



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE OF THE PACIFIC, LLC

# Meditation for Wellness

Our lives are full of demands at all different levels. All demands affect us, some to a mild degree, and some not so mild. We respond to the demands, but what happens when we can't turn off our internal response to the demand? Well, it stays on. As a result, you might start to experience general symptoms such as anxiety, depression, negative mood states including anger or irritability, or stomach cramps and headaches. This is what researchers have called "non-specific and unexplainable general arousal." Relaxation is the process of turning-off the response to demand. We can explore a few ways to turn off the response to stress through what is known as meditation.



*In modern times meditation has become a valuable tool for finding a peaceful oasis of relaxation and stress relief in a demanding, fast-paced world.*

Put your expectations aside, and don't worry about doing it right. There are infinite possibilities and no fixed criterion for determining the right way to meditate. There are, however, a few things to avoid. They are:

- Trying to force something to happen.
- Over-analyzing the meditation.
- Trying to make your mind blank or chase thoughts away.
- Putting too much emphasis on doing it right.

Find a quiet, comfortable place to meditate. You can sit in a comfortable chair, on the bed, on the floor... anywhere that's comfortable. Eliminate as much noise and as many potential distractions as possible. Don't worry about those things that you cannot control.

And once you practice whatever type of mediation works best for you, this is a tool you can use throughout your day to become more mindful, present, and more relaxed. It doesn't have to take an hour. You can do this during your lunch break, or from your car (please not while you're driving!), or from the privacy of your bathroom.

Some people like to start with a guided mediation. Here are a few YouTube videos (each with millions of views) that might help:

[Daily Calm 10-minute Mindfulness Meditation](#)

[5-Minute Meditation You Can Do Anywhere](#)

[10-Minute Mediation for Anxiety](#)

[20-minute Guided Meditation for Positive Energy, Relaxation, Peace](#)

And if you like these, you can search YouTube for Hawaiian Meditation videos as well -- there are even Ho'oponopono mediation videos!

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Here's an article from the [Mayo Clinic](#) we thought might help:

## Meditation: A simple, fast way to reduce stress

If stress has you anxious, tense and worried, consider trying meditation. Spending even a few minutes in meditation can help restore your calm and inner peace. Anyone can practice meditation. It's simple and inexpensive. And it doesn't require any special equipment. And you can practice meditation wherever you are — whether you're out for a walk, riding the bus, waiting at the doctor's office or even in the middle of a difficult business meeting.

### Understanding meditation

Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years. Meditation originally was meant to help deepen understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life. These days, meditation is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction. Meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine. Meditation can produce a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process may result in enhanced physical and emotional well-being.

### Benefits of meditation

Meditation can give you a sense of calm, peace and balance that can benefit both your emotional well-being and your overall health. You can also use it to relax and cope with stress by refocusing your attention on something calming. Meditation can help you learn to stay centered and keep inner peace.

And these benefits don't end when your meditation session ends. Meditation can help carry you more calmly through your day. And meditation may help you manage symptoms of certain medical conditions.

### Meditation and emotional and physical well-being

When you meditate, you may clear away the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to your stress.

The emotional and physical benefits of meditation can include:

- Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations
- Building skills to manage your stress
- Increasing self-awareness
- Focusing on the present
- Reducing negative emotions
- Increasing imagination and creativity
- Increasing patience and tolerance
- Lowering resting heart rate
- Lowering resting blood pressure
- Improving sleep quality

### Meditation and illness

Meditation might also be useful if you have a medical condition, especially one that may be worsened by stress. While a growing body of scientific research supports the health benefits of meditation, some researchers believe it's not yet possible to draw conclusions about the possible benefits of meditation. With that in mind, some research suggests that meditation may help people manage symptoms of conditions such as:

- Anxiety
- Asthma
- Cancer
- Chronic pain
- Depression
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Sleep problems
- Tension headaches

Be sure to talk to your health care provider about the pros and cons of using meditation if you have any of these conditions or other health problems. In some rare cases, meditation might worsen symptoms associated with certain mental health conditions. Meditation isn't a replacement for traditional medical treatment. But it may be a useful addition to your other treatment.

### Types of meditation

Meditation is an umbrella term for the many ways to achieve a relaxed state of being. There are many types of meditation and relaxation techniques that have meditation components. All share the same goal of achieving inner peace. Ways to meditate can include:

- **Guided meditation.** Sometimes called guided imagery or visualization, with this method of meditation you form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing. You try to use as many senses as possible, such as smells, sights, sounds and textures. You may be led through this process by a guide or teacher.
- **Mantra meditation.** In this type of meditation, you silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts.
- **Mindfulness meditation.** This type of meditation is based on being mindful, or having an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment. In mindfulness meditation, you broaden your conscious awareness. You focus on what you experience during meditation, such as the flow of your breath. You can observe your thoughts and emotions. But let them pass without judgment.
- **Qi gong.** This practice generally combines meditation, relaxation, physical movement and breathing exercises to restore and maintain balance. Qi gong (CHEE-gung) is part of traditional Chinese medicine.
- **Tai chi.** This is a form of gentle Chinese martial arts training. In tai chi (TIE-CHEE), you perform a self-paced series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner while practicing deep breathing.

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## Types of meditation (continued)

- **Transcendental meditation.** Transcendental meditation is a simple, natural technique. In this form of meditation, you silently repeat a personally assigned mantra, such as a word, sound or phrase, in a specific way. This form of meditation may allow your body to settle into a state of profound rest and relaxation and your mind to achieve a state of inner peace, without needing to use concentration or effort.
- **Yoga.** You perform a series of postures and controlled breathing exercises to promote a more flexible body and a calm mind. As you move through poses that require balance and concentration, you're encouraged to focus less on your busy day and more on the moment.

## Elements of meditation

Different types of meditation may include different features to help you meditate. These may vary depending on whose guidance you follow or who's teaching a class. Some of the most common features in meditation include:

- **Focused attention.** Focusing your attention is generally one of the most important elements of meditation. Focusing your attention is what helps free your mind from the many distractions that cause stress and worry. You can focus your attention on such things as a specific object, an image, a mantra, or even your breathing.
- **Relaxed breathing.** This technique involves deep, even-paced breathing using the diaphragm muscle to expand your lungs. The purpose is to slow your breathing, take in more oxygen, and reduce the use of shoulder, neck and upper chest muscles while breathing so that you breathe more efficiently.
- **A quiet setting.** If you're a beginner, practicing meditation may be easier if you're in a quiet spot with few distractions, including no television, radios or cellphones. As you get more skilled at meditation, you may be able to do it anywhere, especially in high-stress situations where you benefit the most from meditation, such as a traffic jam, a stressful work meeting or a long line at the grocery store.
- **A comfortable position.** You can practice meditation whether you're sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions or activities. Just try to be comfortable so that you can get the most out of your meditation. Aim to keep good posture during meditation.
- **Open attitude.** Let thoughts pass through your mind without judgment.

## Everyday ways to practice meditation

Don't let the thought of meditating the "right" way add to your stress. If you choose to, you can attend special meditation centers or group classes led by trained instructors. But you can also practice meditation easily on your own. Or you may find apps to use, too.

And you can make meditation as formal or informal as you like, however it suits your lifestyle and situation. Some people build meditation into their daily routine. For example, they may start and end each day with an hour of meditation. But all you really need is a few minutes of quality time for meditation.

Here are some ways you can practice meditation on your own, whenever you choose:

- **Breathe deeply.** This technique is good for beginners because breathing is a natural function. Focus all your attention on your breathing. Concentrate on feeling and listening as you inhale and exhale through your nostrils. Breathe deeply and slowly. When your attention wanders, gently return your focus to your breathing.
- **Scan your body.** When using this technique, focus attention on different parts of your body. Become aware of your body's various sensations, whether that's pain, tension, warmth or relaxation. Combine body scanning with breathing exercises and imagine breathing heat or relaxation into and out of different parts of your body.
- **Repeat a mantra.** You can create your own mantra, whether it's religious or secular. Examples of religious mantras include the Jesus Prayer in the Christian tradition, the holy name of God in Judaism, or the om mantra of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions.
- **Walk and meditate.** Combining a walk with meditation is an efficient and healthy way to relax. You can use this technique anywhere you're walking, such as in a tranquil forest, on a city sidewalk or at the mall. When you use this method, slow down your walking pace so that you can focus on each movement of your legs or feet. Don't focus on a particular destination. Concentrate on your legs and feet, repeating action words in your mind such as "lifting," "moving" and "placing" as you lift each foot, move your leg forward and place your foot on the ground. Focus on the sights, sounds and smells around you.
- **Engage in prayer.** Prayer is the best known and most widely practiced example of meditation. Spoken and written prayers are found in most faith traditions. You can pray using your own words or read prayers written by others. Check the self-help section of your local bookstore for examples. Talk with your rabbi, priest, pastor or other spiritual leader about possible resources.
- **Read and reflect.** Many people report that they benefit from reading poems or sacred texts, and taking a few moments to quietly reflect on their meaning. You can also listen to sacred music, spoken words, or any music you find relaxing or inspiring. You may want to write your reflections in a journal or discuss them with a friend or spiritual leader.
- **Focus your love and kindness.** In this type of meditation, you think of others with feelings of love, compassion and kindness. This can help increase how connected you feel to others.

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## Building your meditation skills

- Don't judge your meditation skills, which may only increase your stress. Meditation takes practice.
- Keep in mind, for instance, that it's common for your mind to wander during meditation, no matter how long you've been practicing meditation. If you're meditating to calm your mind and your attention wanders, slowly return to the object, sensation or movement you're focusing on.
- Experiment, and you'll likely find out what types of meditation work best for you and what you enjoy doing. Adapt meditation to your needs at the moment. Remember, there's no right way or wrong way to meditate. What matters is that meditation helps you reduce your stress and feel better overall.

## More Meditation Techniques:

**Two-to-One breathing:** Practice making exhalation twice as long as the inhalation. For example, you may time your breath so that you exhale for a count of 6 seconds, and inhale for a count of 3 seconds, or about 6-7 breaths per minute. You work with the rates of breathing to find the most comfortable speed for you. For example, 4:2, 6:3, 8:4, 10:5, 12:6, where the first number is the number of seconds of exhalation, and the second (smaller) number is the number of seconds of inhalation. You can simply count internally for a minute or so, and then let go of the counting so as to just practice and observe the breathing. Two-to-One breathing has a very relaxing effect on the autonomic nervous system and is great preparation for meditation.

**Walking breath:** This is a wonderful practice that can be done right in the middle of daily life, and *integrates* body, breath, and mind. You count internally with exhalation and inhalation, and align this with the steps you are taking while walking. So, for example, you may count 4:4. This means as you walk, you internally exhale while you count off 4 paces. At the end of this, you start to inhale, and count off 4 paces. You count 4 paces with exhalation, and 4 paces with inhalation. Automatically, your breath becomes even. Automatically, your body and breath synchronize. Automatically, your mind synchronizes with the body and breath, by virtue of the internal counting. As you walk, you need to find the right pace that is comfortable, and in alignment with the speed you are walking. You might find that 2:2, 3:3, 4:4, 5:5 6:6, etc. is the optimum speed for you. As you get proficient with even breathing, you can shift to two-to-one breathing with walking, such as 6 paces with exhalation, and 3 paces with inhalation. Again, you need to find the pace that is comfortable for you. This practice can easily be done when you are walking even 1-2 minutes from one place to another. It brings great benefits, right in the middle of daily life.

**Cloud Thoughts:** Sit comfortably with your back straight but not rigid. Let your eyes close, and notice what it's like to sit with your eyes closed. It may seem a little strange at first. You may notice that as your eyes close, other senses, like hearing, become more sensitive. Notice the different sounds that become apparent to you. Notice the variety of sounds and how they change from moment to moment.

Next, feel your body sitting on the floor or chair. Feel the pressure of your buttocks on the cushion or chair. Feel your shoulders. Feel your feet. Your belly. Feel your body sitting here. Let the body be soft and open. Relax any place of tension or holding in the body as best you can.

Then feel the movement of the breath in the body. Notice how the breath has a pattern, a beat. See if you can tune into that pattern. Notice how the belly rises on the inhalation and falls on the exhalation. Notice how the chest expands and contracts with each breath, and how the breath enters and leaves the nostrils. You are not imagining or controlling the breath, but feeling it. Allow the breath to come and go in its own pattern.

Now turn your attention to your thoughts. Be aware of thoughts coming into your mind like clouds floating across the sky. Rest your attention on that flow. One thought comes and then another floats by to take its place... If mind-chatter can be thought of as clouds, the important thing to remember is that the clouds will pass through, if you don't hold onto them! Thoughts are like clouds that appear in the sky. They don't require us to do anything about them. We can observe them and let them pass. You may say to yourself, "There's a thought," just like you might say, "There is a cloud." You don't need to classify the cloud, or think about what it looks like. It is just there, and in a little while it won't be there. You don't need to do anything with thoughts, and if you don't do anything, in time, they will drop away. Now gently turn your attention to the space between the cloud-thoughts. That space is empty and it is effortless to turn to it. Let your awareness rest there. Clouds will come by...just notice them and return your attention to the empty space between the clouds. Allow them to come, to have their moment, and allow them to leave. Don't hold onto the clouds or jump from one cloud to the next. If you find your mind doing that.....and it will.....don't create more clouds with frustration or judgments. Just return your awareness to the delicious space between the clouds.

See if you can be with each moment without struggle. Meditation is a time to rest from the constant activity of the mind. Enjoy this time. Have compassion for yourself in your sincere effort to bring more calm and peace in your life.

