

Meditation 101

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Overview

- Origins of Meditation
- Meditation in the West
- Mindfulness and other types of Meditation
- Notes on how to Meditate
- Why Meditate?
- Guided Meditation
- Why is Meditation so Difficult?
- What others say about Meditation
- Inquiry
- Resources

Origin and Roots of Meditation

- **India, Vedatism, and Yogis**

- The oldest documented images of meditation are from **India** and date back to 5000 to 3500 BCE. Wall art paintings depict people sitting in meditative-like seated postures.
- The oldest documented text of meditation is also from India, from the Hindu traditions of **Vedatism**, from around 1500 BCE.
- Alongside the Vedic practice, Hindu traditions also describe the Yogi practice of meditating in caves. It is believed that many modern practices of meditation stem from this lineage, including the modern yoga movement whose techniques are predominantly based on the Hatha Yoga practice.

Origin and Roots of Meditation

- **Buddhism in India**

- Meditation is often most closely attached to Buddhism, even though the image of the Buddha meditating on a lotus didn't come until much later, a long time after Buddhism itself began.

- **Sufism and Meditation Practice**

- Sufism is an ancient Islamic tradition that dates back as far as 1400 years. It is a practice in which Muslims seek to connect with Allah (God) through self-reflection and contemplation, and through shunning material goods. It is thought that through some Indian influence, Sufism developed its particular practice of meditation that includes a focus on breathing and the use of mantras.

- **Judaism and Meditation Practice**

- As well as what is believed to be descriptions of meditation practice in the Torah, the Jewish esoteric method and school of thought of Kabbalah, also includes some of its own forms of meditation. These are generally based around deep thought on philosophical topics and prayer.

Acknowledgement of Indigenous History of Meditation Practice

- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples have a long and important history of engaging in contemplative and mindfulness practices in daily and ceremonial life. However, during different periods of European and American colonization many of the sacred and secular practices were deliberately destroyed, leaving many communities without the cultural approaches they had used for millennia to heal and restore well being. ([source](#))
- The use of meditation practices and techniques are facets of the Native American culture to be treasured and respected. Through prayer, through sage, or through music, meditation has spanned countless generations and continues to do so. ([source](#))

Meditation in the West

- Meditation first began to be of interest in the West in the 1700s, when some of the Eastern philosophy texts, containing references to meditation techniques and practices, were **translated** into different European languages. This included:
 - The Upanishads – A collection of religious and philosophical texts from India, assumed to have been written between 800 and 500 century BCE.
 - The Bhagavad Gita – A Sanskrit scripture made of 700 verses that form part of the Mahabharata: a Hindu epic detailing the narrative between Pandava Prince Arjuna, and Krishna.
 - The Buddhist Sutras – Scriptures that are assumed to be the oral teachings of the Buddha.
- By the 19th century, meditation was seen only as a topic for discussion and interest by philosophers and intellectuals.

Meditation in the West

- It wasn't until the 20th century that meditation became more prominent, especially in the United States, when a prominent yogi, Swami Vivekananda, delivered a presentation at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.
- The presentation created a new surge of interest in Eastern models of spirituality in the West, and influenced a number of other spiritual teachers from India to migrate to the States.
- With its introduction in the West, meditation began to become more removed from the religious connections and teachings of its roots and taught in more westernized ways.
- **Every time meditation has been introduced in a new place, it has been shaped by the individual culture it finds itself within.**

Meditation in the West

- By the 1960s, meditation was being researched via scientific studies.
- It was not until the late 1970s that meditation began to be studied as an intervention to enhance psychological well-being.
 - It began with the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, which explored the use of mindfulness meditation in treating patients with chronic pain. In 1979 he introduced his Mindfulness-Based-Stress-Reduction ([MBSR](#)) program and opened the Stress Reduction Clinic.
- Around this time, Transcendental Meditation was growing in popularity too, with many celebrities turning to the practice to help them cope with fame, including The Beatles. Although during this time many meditation techniques were connected predominantly with Hippie culture and were not very mainstream.
- It wasn't until the 1990s that this began to change...

Enter...Mindfulness Meditation

- The term mindfulness is typically used to describe focused action, which can be thought of as dharana on any given action or task.
- It's important to keep in mind Eastern and Western conceptualizations of mindfulness differ in many ways. For example:
 - Mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition is viewed as one factor of an interconnected system of practices that are necessary for attaining liberation from suffering, the ultimate state or end goal prescribed to spiritual practitioners in the tradition. Thus, it needs to be cultivated alongside with other spiritual practices, such as following an ethical lifestyle, in order for one to move toward the goal of liberation.
 - Western conceptualization of mindfulness, on the other hand, is generally independent of any specific circumscribed philosophy, ethical code, or system of practices.

Hence why mindfulness meditation may look different, feel different and deliver different things to different people.

Mindfulness (cont.)

- Mindfulness is one way to cultivate a greater sense of flow and presence in one's daily activities and tasks.
- For example, mindful eating is used to describe the practice of focusing all of one's attention on the experience of eating - how does the food taste? How does it feel? smell? look? etc., without distraction.
 - *What else can we do mindfully?*
- Mindfulness is just one form of meditation...

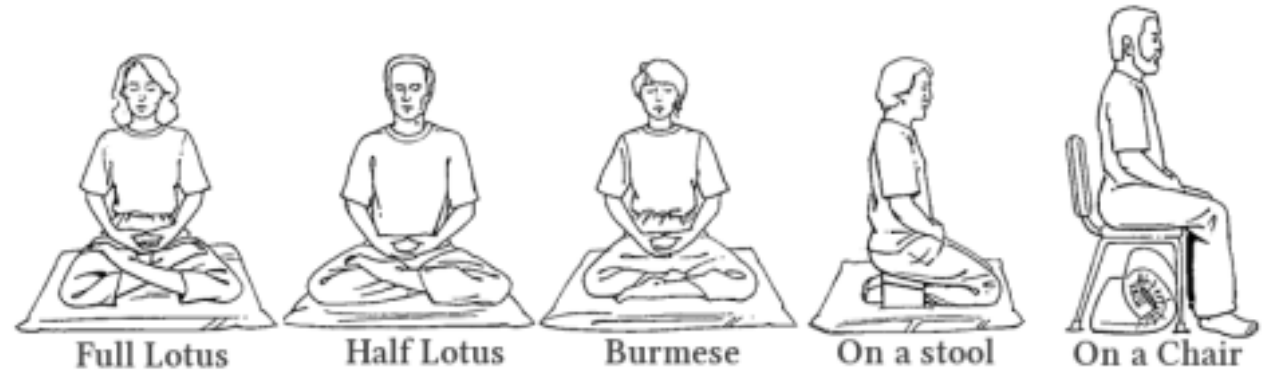
Other Forms of Meditation (not a comprehensive list)

- Zen meditation (Buddhism)—“just be.”
- Mantra meditation—focus on a syllable, word or phrase (in Sanskrit).
- Transcendental meditation—specific mantra, 15-20 minutes, at least twice a day.
- Vipassana meditation—intensely examine certain aspects of your existence.
- Chakra meditation—aligning the body’s core centers of energy.
- Quigong meditation (China)—opening meridians (pathways) to harness energy.
- Sound bath meditation—focus on sound vibrations from a bowl, gong, etc.
- Focused attention—chose an object to anchor your attention, e.g., candle/flame
- Visualization
- Loving Kindness
- *All of these can be guided or unguided.*

Notes on Meditation

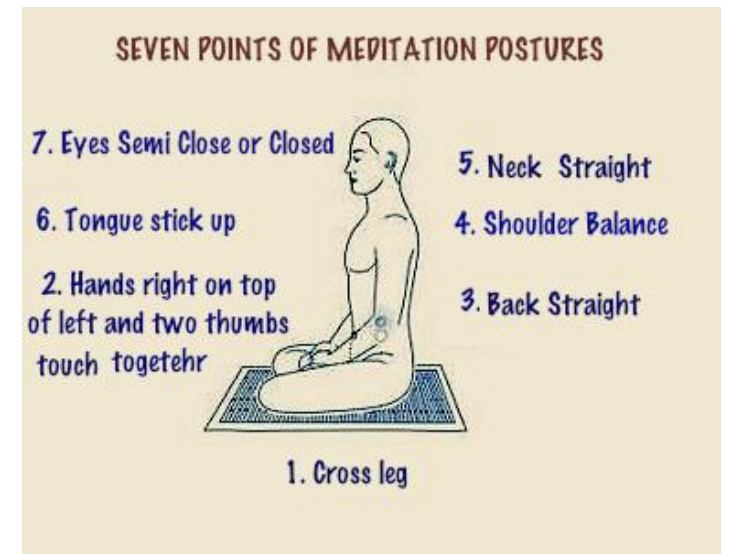
- How to meditate:

- Set your space
- Set your time
- Set your body—Padmasana (lotus) variation + 7 points = energy can flow
- Set your intention—e.g., feeling strong and confident every day (North pg. 29).
- Set your breath



- How to develop your practice:

- Aroma
- Affirmations—e.g., “I am _____” statements (North pg. 28).
- Music
- Counting
- Get outside (in nature)



Why meditate?

Let's meditate!

(3-5 minutes—ask for a volunteer to lead)

Take a comfortable seat wherever you are.
Drop weight down into your sitz bones,
and feel into an opposing upward, natural lift through your spine

Close your eyes to turn your attention inward
And settle your focus on your breath

Breathe patiently and quietly in and out through your nose
Stay present right here, right now
With this one breath in, and this one breath out

Why is meditation so difficult?

What does Baron say about Meditation?

- Meditation is possible if you're willing to relax, look inward, trust, and surrender (pg. 182).
- Meditation helps us wake up to the reality of who we are without the doing and having (pg. 183).
- Meditation washes our minds of yesterday's "stuff," clearing the slate. (pg. 184).
- Meditation reveals new discoveries, new insights, and new opportunities for genuine healing (pg. 187).
- Focused attention meditation pg. 188-190

What does Stone say about Meditation?

- Some teachers describe the first four limbs as external and the last four limbs as internal. Others say that you practice the first four limbs with sheer will and then the last four limbs occur spontaneously. However, this is not the traditional approach to the eight limbs...A balanced practice is the simultaneous investigation of all eight limbs, as each limb compliments every other (pg. 48).
- A practical way of translating mindfulness is as present-centered, nonjudgemental awareness with acceptance...In the case of establishing your body as a frame of reference, it means being able to remember where you're supposed to be—with the body—and you don't let yourself forget, whether you are in a sitting meditation, pranayama or asana (pg. 145).

Inquiry

- *What do you love about your meditation practice?*
- *How can you continue to develop your meditation practice?*
- *How can you incorporate mindfulness into teaching yoga?*
- *What type of meditation speaks to you, and why?*

Take 10 minutes to journal about your meditation practice.

Take 6 minutes (3 mins each) to share with a partner.

We'll come back together and hear from at least 3 volunteers.

References

- [History of Meditation](#)
- [Effects of Mindfulness on Psychological Health](#)
- [Meditation Types/Techniques](#)
- [Mantras vs. Affirmations](#)
- [The Little Book of Mindfulness by Dr. Patrizia Collard](#)
- [morning meditations by Danielle North](#)
- [Journey into Power by Baron Baptiste](#)
- [The Inner Tradition of Yoga by Michael Stone](#)