to that state in the future. That mental adaptability is one of the key reasons that meditation helps us be more physically resilient – able to bounce back more quickly and easily after suffering a physical trauma.



Strengthening that mental flexibility is also why the benefits of meditation extend beyond the time that we are actually meditating. As we learn more balanced brain wave activity, the brain learns to adapt its activity to brain wave patterns that are more appropriate and not automatically trigger the high frequency Beta Waves. But remember that as many triggers that exist for the high frequency Beta Waves in your life, you can consciously set just as many triggers for meditation. Using a simple reminder or a single exhaled breath, experienced meditation practitioners learn to alter their brainwaves in an instant.

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

The Psychological Component – Meditation and the Mind



Due to the nature of the mind, the psychological benefits of meditation can seem more subjective than their physiological counterparts; however, they are just as important. Increasingly,

meditation is becoming an integral part of many psychotherapy programs as a tool to both discovery and recovery. Why is this? Because even outside of psychotherapy programs, meditation has been found to:

- Increase feelings of vitality, clarity and rejuvenation
- Increase self-confidence and socialization
- Increase satisfaction with both home life and career
- Increase measures of happiness and calmness (peaceful state)
- Decrease irritability and moodiness
- Decrease insomnia
- Increase harmony of brain wave activity in different parts of the brain (associated with greater creativity, and improved moral reasoning)
- Increase gamma waves in the prefrontal lobe area, which is where positive emotions seem to be produced

Additional studies have found biological indications for some of these benefits:

- Increases thickness in the brain responsible for happiness, state of well-being and emotive processing

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

- Relaxes the area of the brain connected to emotional reactivity

But instead of focusing on what is wrong that meditation can help heal, let's focus on how meditation can help someone that is already mentally stable. Because what kind of a low bar is that to set for ourselves? Stable? On TV, when we see someone being referred to as "stable" they are probably in a hospital bed and it usually just means they are not in an immediate danger of dying. That's the goal we're setting for ourselves?

Beyond simply becoming "mentally stable" or eliminating stress, meditation can be a powerful tool in your journey of self-actualization. You may be more familiar with this type of journey under another name: self-realization; self-discovery; self-empowerment; or any other journey or program where the goal is moving beyond simple "stability" into the realization of your full potential. For those that are interested, meditation offers a powerful contribution to any self-actualization program by:



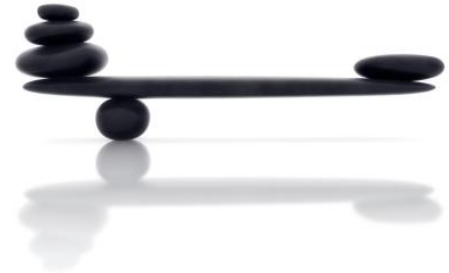
1. Increasing your sensitivity to your own mental balance (discovery)
2. Strengthening your mental flexibility and resiliency (recovery)

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

Mental Balance

Meditation decreases the brain's reliance on upper frequency Beta waves as the response to any given situation while increasing its access to other brain wave frequencies. By balancing the brain's activity in this way, meditation actually helps us learn to balance our reactions to the ever-changing world around us. However, you have to remember that balance is something that doesn't come instantly or something that you can find and forget. It's something you attain and maintain. Even when we learned physical balance as a child, it came in stages:



1. Balance in stillness (we learn to balance while standing still)
2. Balance in movement (we learn to balance while walking/running)
3. Balance while standing in chaos (we learn to balance while what we are standing on is moving)
4. Balance while moving through chaos (we learn to balance while walking/running on something that is moving)

Each stage required that we rediscover our center of balance and deepen our understanding of our own sense of balance.

Meditation offers these same stages while it enhances our understanding of our mental balance:

1. Balance in stillness. When we sit in silent meditation and deliberately remove the external distractions around us, we allow ourselves to rediscover the foundation of our mental balance.

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

2. Balance in movement. As we rediscover our mental balance, we can remember to maintain it while walking, doing chores or moving through our normal daily routine.
3. Balance while standing in the midst chaos. Remaining in mental balance while turmoil beckons on all sides is essential in the information age. Even though events on the evening news or the internet may not require your direct participation, you can easily find yourself pulled or manipulated without your own sense of balance.
4. Balance while moving through chaos. Meditation also gives you the ability to consistently return to the calm center of the storm as you move through (and interact with) the world around you during times of upheaval or crisis.

Each stage builds on the one before it and constantly presents new challenges. The very first stage, *Balance in stillness*, is the foundation for each of the other stages.

That's why devoting time to sitting in silent meditation each day fortifies your foundation of meditation, but it can also make you more sensitive to areas where your thoughts, beliefs or actions may be out of



balance. You may find yourself beginning to question assumptions and beliefs about yourself or the world that you have held for most of your life. Usually, this indicates an area where there is a disturbance in your life. Rather than be upset about that or afraid of it, treasure it! Just as in finding your physical balance, sometimes you need to adjust some of your extremities to bring yourself more into alignment with your center of balance. So, if your meditation is consistently disrupted by your worries about a particular problem or

The Power of Meditation

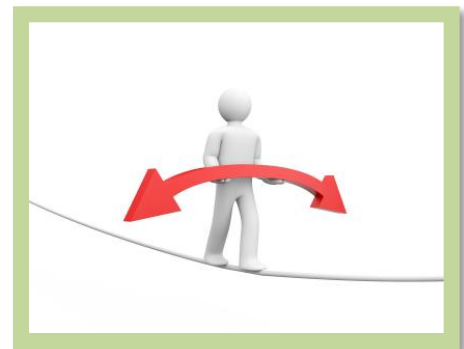
How Meditation Works

thoughts about a specific thing, then that's a red flag that you can look into later.

However, always remember that red flags are signals for AFTER meditation. Imagine you are walking across a tightrope and you get distracted momentarily and lose your balance for an instant. The thing that is important is to find your balance again as quickly as possible and continue until you get to the end. The time that you spend sitting silently in meditation is like that. For that period, it's all about maintaining your balance. So, during meditation, the only thing you need to do is retrain your brain, refocus your thoughts and gently return your attention to meditation. After meditation there is plenty of time to examine any red flags that may have popped up for your attention. And these red flags are incredibly useful in any self-actualization journey. They indicate where your balance is threatened and allow you to become more sensitive to areas or old habits that can use your attention. And you will find that as you bring all of these areas into alignment; it becomes easier to maintain your balance consistently.

Mental Flexibility and Resilience

Along with helping you to maintain your mental balance, meditation helps you recover from a “fall”. In the same way that meditation speeds healing and recovery from physical trauma, it also helps you recover from a mental fall.



The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

One of the first things that any martial artist learns is how to fall. This is because no matter how well you train and how gifted you are, everyone falls. What is important is reducing the amount of damage done in a fall and speeding the recovery time from any damage you sustained. Meditation offers this same *flexibility* and *resiliency* on a psychological level:

- *Flexibility*

As you learn more balanced brain activity, you are able to bring other states of awareness to bear that may be better able to handle a given situation. Your immediate response is not limited to the higher frequency Beta wave response. Perhaps instead of an immediate stress reaction, a better response would be an intuitive gauge of the situation around you, or relying on creativity to find a solution outside-the-box. Mental flexibility is the option to bring to bear the most appropriate response to any situation. By providing you with a greater conscious access to the other brain wave frequencies, meditation gives you this option.



This is especially important during emergency or crisis situations. If you have ever been in a car accident, you know the value of remaining flexible and at ease during impact. If you remain very relaxed during an accident, your natural flexibility makes you less likely to suffer physical injuries than if your fear reflex causes you to stiffen up and brace for impact. Similarly, if you are always moving through your life in the fear/stress mode of higher frequency Beta waves, you will be so rigid and stiff that even the most minor bump may feel like a big impact. This is one of the reasons meditation seems to help so many areas of our life. As you move through life with a keener mental balance, you are able to brush off things as trivial that those under stress would see as catastrophes.

- *Resiliency*

An important part of health is the ability to recover from a

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

trauma. This can be either physical or mental/emotional. During meditation, we consciously enter the more healing frequencies of our consciousness which accelerates healing in and of itself. But also, by the very nature of practicing meditation, we discover an inner strength and resiliency. We *learn to allow ourselves to heal.*

So much of what thwarts our natural healing process is our tendency to focus on the problem and what has been hurt, rather than on returning to a state of balance. The practice of sitting in silent meditation gives us a practical excuse, a real-life exercise. Rather than being distracted and allowing our thoughts to dictate where our attention goes, we choose to continue to direct our thoughts back to meditation. You will never experience your own strength as profoundly as:



- When everything (internally and externally) is telling you what you need to focus on, but you continue to gently return your attention to meditation.
- When you refuse to be distracted by what seems determined to distract you.
- When you consciously choose to keep your sights on balance, health and happiness.
- When you begin to realize that "sitting and doing nothing" may be the most powerful thing you can choose at that moment.

Then you begin to get a peek at your own power and how much more you are able to handle than you thought you could.

Through meditation and altering your brain wave balance, you foster more feelings of happiness and life satisfaction. Not only can you feel happy during meditation, it spills over into the rest of your day. At first it may only last a few minutes or a few hours after

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

meditation. Then over time, that happiness becomes your normal state of mind.

The Spiritual Component – Meditation and the Spirit



Some begin meditation as part of a prescribed spiritual practice advocated by their religion, their spiritual leader or by their own inner voice. For them, seeing the spiritual connection is automatic and they usually have some form of guidance for the

techniques they should employ for their greatest spiritual reward. Even though they might come at it from a desire for spiritual growth or awakening, they will reap the physical and physiological benefits as well.

However, those individuals who initially approach meditation for its self-regulatory aspects may also find that as their practice deepens they are drawn more and more into the realm of the “spiritual.” They may become confused by the many different paths and techniques available for those interested in the spiritual component of meditation. That’s not surprising considering that meditation is a fundamental part of *many* spiritual practices; and consequently, *many* religions. Ironically, that may also be one of the most controversial aspects of meditation because, historically, when organized religions claim something as their own, they jealously

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

protect it and decry any other religion's use of it as heretical – or, at best, misguided.

The good news is that most spiritual paths advocate meditation of some kind, and regardless of the path you choose, meditation can be an incredible part of your transformation process. And one of the anecdotal benefits of meditation is



that, once begun, you may be guided to different meditations that are more appropriate for your expanding awareness as your sensitivity and mental discrimination increases. But for now, as with any journey, the first step starts from where you are standing...

The spiritual experiences that many find in meditation seem incredibly sacred to those that experience them. So, even though a case could probably be made that there is a link between the different brain wave frequencies and their perceived religious experiences, let's not tear the wings off their butterfly so we can examine them. Let's just look at descriptions of what many have experienced:

- When in meditation, time is illusory. It is not uncommon to find that thirty minutes or even an hour may seem like only three minutes. There is perception of total connected-ness to the omnipotent source of all that is, and a feeling of one-ness with God and the universe.
- The miraculous becomes common-place. There are people throughout the world who are able to heal themselves through the practice of daily meditation without any traditional medical intervention.

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

- Finding abundant energy and creativity in the gap between the moments... the space between the notes of music. That space in which there are absolutely no thoughts. It is in this gap that you are in touch with your higher self, in touch with a higher reality and open to the divine.
- Losing a sense of separate-ness. There are no more thoughts, no self-awareness and no ego.

The most common phenomenon reported is this feeling of one-ness.

Most of the time you may feel separated from everything (including God) because you are so identified with who you are, encased in this little shell of a body. Your body and your identity



seem to separate you from everything else, like an impermeable wall. In meditation, there is a deeper realization where you see yourself more like a wave in the ocean. Even though a wave may extend several feet out of the water, it is still a part of the ocean. In fact, from several hundred feet in the air, the wave may be indistinguishable from the rest of the ocean. It is only our insistence on being separate that deludes us.

In meditation, it is common to experience that absolutely everything in the universe is connected to everything else. And when you meditate, you totally change the vibration of every molecule and atom in your body to one that is more in line with this vision of the universe. Consequently, that is what you will see in your everyday life, reflected back at you. This feeling of one-ness and

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

unity gives you a feeling of serenity that is the foundation of many spiritual practices.

Creating the Life of Your Dreams

Whatever your motivations or reasons for meditating, learning how to control your own mind is one of the greatest problems you will ever encounter. But mastering it is going to be your greatest celebration. And it's vital if you want to transform your life!



We are all powerful creators but the question is: what are you creating with your mind? Your mind is incredibly powerful and your thinking processes create and attract all of the conditions that occur in your life, so mastering this should be an essential priority. Your beliefs about yourself and your

capabilities can limit or empower you. Which would you prefer? All that is required is your willingness and desire to learn and then take the actions that will allow those things to manifest in your life.

It begins with meditation. Meditation teaches you how to still the mind, so that it will do what you want it to do, rather than what it has already been programmed to do. In meditation you learn to ignore the flow of ideas, sounds and thoughts while you are in absolute stillness. You can observe your thoughts rather than allowing yourself to be distracted by the focus of those thoughts. In

The Power of Meditation

How Meditation Works

this stillness lies the power to overcome obstacles and reach your highest potential.

All research shows meditation methods result in reducing stress and do so in different ways. The earliest methods of meditation aimed to explore the field of consciousness beyond the physical universe (as the material world was seen as illusory and limiting.) As a result, these methods were believed to eliminate stress by creating detachment. In comparison, the more modern methods of meditation honor the physical world as the final step in spirituality,



and honor the problems people face in life as the stimuli of growth. The more modern meditation practices do not all aim to create detachment; but rather promotes focus, clarity and creativity.

As much as the goals of practicing meditation (as well as the methods and techniques available) have shifted over the last four thousand years, what has remained the same is the incredible potential that meditation offers of engaging the mind-body connection to accomplish particular personal and spiritual goals.

The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations

Chapter 3: The Road to Better Meditations

Regardless of the technique or discipline of meditation you follow, there are certain guidelines and principles that can help you reach success – whether your goal is inner bliss or lowering your blood pressure.

Pay Attention to Your Breath

Perhaps the single-most defining characteristic of meditation is conscious breathing. In many languages - the words for spirit and breath are one and the same (Sanskrit *prana*, Hebrew *ruach*, Greek *pneuma*, Latin *spiritus*). Breathing is the bridge between mind and body, the connection between consciousness and unconsciousness, the movement of spirit in matter. Breath is the key



to health and wellness, and perhaps the single-most important function we can learn to regulate and develop in order to improve our physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Breathing is very special in that it is controlled by two sets of nerves, one set belonging to the voluntary nervous system, and the other set to the involuntary (autonomic) nervous system. What this means is that it is one of the only functions you can control both

The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations

consciously and subconsciously. For this reason, breath is the bridge between your conscious and subconscious.

Most people do not know how to breathe effectively: to take full advantage of the nourishing, health-giving properties of the act of breathing. The simple art of knowing how to breathe properly can help lower your blood pressure, calm a racing heart, or help your digestive system without taking drugs. Breathing also has direct connections to emotional states and moods. Observe someone who is angry, afraid or otherwise upset, and you will see a person breathing rapidly, shallowly, noisily and irregularly. You cannot be upset if your breathing is slow, deep, quiet and regular.

You may not always be able to center yourself emotionally by an act of will, but you can use your voluntary nerves to make your breathing slow, deep, quiet and regular, and the rest will follow. This is why the breath is such an integral part of many techniques of meditation.

Be Patient with Yourself

As with anything new, meditation can seem difficult for beginners so it's important to be patient with yourself as you learn to meditate. Everyone is a beginner when they start out but because we have trained our thoughts to be results-oriented, it's easy to feel impatient to reach our goals. But those are exactly the thoughts and feelings that meditation is allowing you to release. So release them. When those thoughts and feelings arise, recognize them as an old pattern

The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations

and a mistaken understanding of what you are supposed to be doing and gently guide your thoughts back to your point of focus.

This is an important part of any meditation practice. Whenever your attention drifts away from your point of focus – to a sound in the environment, a sensation in your body, or a thought in your mind – gently but firmly return your awareness to your meditation. And when this happens, it's important that you don't judge it or criticize it. This defeats the purpose of meditation. And your brain is only doing what you have trained it to do. So, just notice what is happening and take back the control of your focus.



The first few times you meditate, you may feel as if you are continuously wandering off on tangents of thought and spending a great deal of the time dedicated to chasing those thoughts and guiding them back to your point

of focus. This is actually the whole point. You are retraining your brain and refocusing your thoughts.

If feelings of frustration show up for you, remember that it's because you think you are not where you *should* be. You need to understand that you are *exactly* where you should be. In fact, whatever feelings pop up as a reaction to meditation, probably show up in many other aspects of your life. If you are frustrated with yourself for not 'getting' meditation quickly enough, there is a good chance you are always comparing yourself to some mental image and feeling anxious and frustrated when you feel you don't measure up! The solution is always to not be distracted by those

The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations

thoughts and to gently return your thoughts to meditation. Each time you make that choice, you are training your brain so that it becomes an easier choice, even when you are not sitting in formal meditation.

"Best Practices" for Formal Meditation

Meditation is simple and easy to make a part of your daily routine. However, it's very useful to dedicate a particular place and time to "formally" meditate each day. If there is a particular time that is meaningful to you, then choose that time. Generally, in the morning before breakfast and in the evening before sunset works best for most people. But be consistent.



Establishing a consistent time every day for meditation, means that your brain learns that something specific is being asked of it during that time period so it will also become more consistent in giving you the results you are asking for.

As far as creating a specific place where you will practice your meditation, you can use these ideas to get you started:

- Picking the right area for your formal meditation can be extremely helpful. You mainly want it to be peaceful, serene and free of distractions. What this means and how it is symbolized is different for each person so just find what works for you. But let it be special! Don't pick an area that you already associate with another activity (like watching TV.) If your meditation area is only used when you meditate, then it

The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations

becomes easier for your brain to get the message that when you enter this area, you are going to meditate. The quicker it gets this idea, the easier meditating becomes. Creating a place that helps to calm the mind and enhance positive feelings can make meditation a more rewarding and enjoyable experience. But remember, it doesn't have to be perfect. Just perfect for creating the right tone for you.



- Pick a comfortable place to sit. Unless you are bed-ridden, you do not want to use your bed as your formal place of meditation. Your bed is used for other activities already so your mind already has associations established for that place. And since many people are not used to being relaxed except right before they fall asleep, the brain sometimes will interpret an attempt to meditate as a command to fall asleep. You want to do what you can to prevent your brain from making that association.
- Remove any distractions. Distractions can be anything that may try to wrest your thoughts and attention out of your control. So, do not have anything that reminds you of work or other responsibilities nearby. And don't forget to turn off that phone or computer if it's nearby. However, it's OK to use an alarm to establish a certain time period for your meditation. In fact, if you find yourself constantly "peeking" to see how much time has gone by while you are meditating – *definitely* use an alarm. "Peeking" is a sign that your thoughts are trying to move your focus outside of your control. Take back control and gently guide your focus back to your meditation.
- Those on a spiritual path might also consider adding "sacred" or devotional reminders to help set the right tone. This can take the form of anything from candles and inspirational quotes to full blown altars holding symbols of worship. Guidance for this might be part of whatever particular technique or discipline that you follow. If not, simply use anything that brings



The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations

about the reverent, open and serene feelings to which you aspire.

These guidelines can be useful for everyone, but they are especially important for beginners. Starting out with good technique is much easier than trying to change bad habits later. And the importance of learning how to set up the right environment – that encourages you to approach meditation with the proper mindset – is often overlooked.

Formal Meditation versus Meditation in Action

When the time for your formal meditation is over, open your eyes and allow yourself a few minutes to reconnect with your surroundings. Notice the quiet stillness you are feeling. Becoming familiar with that feeling will help you find it more easily later. Notice how that stillness seems reflected in your physical surroundings. Allow yourself to enjoy that. If you have any devotions or visualizations or affirmations, this is a perfect time to do them. As you begin your day and allow your thoughts to focus on the tasks, notice how you can still feel connected to that stillness you found inside. Practicing meditation does not mean that it ends when you stand up after formal meditation any more than practicing singing ends with doing your scales.

Practicing meditation is similar to anything else that you practice. Consider if you are learning something else... like ballet. Each day, at the beginning of class, ballet dancers line up at the ballet bar and practice simple exercises. No matter how great the dancer,

The Power of Meditation

The Road to Better Meditations



they return to the bar to maintain their technique and mastery of the most simple and basic moves. Why is that? Because in this controlled space, glaring mistakes that can hide within

a larger dance routine are easily spotted. So the practice at the ballet bar is to fully learn and master the fundamentals so that when the dancer moves to the dance floor and dances a piece of choreography, they will have already mastered those fundamentals and be able to focus on the dance. The same is true for meditation. Only the dance you are practicing for is the dance of life itself.

That's why formal meditation is so important. That time when you are sitting quietly is where you learn the basics. Then, everything you experience, you can take with you throughout your daily routine. Don't leave your meditation in your meditation chair! You will find that it becomes easier to access those meditative brain waves throughout your day. If other brain waves are appropriate, they are readily available. But just like working out a muscle, meditation gives you that strength when you need it outside of your workout.

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

Chapter 4: Different Techniques & Disciplines

There are many different disciplines of meditation and although terminology and technique may vary, many seem to have a number of things in common. For the moment, let's look beyond any specific discipline or religious practice of meditation and focus on the four types of meditation that many disciplines seem to share:

- *The Stillness*: focus on a single (still) point
- *The Flow*: focus on a single (moving) point
- *The Centering*: focus on your complete surroundings (multiple points)
- *The Void*: focus on the absence of a point of focus

The Stillness: Focus on a Single (Still) Point

One of the most commonly-practiced meditations involves focusing your thoughts on a single non-moving point. This focus can be external or internal, as well as visual, auditory or imagined:

- Examples of an external still point of focus:
 - A candle flame (visual)
 - A cross or other religious symbol (visual)
 - A bell or chime (auditory)
 - A single sustained chant (such as OM) (auditory)



The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

- Examples of an internal still point of focus:
 - An energy center of your body (the heart, third eye, chakra, etc.)
 - Your own heartbeat

Note: Internal points of focus do not actually engage external senses. Even so, many people allow their imagined focus to take on the qualities of their dominant or preferred sense. For instance, when they focus on the heart, they will either SEE the heart, or HEAR the heartbeat.

A Simple Example of Stillness:

The OM Meditation

OM (pronounced AUM) is one of the most popular chant or mantra meditations in practice today. Given special significance by some as “the sound of the universe” or “the name of God,” the OM Meditation is a good example of Stillness meditation and it is one of the simplest to explain:

1. Sit in the area you have set up for your meditation practice.
2. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths before you begin.
3. Now take a slow deep breath and, while releasing it, as slowly as you can, chant the word OM (AAAAAA UUUUUUU MMMMMMMM). Some like to focus on the sound itself. Some like to focus on the slight vibration they feel in their nasal area or upper lip. Whatever you choose to focus on, remember that if your thoughts wander, gently but firmly guide your focus back to the OM.
4. When your breath has been released, take another breath and repeat this chant again.

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

When you first start out, repeat the chant for 8 – 10 times and then sit silently and notice how you feel. For such a small, simple chant, many people are surprised at how calm and peaceful they feel. Using this simple meditation and building until you are chanting it for 15 minutes in one sitting will help you calm the frantic mind and find an inner balance for your thoughts.

The Flow: Focus on a Single (Moving) Point

Another commonly-practiced meditation involves focusing your thoughts on a single moving point. This focus can be external or internal, as well as visual, auditory or imagined:

- Examples of an external moving point of focus:
 - A stream, river or waterfall (visual)
 - A chant, mantra or hymn (auditory)
- Examples of an internal moving point of focus:
 - Energy moving through or rotating the body's chakras
 - Your own breath



Note: Internal points of focus do not actually engage external senses. Even so, many people allow their imagined focus to take on qualities of their dominant or preferred sense. For instance, when they focus on the heart, they will either SEE the heart, or HEAR the heartbeat.

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

A Simple Example of Flow:

Meditation on Your Breath

Conscious breathing is used by many to ensure the body is always supplied with enough oxygen while flushing out processed gases from your system. But when used as part of a meditation practice, it becomes a perfect example of Flow meditation:

1. Sit in the area you have set up for your meditation practice.
2. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths before you begin.
3. Now allow your breath to move in through your nose and out through your mouth.
4. Focus your attention on your breath as you breathe. Follow it as it enters your body and fills your lungs. Remember that if your attention wanders from your breath, gently but firmly guide it back to your breath.
5. Pause the breath for a moment before you exhale.
6. Follow the breath as you exhale... stopping the attention at the base of your nostrils as the rest of the breath is exhaled.

When you first start out, follow your breath like this for 5 or 6 minutes and then sit silently and notice how you feel. As you feel more comfortable with this meditation, you can increase the time to 20 – 30 minutes in each formal meditation.

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

The Centering: Focus on Your Complete Surroundings

One meditation that takes many different forms in various disciplines involves a focused effort to heighten your awareness of your place in the world, especially in relation to a specific image, idea or issue. Centering

meditation can be either outer (real) or inner (imagined) but the intent is to anchor your perspective in the center of a vivid image in which even the smallest detail is noted:



Outer Centering

Outer centering is used in many different circumstances and known by many different names but many times it involves finding your own place in the rhythm or pattern going on around you. When you hear someone reference being “in the zone,” usually they have tasted a moment of this. One of the reasons this type of meditation is very popular in martial arts and other sports is that finding your own place in the rhythm of the moment can allow you to react more quickly – even anticipating movements of the pattern before they actually materialize. Common examples of this type of meditation include:

- Mindful meditation: A dynamic meditation where the body and mind are allowed to respond to external stimuli without conscious thought or judgment

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

- Contemplative meditation: Contemplation of a spiritual concept, life problem, or emotional response

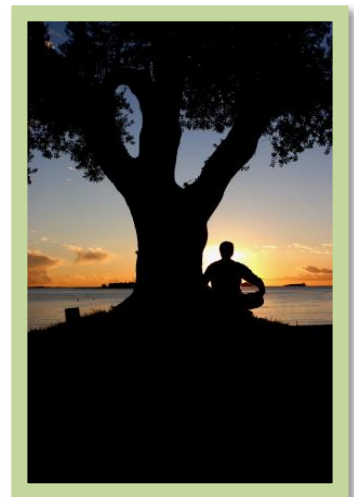


Obviously these two examples seem very different on the surface, but they share one thing in common. Rather than actively controlling your thoughts, you notice your thoughts and action in the

present moment, without judgments or attachments. Thoughts enter your awareness and then pass out of it, like wispy white clouds in a windy blue sky – momentarily appearing but then vanishing quickly as other clouds take their place. In this meditation, your awareness skims along above your thoughts, not being *attracted to them* or *distracted by them*. Remain in the center, INTERacting but not REacting.

A Simple Example of Outer Centering: The Sound and the Silence Meditation

Many outer centering meditations zero in on a single sense. The other senses and any stray thoughts are disregarded so that single sense can have our full focus during the meditation. Hearing is the first sense we develop so perhaps that's why some people find this exercise one of the most comforting and familiar entries into centering meditation:



The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

1. Find a place that has some activity and where you can sit comfortably with your eyes closed. Sitting under a tree in a park would be a good choice. You want some place where there is activity and sounds – but not so much that you can't distinguish individual sounds.
2. As you sit with your eyes closed, let yourself listen to the world around you for a few minutes.
3. Then allow one particular sound to steal your complete focus. Focus only on this sound.
4. What does it sound like to you? It doesn't matter what it actually is, only what it sounds like to you. How far is it from you? How loud is it? What distinguishes it from the other sounds around it? Is it moving? If so, is it moving toward you or away from you? Are there different components to the sound? Is what you heard as one sound, actually several sounds that you hear as one?
5. Let yourself become absorbed fully by this sound. Explore everything about it and its relationship to you. When YOU choose (and ONLY when you choose) let your focus become more loose again and listen to all of the sounds around you. See how the sound you were listening to fits into the melody of the rest of the sounds around you.
6. Now allow a different sound to steal your focus and repeat the exercise for this sound. You can repeat this for as long as you like.

After this exercise, open your eyes and allow yourself to remain quietly seated and look for the source of any of the sounds you focused on. Allow yourself to see them, but now your experience in meditation adds an additional layer to the way you look at them.

Inner Centering

Inner centering is similar to outer centering except the perception of the world and your place in the pattern is imagined (since it is internal.) Inner centering is vital to many healing meditations or any

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

meditations that involve affirming or visualizing positive life changes. But the process is the same as in Outer centering. When a thought enters that is not part of the pattern you are imagining, you do not allow yourself to be distracted by it but continue to return focus to the image of this new pattern you are creating for your life.



By helping you to find your place in this new pattern, inner centering meditations allow these more positive and healing life images to soak deep into the subconscious part of your brains where they can take root and flourish. Changing deeply rooted belief is often crucial to making life changes. The average person loses focus and gets distracted every six to ten seconds. Regular meditation trains your brain to hold its focus without getting distracted. It changes



your brain from a clear pane of glass to a magnifying glass, and then to a laser – etching the image of your new life condition and your place in that pattern into your subconscious mind.

A Simple Example of Inner Centering:
Visualization Meditation

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

For this meditation, sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. If any random thoughts come up, always gently guide your thoughts back to what you want to focus on:

1. Take a slow deep breath. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
2. Take another 5 or 6 breaths like this, long and slow, as you let yourself relax.
3. Visualize your perfect life. Imagine this life as fully as possible. You can use images from your vision board or personal affirmations to sharpen your mental focus. You want to define this world around you and your relationship to it.
4. Visualize all aspects of this life. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? What are you thinking and feeling? How do others react to you? What is the weather like? Feel that on your skin. You want to engage as many feelings and senses as you can to make this as vivid as possible.
5. Open your eyes and maintain that feeling as you move through the world around you.

Those wishing to establish new beliefs that are rooted in the life that they WANT, will find that, in addition to centering the mind, this exercise strengthens the power of whatever affirmations or visualizations are used. Combining visualization and affirmation with meditation is a quick way to get directly at the subconscious mind and effect some truly amazing changes.

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

The Void: Focus on the Absence of a Point of Focus

The last classification of meditation involves an internal focus on that which does not exist – blank space or the absence of something. It can be the absence of something visual or auditory but it must be



imagined since our senses are unable to pick up the “absence” of something. Examples of focusing on the absence of something include:

- Imagine the sound of one hand clapping (This is actually a **kōan** or riddle given to some students of Zen by their teachers.)
- Imagine the space between your right thumb and your left
- Imagine the space around your heart

A Simple Example of Void: Meditation on the Space around You

Meditation on empty space is one of the most elusive meditations to teach but also one of the quickest ways to enter a more meditative brain wave frequency range. For this exercise, sit with your eyes closed in a comfortable position. Where the word “imagine” is used in these guiding statements, use your imagination as fully as possible. If you are a beginner, perhaps you will just FEEL while more experienced practitioners may also be able to SEE,

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

HEAR, SMELL and TASTE it. Whatever your level of experience, allow yourself to imagine it as fully as you can:

1. Imagine you are aware of the space surrounding your skin. You can feel where your skin ends and the space begins. What does that space feel like? Allow yourself to explore everything you can feel about that space.
2. Imagine the space around your head. Become aware of the space between your eyes. What does that feel like? Can you imagine it?
3. Now become aware of those same feelings of open space and emptiness as you imagine the space between your eyes and the back of your head. Can you see that space behind your eyes?
4. Now imagine the space between the back of your head and your mouth. What does that feel like? Can you hear the silence of that space?
5. Now imagine the space between your nose and your ears. What is that like? Can you feel the presence of that space?
6. Now find the space in the middle of all of those other spaces. What does that feel like? How big a presence does it have?

You will notice that as you focus on the space around an area, that part of the body relaxes. This is a normal by-product of this type of meditation. When it happens, try not to switch your focus to your body relaxing... try to stay focused on the space itself. You can take anywhere from a few minutes to a half hour to follow this guided meditation. Even some people that have had trouble catching on to this meditation technique have found it helpful as a relaxation exercise before their actual meditation.

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

Combining Different Techniques

These classifications are just for the sake of convenience when discussing different aspects of meditation. There are no hard and fast divisions between styles and techniques. In fact, many meditations involve combining two or more of the different techniques:

- In certain practices of the Stillness, the thoughts that occur are fed into the flame of the candle or offered up to the religious icon. This combines aspects of the Stillness meditation with aspects of Inner Centering.
- Some Inner Centering techniques involve focusing on a flow of light or energy as it moves through your body and reacts with the various energy centers of the body. This combines aspects of Stillness, Flow and Centering.

Don't get hung up on the techniques. Each technique offers something useful. You merely have to find the one that offers the results that you are looking for.

Advanced Techniques for Meditation in Movement



Formal meditation (or “finding balance in stillness”) is the first stage of learning to meditate and all of these techniques and disciplines are different approaches to mastering that stage. The next stage (“finding

balance in movement”) also has many disciplines for those

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

interested in pursuing more advanced studies. Some of the more commonly known traditions include:

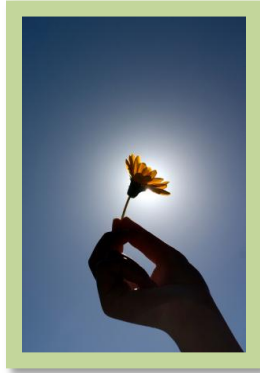
- Qigong (Chi Kung): An internal Chinese meditative practice where slow movements and controlled breathing techniques promote the circulation of *qi* (which can mean air, breath or energy) through the body.
- Tai Chi Chuan: A soft-style Chinese martial art where training emphasizes focusing the mind during slow sequences of movements which emphasize a straight spine and abdominal breathing.
- Yoga: The Indian practice of moving the body through positions in order to improve its flexibility and vitality and increase the amount of time seated meditation postures can be maintained.

Obviously, these are very, *VERY* general and cursory descriptions of these disciplines as each of them embodies their own school of thought, philosophy and beliefs. But if you are interested in the next stage of meditation, any of these would be a good place to begin. Sit in on a local class or get a home instruction video and watch the exercises. As you watch an exercise, do you notice that the instructor guides your thoughts and focus back to your movements and your breath? Because that is what you want to learn. You are training your mind to meditate while you are moving so you want that to be the focus of your instruction. Also pay attention to the movements themselves. Are these movements that you will feel comfortable with? Does something about it spark an interest with you? If so, give it a try! If you have already become comfortable with the first stage of your meditation practice, you are already ahead of the game!

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

The Many Faces of Meditation



Meditation has many different faces because invariably, anyone that has achieved excellence has probably found, within themselves, a state of meditation that allowed them to become extraordinary. Here is what some recognized authorities on meditation have to say about it:

"The single most effective relaxation technique I know is conscious regulation of breath." ~ Dr. Andrew Weil, physician and author, best known for establishing and popularizing the field of alternative and integrative medicine

"Meditation is not a way of making your mind quiet. It's a way of entering into the quiet that's already there—buried under the 50,000 thoughts the average person thinks every day." ~ Deepak Chopra

"Meditation brings wisdom; lack of meditation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what hold you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom." ~ Hindu Prince Guatama Siddharta, the founder of Buddhism

"We could say that meditation doesn't have a reason or doesn't have a purpose. In this respect it's unlike almost all other things we do except perhaps making music and dancing. When we make music we don't do it in order to reach a certain point, such as the end of the composition. If that were the purpose of music then obviously the fastest players would be the best. Also, when we are dancing we are not aiming to arrive at a particular place on the floor as in a journey. When we dance, the journey itself is the point, as when we play music the playing itself is the point. And exactly the same thing is true in meditation. Meditation is the discovery that the point of life is always arrived at in the immediate moment." ~ Alan Watts, Writer, Zen Buddhist

"Empty your mind; be formless, shapeless - like water. Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup, you put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle, you put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend." ~ Bruce Lee, Martial Artist

"Be open to everything and attached to nothing." ~ Dr. Wayne Dyer

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

"Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in Eternal awareness or Pure consciousness without objectification, knowing without thinking, merging finitude in infinity." ~ Swami Sivananda, Indian Yoga master

"Thus meditating you will no longer strive to build yourself up in your prejudices, but, forgetting self, you will remember only that you are seeking the Truth." ~ James Allen, New Zealand Statesman, Minister of defense

"Still your mind in me, still yourself in me, and without a doubt you shall be united with me, Lord of Love, dwelling in your heart" ~ Bhagavad Gita

"Be still and know that I am God." ~ The Bible

"We meditate for various reasons. Peace of mind we all badly need. Therefore, when we meditate, either consciously or unconsciously we aim at peace of mind. Meditation gives us peace of mind without a tranquillizer. And unlike a tranquillizer, the peace of mind that we get from meditation does not fade away. It lasts for good in some corner of the inmost recesses of our aspiring heart." ~ Sri Chinmoy

"Reading makes a full man, meditation a profound man, discourse a clear man." ~ Benjamin Franklin

"Whatever forms of meditation you practice, the most important point is to apply mindfulness continuously, and make a sustained effort. It is unrealistic to expect results from meditation within a short period of time. What is required is continuous sustained effort." ~ Dalai Lama

"When you meditate, the silence of the senses illumines the presence of God within." ~ Gurumayi Chidvilasananda

The kingdom of God is just behind the darkness of closed eyes, and the first gate that opens to it is your peace." ~ Paramahansa Yogananda

"Sit quietly, doing nothing, spring comes, and the grass grows by itself." ~ Zen Koan

"Yoga is meditation and meditation is yoga - Never forget it. Yoga and meditation can both be seen as processes and goals." ~ Swami Satyananda

"Meditation has been glorified as the most sacred vocation. Humans alone are capable of the highest effort, by which they can hasten their own evolution. In preparing ourselves for meditation, we should first acquire the ability to look within. You must learn to go about your daily routine and uninterruptedly watch the mind...Let it be a silent observer of the workings of your inner life and estimate the motives, intentions and

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

purposes that lie behind your thoughts, words and deeds." ~ Swami Chinmayananda

"Meditation is not an entirely independent discipline but a stage in concentration common to almost all spiritual paths. In every path, the aspirant begins with a large number of thoughts in the mind. These gradually become reduced, and the aspirant reaches a stage when there exists only one thought in the mind." ~ Swami Bhajananda (Trustee of the Ramakrishna Mission)

"Meditation is a scientific method of enhancing the capacity of the mind. It fixes the mind on one's magnetic force, enhancing the ability to focus. This is the key to self realization." ~ Vethathiri maharishi

"The whole purpose of meditation is to make you aware of your kingdom, to make you aware of your highest potential." ~ Osho

"Meditation is the study of attention. Attention is cognitive phenomenon. Meditation is the capacity of the brain to attend to something over a period of time." ~ Dr. Adam Burke (research psychologist renowned for studying brain wave patterns and states of mind during meditation)

"Meditation, or consciousness focused upon itself, is the ultimate revealer of who you really are, and what you truly are. You can discover an inner guidance within yourself, and that inner guidance will guide you to the destination you need to go. You have already been guided to many things which are opening you to be aware, but the greatest tool for self knowledge is meditation." ~ Paramahansa Yogananda

"Is it possible for us to develop the mind to function more constructively; can we change obsession into contentment, agitation into peace, hatred into compassion? Twenty years ago, among neuroscientists there was a quasi-dogma that stated that all the brain's neurons were present at birth and that their number will not be modified by the experiences of life. Today, however, neuroscientists think in terms of "neuroplasticity," meaning that the brain is continuously evolving as a function of our experiences and can produce new neurons throughout our whole life. In particular, specific training, such as learning to play an instrument or a sport, can profoundly change the brain. This implies that attention, compassion, and even happiness can also be cultivated and depend, for a large part, on a skill that can be acquired.

Acquiring a new skill always involves training. We cannot expect to learn to play tennis or to play the piano well without first practicing for a long time. If we dedicate a certain amount of time each day to cultivating compassion or any other positive quality, we are likely to attain results, just like when we train the body. In Buddhism, 'to meditate' means 'to become familiar with' or 'to cultivate.' Meditation consists of familiarizing ourselves with a new way of being, of managing our thoughts and the way we perceive the world. Through the recent advances in

The Power of Meditation

Different Techniques & Disciplines

neuroscience it is now possible to evaluate these methods and to verify their impact on the brain and body.

The new research indicates that the brain activity of subjects meditating on compassion is particularly elevated in the left prefrontal lobe, a region of the brain associated with positive emotions. So compassion, the concern for the wellbeing of others, is related to other positive emotions, such as joy and enthusiasm. Moreover, the parts of the brain involved in planning movement and in feeling maternal love are also strongly stimulated by this meditation. This does not come as a surprise to contemplatives since, in their experiences; compassion brings about an attitude of complete receptiveness that can easily transform into action.

We are on the threshold of fascinating discoveries that should prove it is possible to transform the mind in a more significant way than psychologists had previously imagined. In this way, meditation will gain the recognition and respect in the West that it has had in the East for thousands of years."
~ Matthieu Ricard, member of the Mind and Life Institute and active in research programs on the effects of meditation and mind- training on the brain



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