

## How to Meditate

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The beginning and ending of meditation starts with maintaining the correct standpoint. If we don't know what we are aiming towards, why we are aiming towards it, and how to hit the target, our efforts are unlikely to bear much fruit. If our intellect is not engaged in what we are doing, failure is certain.

So, right from the beginning, your efforts must be mentally active and awake, you must have the proper stance and you must recognize the best way to approach your target. This is no different than driving a car from one city to another. If you start off pointing in the wrong direction, if you don't have enough intelligence to get your bearings right, and if you continually forget where you are going, you may find yourself going in the wrong direction or, worse, running around in circles.

To begin with, you must be willing to examine the fundamental beliefs that we are our body and we are our thoughts. The problem concerning the body is not all that difficult. The problem of the mind is more challenging. We have been conditioned to believe we are who we think we are. If you are prepared to challenge this deep rooted belief, then you can come to understand the real nature of thought and to recognize the hazards in getting involved and caught up with transient thought forms. Our life experience has already led us to suspect that thought is delusive. We have seen that it often spills out negative attitudes and cruel judgments. Many memories that we recall are inaccurate, the plans we formulate never go according to plan. The mind spawns considerable suffering in our life. Because we have long associated thought forms with our identity and because we accept mental images in collusion with the idea of a self-ego, it is critical that we investigate and re-evaluate this premise. Is this the way it is?

Meditation practice offers everyone a comprehensive way to test this supposition. It is the only way that we can learn the Truth concerning thought and thereby uproot the critical misunderstandings that generate so much suffering in our lives.

The Buddha taught that through meditation you will discover that you are not your body; you are not your thoughts. You can discover if his Teaching is in alignment with Nature or just a radical hypothesis put forth by a sage. The wise agree that He was right. The misunderstanding that we are our body and our mind has obscure and deep roots. Therefore, it requires effort and dedication to see through. Fortunately, we have the means and the opportunity to overturn this mistaken view. If we use the opportunity, we can come to see for ourselves the Truth about the Way-Things-Are. We won't ever have to rely on anyone for the answers to life's most intriguing enigma

Meditation is to real-ize (make real) reality and thereby come to the Truth. Thought is not reality. The foremost point of practice is to get out from under the illusion of thought and the way it promotes the notion of a substantial self. You will find the evidence for this assertion all along the way. You will see and confirm that the mind is not really yours for it is something which is beyond your control (do you know what you will be thinking five seconds from now?). You will see and confirm that the mind continuously impacts upon us at some level, at some

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dimension of suffering. If we could control the mind, we could lessen our suffering. . But we can't. The mind is out of our control and never stops...it's a 24/7 robotic machine. Even while sleeping, eating, reading, talking, working, etc., it impinges upon our life with unsolicited streams of data and images fashioned out of past memories, karma, and experience. It pours out a sound and light show of impressions stitched together to support the idea of a hoped for (or dreaded) future. Apart from mechanical functions like adding up numbers (as long as there is sufficient concentration behind your effort) the mind doesn't tolerate being in the present at all. When we are not present, where are we? What's so significant about the Now? Does it affect who we think we are?

In proper meditation practice you will find that abiding in the now and focusing on feeling (rather than thought) will open a door of enhanced perception (some call it, awaken-fullness) that will provide you with the immutable Truth concerning your body and mind...your Life.

How to do it? You don't need to sit cross-legged and count numbers or a mantra. You don't even need to sit. What you need to do is to make use of your time by inclining into being present and recognizing the feelings that arise in the mind- moments that continually arise and pass away. What is going on (at the feeling level) with your body right now? By body, we mean ears, eyes, nose, tongue, and skin sensation. Or, what is going on in your mind? By mind, we specifically mean thought. Is thinking occurring? Not what are "you" thinking about. Recognize the feel of thought rather than the content of the thought-dialogue. You can do this because you are not your thought. You are able to see thought, thought cannot see you.

The other thing going on concerns the five sense doors of perception. . When thought hasn't engaged mentality, there can be only awareness of something going on at one of the five sense doors. This is what's going on in the present, in the now. The job of the meditator is to know through feeling that something is impinging on one of the body's sense doors. This feeling is not you. You can be aware of it as an object.

This is the most effective way to practice. Your practice is a dedication to the present by being aware of your body and mind in each mind-moment. Each and every time your awareness is in-time, you make progress toward gaining the ability to detach and separate from the deadly thinking that the body or mind is an immortal you. You move closer to the Truth of the Way-it-is. There is nothing that you need to change, alter, or fix. You need only to know what is really going on in the present. Just keep your attention on feeling the present moment.

In time, the practice of knowing becomes automatic. The result is increased happiness in your life. On the other side, you are certain to feel less suffering in your life, you won't feel plagued by doubts, and the relationship conflicts you previously endured will gradually disappear.

Do this from now until you take your last breath. If your life is contained within the five precepts (the ethical behavior suitable for all human beings), you will develop a concentration that continually energizes your awareness, and perhaps creates a smattering of wisdom there guarantees that there is no possibility you will fall into hell in this life or the next one. Go ahead, radically change your life!

