

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

What is meditation? When a person focuses their attention on an image or thought with the goal of clearing the mind and creating relaxation, or an inner peace, that person is practicing **meditation**. Although meditation has been practiced throughout time, modern meditation dates back to the Hindus who's goal was to understand and get closer to the true nature of Brahman ("God").

There are three major approaches to meditation.

1. **Transcendental meditation** involves the mental repetition of a mantra, a word or sound repeated to aid concentration in meditation - this is usually a Sanskrit (ancient language of India) phrase. The meditator sits with eyes closed and meditates for 15 to 20 minutes twice daily.
2. **Mindfulness meditation** was developed from Buddhist tradition, but is the most popular form of meditation in the U.S. This form of meditation focuses on the present moment. In mindfulness, distracting thoughts and feelings are not ignored but are rather acknowledged and observed non-judgmentally as they arise to create a detachment from them and gain insight and awareness.
3. **Breath meditation** is a concentration on one's respiration—the process of inhaling and exhaling.

Mindfulness Meditation (Mindfulness)

Mindfulness is about being aware of what is happening in the present, moment-by-moment, without making *judgements* about what we notice. Because our minds can be focused on things in the past, present or future, we often find ourselves ruminating about events that have already happened, or worrying about things that could happen. These habits of thought are often distressing.

"If you let cloudy water settle, it will become clear. If you let your upset mind settle, your course will also become clear"

Jack Kornfield, Buddha's Little Instruction Book

Mindfulness is a practice which encourages us to attend to the present moment. There is good evidence that mindfulness practice can help people cope more effectively with a wide variety of feeling-states such as depression and anxiety, but also with physical health conditions including and chronic pain and illness.

Without making judgments?

Making *judgements* about our experiences can often lead to us becoming quite stressed. For example, thoughts like "this is horrible" and "too much to do" are both judgmental interpretations of facts and can bring on stress. Stress has both short term and longterm negative health affects on the body and mind. But by practicing mindfulness, we can learn to accept more of our experience without judging it. This has been shown to help people live more fulfilling lives.

Does it work?

Research has found that regular meditation can mediate the effects of stress, anxiety and depression and promote well-being. Meditation has also been shown to assist in controlling blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate. It is possible that the positive effects of meditation could also be found by using other methods of relaxation. Advocates of meditation claim that meditation brings on a alternate form of consciousness, in addition creating greater relaxation and well being. Evidence from EEGs suggest meditation produces more changes in electrical brain wave activity associated with wakeful, relaxed attention than just resting without any specific mental technique.



HOW TO START MEDITATING



THOUGHTS

When you notice thoughts, gently let them go by, returning your focus to the breath. Don't try to stop thoughts; this will just make you feel agitated. Acknowledge their presence and ask them to leave.



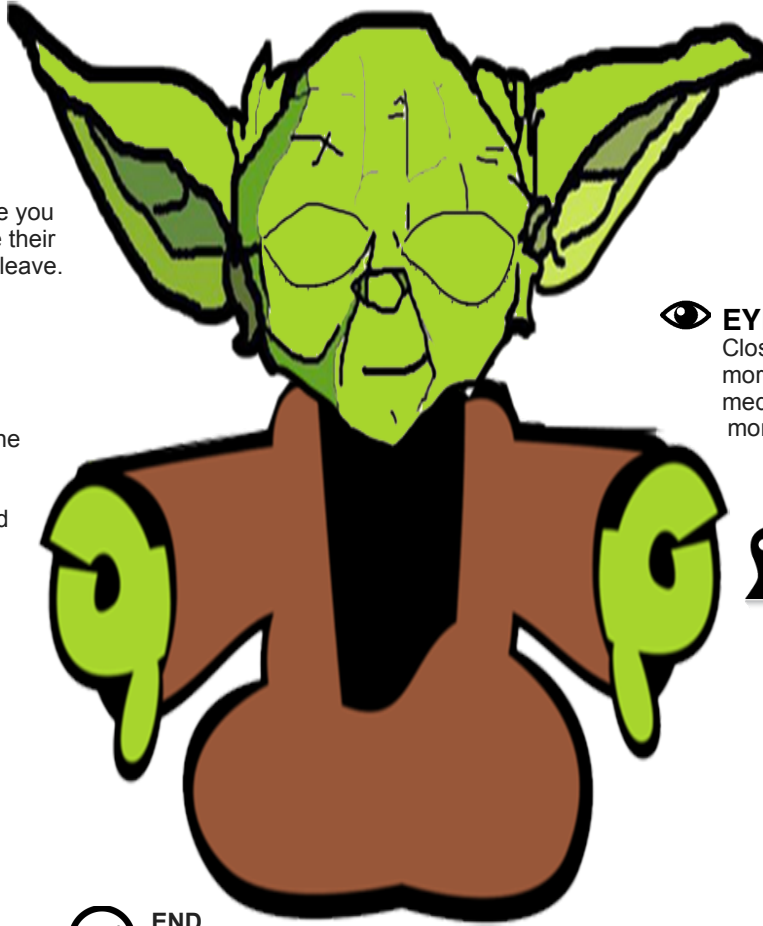
BREATH

Make no effort to control the breath; simply breathe naturally. Focus your attention on the breath and on how the body moves with each inhalation and exhalation



COMFORT

Sit or lie comfortably. Your spine should be straight and you should cross your legs.



TIME

Meditation isn't about how long, but how often - at least once a day. For beginners, 5 to 10 minutes a day is a great start!



EYES

Close your eyes for a more body based meditation. Open for a more anchored feeling



MANTRA (OPTIONAL)

is a word or phrase that you silently repeat to yourself during meditation. It gives you something to put your attention on other than your thoughts. Use any phrase you like, "Peace" or "Love". Or use the So Hum mantra. It's a commonly used Sanskrit mantra, which means "I am."



END

slowly bring your conscious attention back to your surroundings. Gently wiggle your fingers and toes. Move your hands, feet, arms and legs. Open your eyes. Move slowly and take your time getting up

1. What is meditation? _____

2. What are three types of meditation? _____

3. What type of meditation is practiced the most in the United States? _____
4. What is a mantra? _____
5. What type of meditation uses a mantra? _____
6. According to mindfulness, why is it important to concentrate only in the now? _____

7. What does *non-judgmental* mean in mindfulness? _____

8. What are the benefits that are most likely to result from someone practicing meditation? _____

9. According to the infographic, how long and often can a person practice meditation? _____

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1. What is meditation? focusing one's attention on an image or thought with the goal of clearing the mind and creating relaxation, or an inner peace
2. What are three types of meditation? Transcendental meditation, Mindfulness meditation and Breath meditation
3. What type of meditation is practiced the most in the United States? mindfulness
4. What is a mantra? a word or sound repeated to aid concentration in meditation
5. What type of meditation uses a mantra? Transcendental meditation
6. According to mindfulness, why is it important to concentrate only in the now? Possible answer: past and future events can be distressing. By focusing in the now, people are freed of daily the daily stresses in life, and only on themselves
7. What does *non-judgmental* mean in mindfulness? Making judgements about our experiences can lead to stress. Stress causes short term and longterm health problems.
8. What are the benefits that are most likely to result from someone practicing meditation? Helps with stress, anxiety and depression and promote well-being. Can assist in controlling blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate
9. According to the infographic, how long and often can a person practice meditation? 5-10 minutes/day for beginners