QUICK-START GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL MEDITATION



Quick-start Guide to Successful Meditation

Which method and how?

There are numerous methods to choose from when it comes to meditating. For this quick-start guide I am going to mention just three of the main variations.

When I first started meditating, I found it easier to chant in my head as I found that stray thoughts would sabotage my attempts in the early days and by having a short phrase to chant, I could focus my attention on it reasonably easily.

I love the sound and vibration of the mantra I used:

Om Namah Shivayah

The meaning of this mantra also was inspirational for me:

I honour the divinity within myself

I honour that which I am capable of becoming

There is a link to some mantras you may like to consider using which can be found in the blog post I wrote about meditation – <u>Click Here</u>

With practice I became more used to meditating by observing my thoughts, outside noises, interruptions and just letting them go without giving them any emotional weight.

Nowadays, I prefer the empty space method which allows me to experience peace and calm and my brain to have a complete rest. It took me a while to be able to do the empty space method and occasionally, thoughts do sabotage my attempts, but when they do, I just let them go and try and return to the empty space. There is no best method, just the right one for you individually. Try these variations out and see which works best for you.

Focused meditation

Focused meditation is where you focus your attention on one thing only which helps you to turn off your internal dialogue and be totally in the present moment. There are many things you can choose to focus your attention on such as a candle flame, a short mantra, soft music which you find relaxing, something tactile such as a piece of fabric you can rub between your fingers as well as using your own breathing where you focus on counting your breathing in and out.

Open meditation

This is a process of non-reactive meditation where you sit with the world as it is. Your internal and external environments are merely acknowledged and released. No energy is focused on one particular input. The idea of open meditation is to be with yourself in a quiet space, in a non-judgemental frame of mind.

Empty-space meditation

This is where you open your mind to nothingness. Your aim is to achieve an internal state of void where you are totally non-reactive to internal and external inputs.

There are times when my head is too frazzled to achieve this kind of meditation and in those instances I find the focused meditation where I chant my mantra to be comforting and relieving.

How long to meditate for?

Meditation is one of those skills which can be started by spending just a few minutes a day and working up to 30 – 45 minutes. The key to success is to keep it regular. Try and do a few minutes every day.

I find meditation for me is most useful in the morning as it helps to clear my thoughts and gives me greater focus to achieve the items on my to-do list. I know some people who also meditate before going to bed, but I tend to fall asleep when I do this.

The most important thing to remember is to remain relaxed and to enjoy it. The ability to meditate grows the more you practice it and as a result, the benefits you will gain will also grow the more you become proficient at meditating.

Posture: Do I need to be in an upright position?

Ideally yes. It is important to be sitting in an upright position where the back is straight and upright. Energy can pass through the body easily when in an upright position, which is an essential ingredient to successful meditation.

Traditionally those practising meditation sit in the lotus position which is where your legs are crossed but the feet rest on top of the legs rather than beneath, but it is not essential.



NB: This is image is purely to show the Lotus position, not the upright meditation position.

You can either sit cross-legged, sit upright in a chair or stand. Many people find that to sit cross legged can be uncomfortable when they start meditation and is a reason they give up the practice.

Find an upright posture that is comfortable for you. Importantly, if you sit in a chair, sit in an energized position, not heavy on top of your legs.

Meditation lying down

It is ideal to have an upright position when meditating, however, if you are unable to sit upright and / or need to plain old relax, you can lie down. The most important element is to be comfortable. If you are cold, stiff, in pain, no matter how hard you try and detach from these unpleasant feelings, it will be very difficult to achieve a state of meditation. By meditating you will help to release pain and the anxiety that goes with it, so go with what works for you best and don't waste time or energy worrying about the "perfect" position. Too many people give up because of trying to abide by the "rules" of trying to meditate in the "correct" way. Most importantly, go for a relaxed mind and the rest will fall into place.

Summary of the key benefits of Meditation

Physical benefits

- Anxiety is lowered
- Stress is dealt with more effectively
- Headaches / migraines are reduced or eliminated
- Immune system is boosted
- Serotonin output increases which helps to keep mood buoyant
- Energy levels increase
- Blood pressure is lowered
- Helps to reduce pain

Psychological benefits

- Meditation aids better memory retention
- Improves focus
- Increases compassion
- Improves emotional stability
- A sense of happiness increases
- Intuition develops

So this is just a short summary to help you find your way into meditating. Ultimately, you will find a method that most naturally evolves for you. If you want to take meditation further, there are many meditation groups which are likely easy to find in your locality. To meditate as a group can add a sense of community and connection and may introduce you to other forms of meditation.

Most of all, enjoy it, build on your practice and you will see the benefits entering your life.