

How To Meditate

Once you've addressed the practical considerations including:

- You've got your space as identified above. (Quiet and without interruption).
- You've settled on what you're sitting on (either a chair, bench, zafu) and posture.
- You've let your face be comfortable and soft (let your tongue be heavy and jaw relaxed).
- Unless you're sleepy, you've lightly closed your eyes.
- You've chosen your anchor spot (nostrils or diaphragm).

Sit Down and:

- Focus on your breath and don't focus on trying to push everything else out of your mind.
- Use your mind and mindfulness to notice how your attention is drawn to:
 - A sound,
 - A body sensation,
 - A feeling, or
 - A thought.
- Bring bare attention to these moments, not considering them as distractions but merely being what they are, no more no less:
 - A sound is a sound.
 - A body sensation is a body sensation.
 - A feeling is a feeling.
 - A thought is a thought.
- Bring no judgment or attempts to analyze where, why or how they came to your attention.
- Just be present to the moment and then begin to **Note** the distractions.
- Noting:
 - As you meditate, rather than becoming annoyed when thoughts intrude, simply "note" them.
 - Noting is a way to acknowledge what is going on in your mind in a non-judging, silent manner harmonious with the natural movement your breath. To note is to briefly acknowledge the noted sensation, thought or experience: For example, you notice yourself starting to plan your day. Silently note it as "planning," and let it go.
 - Noting the breath:
 - Sometimes it helps to observe your breath in one of two ways:
 - With a focus on your abdomen:
 - "Rising"
 - "Falling"
 - With the focus on the edge of the nostrils of your nose:
 - "In-breath"
 - "Out-breath"
 - Either way, silently note each moment when you realize your attention is not on your breath.

- Noting your thoughts:
 - Thoughts will invariably creep into your mind while meditating. Noting them in the following way will help you let go of them.
 - Initially, the noting might be:
 - “Thinking” (if you’re thinking about something specific)
 - “Hearing” (if you are hearing distracting noises)
 - “Feeling” (if you are feeling sad or happy or hungry or...)
 - As your mindfulness deepens, the noting can become more precise.
 - “Fantasy,” “storytelling,” or “future telling” if you are imagining something.
 - “Memory” if you are recalling something specific.
 - “Planning” if you are thinking about what you need to do.
 - Sound – Noting can be more specific:
 - “Hearing” if you only hear noises.
 - “Listening” if you are actively listening.
 - “Harsh” if the noise your hearing is harsh.
 - “Soft” if the noise is soft and/or pleasant.
 - Sensations can be noted as well:
 - “Pain” if you are sensing pain while sitting.
 - “Pleasure” if you are sensing pleasure while sitting.

Jon Kabat-Zinn said in his book *Full Catastrophe Living*: “...when we start paying attention a little more closely to the way our own mind works, as we do when we meditate, we are likely to find that much of the time our mind is more in the past or the future than it is in the present.”

I close with this quote from Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Catholic theologian: “All the unhappiness of men comes from one thing: Not knowing how to stay quietly in a room.”