

How To
**CLEAR THE MIND
WITH MEDITATION**



Introduction

How to Meditate to Clear Your Mind

Meditation is a topic that many people don't fully understand and that has a lot of mixed views surrounding it. Some people view meditation as an almost 'occult' practice focussed on achieving a state above that of normal people and transcending onto another 'plane' of existence. Other people see it as being a great therapeutic technique for healing, and others still don't give it much thought and write it off as a waste of time.

Meditation certainly isn't a waste of time, and nor is it necessarily spiritual or magical. It is very different things to different people. There is not really one form of meditation but rather several and each has different goals and purposes.

What meditation has in common across the board though, is that it is extremely useful, very powerful, and one of the best tools for clearing your mind and for feeling better about yourself. This is a fantastic way to approach any problem with a fresh mind, and without the usual hang-ups, biases, and issues that prevent us from performing our best, living in the moment, or truly expressing ourselves.

Meditation can be used to help you achieve a kind of “mind reset” both in the short term, and in the long term.

Types of Meditation

There are many different forms of meditation that have different goals. The best-known form of meditation is probably transcendental meditation, which involves sitting and then focussing on a mantra. This might be the word “om” repeated over and over, or it might be a humming sound. Either way, the aim is to focus on this sound or word such that you are able to completely eliminate all other distracting thoughts.

Religious meditation often involves focussing on a particular passage from a religious text, or perhaps a prayer. This may seem very different to transcendental meditation and indeed it has very different origins and goals. But what is the same, is that the aim is to focus intently on one thing in order to remove other distracting thoughts.

The same goes for moving meditation, that includes the likes of Tai Chi and that has you focussing on your own body as it moves through space.

The thing that ties all these different uses together is the simple fact that you are trying to actively control your thoughts rather than letting them be led and controlled by outside factors. It is about focus. Whether you are meditating on the answer to a question, trying to understand yourself better or just taking a “time out” this is a useful skill to develop and has been shown to help produce calming brain waves and lower blood pressure.

Imagine that any time you find yourself feeling stressed, anxious, or worried about something, you have the option to return to a place where you will feel calm and collected.

Loving Kindness and Gratitude

The key to many forms of meditation then is focus. By learning to choose what you want to pay attention to, you can opt *not* to focus on the negative or the things that make you stressed. You'll therefore feel better more of the time, and be less affected by things that would otherwise hurt you.

But what if you choose to focus on something that will *actively* make you extremely happy? This is the idea behind both “loving kindness meditation” AND “gratitude meditation”.

In the first example (loving kindness), your objective is to meditate specifically on feelings of warmth, self-love, and kindness. In other words, you will think about things that make you happy, think about people who love you, focus on *feelings* of love, and focus on the things you love about yourself.

Your objective is to cultivate this emotion and then hang on to it – to keep it fresh in your mind and to let it take up the entirety of your focus for a while.

By doing this repeatedly, you will be able to not only enjoy that sense of peace and love in any given moment... but also to let it become your default emotion – such that you always feel that way.

The other option is gratitude. This is very similar to loving kindness motivation, but the goal this time is to focus on the things that make you feel grateful.

What is Enlightenment?

Perhaps you have heard of meditation in the context of enlightenment? Maybe you thought you could use meditation to achieve a higher plane of thought? It's certainly something many people believe, but if meditation is *just* about focus, how can this be the case?

What's all that about? Remember that when you practice transcendental meditation (the kind associated with enlightenment) you use a 'mantra' which is used to try and take your mind off of your usual ruminations (by focussing on the sounds you're making).

What happens here is that because you aren't using the areas of your brain that you normally would, these areas can shut down as they would in sleep but with you still awake. Key regions of the brain that usually help us to understand the world around us shut down: such as the region responsible for detecting contrast, or the area associated with identifying edges in the world around us. You even lose the ability to recognize where your own body is in space.

This can then alter your perception as you view the world without being able to distinguish between edges, and as you start to lose your sense of self. This removes the 'filters' we normally use to see the world and, in that sense, you are seeing reality in a 'purer' sense.

This makes an interesting final aim, but of course takes years of practice. Eventually, this can result in total "ego death" (loss of sense of self) which is an extremely liberating experience.

Flow States: Meditation While Engaged in a Task

In the world of productivity and self-help, the term 'flow state' is used to describe a mental state in which you are able to concentrate unceasingly on a singular task without interruption or distraction. When you reach this state, you are able to hugely increase your productivity and your output and you can this way complete complex tasks in a very short space of time.

In short, a flow state is the point at which an activity you are engaged in *becomes* meditative.

Of course, though getting into this flow state is no mean feat, and particularly when our brains are constantly trying to distract us with other things and consistently getting bored. Particularly in the modern reality we're living in where we are used to concentrating on twenty things at once and being constantly entertained through various mediums. The flow state then is something of an elusive concept and a constant goal, in much the same way that someone who meditates regularly might chase after the promise of enlightenment.

To help you in your own pursuit of this magical state, or at least to achieve a satisfactory level of concentration, here are a few techniques you can use to help encourage focus and avoid distraction and procrastination.

Remove Distractions: One of the best ways you can help to avoid yourself becoming distracted by things is to remove them from your visual field. So, for instance if you are someone who finds yourself distracted by the internet regularly (you are most certainly not alone) then a logical solution is simply to turn off the internet when you are trying to work. And if you find that you struggle with your will power to bring yourself to do this, then an alternative solution is to simply go out to a café to work where there is no internet.

Remove Interruptions: One of the most important things about 'the flow' is to hang onto it once you get it and not to let anything break it. This is why it's crucially important that you avoid anything which could potentially break your concentration which means phones, people talking and anything else that can make a sudden noise. If you can work in a space that will be isolated – such as an office pod at the end of the garden – then this will be ideal.

Ignore Interruptions: And what's important to bear in mind here is that it's just as important to ignore the distractions we create for ourselves too. For instance, if you are in the flow when you suddenly find yourself needing the toilet or wanting to get up to get a drink then simply ignore this urge or set yourself a target to accomplish before you're allowed to move. Consider the flow sacred and if you are working well then don't jeopardize it for a cup of tea that you don't really need.

Switch Off from Other Tasks: Part of the problem when we are trying to focus on one thing is often that we have twenty other pressing matters that it's hard to forget about. While you want to concentrate on this one task then, it's helpful to try and force yourself to forget other tasks and put them out of your mind. One way to accomplish this is to just segregate your tasks better by writing a to-do list with blocks of time dedicated to each task. This way you can put the other jobs out of your mind because you know that you'll be coming to them later.

Entertain Yourself: This might seem counter-intuitive, but actually providing yourself some form of entertainment can sometimes help you to focus. The reason we find ourselves becoming distracted often is simply that we are bored of whatever dry task we are trying to complete. By putting on some background music with no lyrics then, or by watching a video on YouTube of a music video or of someone playing a computer game you can make the work stint a little less boring and satisfy the creative half of your brain while the rest focusses on work.

Psychological Techniques: Failing this you can always try to employ a number of psychological techniques to simply improve your ability to concentrate. This could mean using meditation to practice clearing your mind, or even developing self-hypnosis in order to get better control over your unconscious mind. Concentration, like anything, can be trained and developed through practice and these are some great tools for accomplishing this.

The Power of Meditation

Now you know about the different types of meditation and the different ways you can use them to change your emotions and the way you feel at any given time.

Try to set aside ten minutes a day to begin with and practice the type of meditation that appeals to you. Meanwhile, try to achieve flow while enjoying computer games, or when deep in work.

As you get better at this and it comes more naturally, you can begin to use meditation for 20 or 30 minutes a day. Eventually, you should try to incorporate all these different types of meditation together.

With practice, you will thicken the neuronal pathways and connections that enable you to achieve these different states. It will then become easier for you to engage in any of them at any given time.

So, what does that look like?

Well, imagine being able to clear your mind by focussing on the task at hand at any given time. Imagine being able to “rise above” things that would normally cause you stress, simply by choosing to focus on something else instead. Imagine waking up feeling grateful about your life and feeling a sense of love and appreciation for yourself.

Imagine your default reaction to negative being events being one that helps you cope and feel better about yourself.

That is the power of meditation to clear your mind. Time to take up the habit!