

What is Meditation?

Meditation is neither a dry philosophy nor an exotic cult. It is a practical, down-to-earth way to bring about changes in our thoughts, feelings and actions.

Regular Practice

It is necessary to practice regularly. Try to meditation every day or at least several times a week. There will be times you won't want to do it; meditate anyway, even for only a few minutes. Often these sessions are the most productive.

The Meditation Place

Reserve a corner of a room especially for your meditation. If you are so inclined you may set up a little altar with candles, flowers, incense and a picture of a spiritual figure meaningful to you. This is not for worship but to create a peaceful, spiritual atmosphere.

Choosing a Practice

There are many kinds of practice. Choose one you are comfortable with. There is counting the breath, letting go of thoughts, noting and labeling thoughts or meditating on a subject such as patience or loving kindness. Have a clock or timer nearby.

Be Relaxed and Alert

Decide on your mode of meditation and stick to it. If you like you can begin and end your session with gassho / prostrations. Start with 10 minutes and increase to 40 minutes - as you feel like it.

No Expectations

You will have good experiences but the mind is complex and ever-changing. One day it will be calm and joyful; another day it will be distraught and full of turmoil. Be ready for anything and do not be disturbed by whatever happens. Be easy on yourself.

You Can Do It

You can have the benefits of meditation and to do so it's not necessary to change your lifestyle, behavior and appearance. You can keep your job and your friends, continue to live in your nice house and just enjoy life as usual.

Don't Advertise

Your own inner wisdom will tell you if you are headed in the right direction. Your practice will transform your mind in a subtle level, making you more sensitive and understanding of ordinary day-to-day experiences. But meditation is an internal, not an external activity. It is all rather private.

It is good idea NOT to talk too much about your practice - except with your teacher or group. Broadcasting your experiences will dissipate the good energy and insight you have gained.

1. Excerpts from How to Meditate: A Practical Guide McDonald, Kathleen, Wisdom Publications, London, 1987