

Meditation and Mindfulness: Summary

Stress management doesn't have to be complicated or mystical. Meditation and mindfulness are now being used by medicine on a regular basis. This is a common-sense approach that explains how to meditate in plain language. You will learn step-by-step how to relax your body and mind.

The key to meditation is to relax your body first, and your mind will follow. Do not try to relax your mind. Your body and mind are in constant communication. If you can relax one, you will relax the other. But it is hard to relax your mind. Therefore, relax your body first, and you will be surprised at how your mind will follow.

1. Start with a Quiet Place

Pick a quiet place where you won't be interrupted. It's hard to relax if you think you might be interrupted at any time.

2. Find a Comfortable Position

There are three basic positions to choose from. You can relax lying down, sitting on the floor, or sitting in a chair. All are equally good. Find a position that is comfortable for you.

3. Choose Something to Focus On

To relax your body, focus on feeling grounded and centered. You become grounded by scanning your body and feeling where your body touches the ground. Engage your sense of touch. Feel the weight of your body. Don't try to visualize it – feel it. You become centered by turning your focus inward, which turns your mind away from your distractions. **Meditation is active. You don't just sit and try to relax. You actively relax.**

4. Stay In the Moment

The goal of meditation is to practice being relaxed and in the moment. But your mind is a noisy place. When you try to meditate, your mind will try to resist by jumping from thought to thought. It helps to say something that will hold your focus. Choose something that is easy to repeat, silently to yourself. It could be anything. "Use your senses. Feel grounded." "Let go of fears." "Let go of resentments." It could be an affirmation: "I am calm." "I am strong." It could be something simple like, "Let go."

Say your "focus words" as quickly as you need to stay focused, but not so quickly that you lose sight of the main objective, which is to feel grounded and centered.

5. Don't Try to Empty Your Mind

It is impossible to empty your mind. An empty mind isn't good for anything. This is probably the most common misconception about meditation. The goal is not to empty your mind. The goal is to practice being relaxed and in the moment.

During meditation, you practice filling your mind with the moment. Your senses exist in the moment, and when you focus on feeling grounded and centered, you connect with the moment. The purpose of the focus words is also to fill your mind with the moment.

6. Let Go of Distractions

It's normal to be distracted every few breaths. The reality is that your mind will be distracted all the time, and you will constantly struggle to stay focused and in the moment. When you are

distracted, don't get frustrated, and don't try to relax your mind. Instead return to feeling grounded. Feel the weight of your body on the ground, and you will gradually begin to relax again.

Usually you will be distracted because you have stopped saying your focus words. Distractions are so subtle, that it will take a while before you even realize that your mind has wandered off.

7. Mindfulness

Mindfulness is being aware and relaxed in the moment. During meditation, you will become aware of the negative thoughts that distract you, such as anxieties, fears, resentments, sadness, remorse, or cravings. Mindfulness will show you the recurring themes of your negative thoughts. This is why meditation is more than just a way to relax, it transforms your life.

One distraction that deserves special mention is being in a rush to relax. When you meditate, it's normal to start to think about everything else you should be doing. When you notice that, simply let that thought go and return to feeling grounded and repeating your focus words.

8. Your Practice

Start meditating for 10 minutes a day and let your practice grow gradually. There is no right amount of time to relax. It depends on your schedule. The longer you relax, the better you will feel. Most people settle on 20 to 40 minutes a day as a good balance between self-care and other obligations. Most people prefer to relax in the morning when there are fewer distractions.

9. Test Meditation for Yourself. Don't Just Accept It

You don't have to believe in meditation for it to work. Once you have practiced meditation for a few weeks, try the following experiment. Stop doing it for a few days and see what happens. Within a day or two, you will begin to lose your emotional memory of how it feels to be relaxed, and your tension will start to build again.

10. Make it Your Own

You don't learn how to relax. You practice being relaxed. Don't think of meditation as a chore. It is a gift you give to yourself.

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Reference: "I Want to Change My Life" by Dr. S. Melemis. www.IWantToChangeMyLife.org