

WHY SHOULD WE MEDITATE?

"First of all because each of us needs to realize total rest."

Thich Naht Hanh

Meditation has been used throughout the centuries and in all spiritual traditions to develop inner peace and solace, and to gain insight, wisdom and enlightenment. It is through meditation that many of history's greatest teachers have found their true awakening.

It has now been scientifically proven that meditation actually stimulates the aspects of the brain responsible for our happiness and wellbeing. It is also being used in countless hospitals and clinics as a means to relax, release trauma, and diminish pain.

I have had a practice of meditation for over 3 decades, which for me means I seek rest.

Many of my generation were introduced to meditation along with Eastern philosophies in the mid 60's when the Beatles returned from India having been introduced to the ancient Vedic tradition of Transcendental Meditation. Before the 1970's were over thousands of people were doing Transcendental Meditation.

In the 60's and 70's meditation in the west was finding a larger audience of young people of various religions. Before that timeframe, the 1920's and 1930's was another very fertile time in our US history to embrace the deep ecology of spiritual growth. But, spiritual seekers of all religious paths have always had a meditation practice, a quiet time, a reflective time period each day to collect oneself, to follow one's breath, to walk and listen to the birds, to receive guidance and inspiration. Some form of contemplative reflection is deeply imbued in all of our religions. Meditation is a direct path to creating peace and love in our minds and hearts. This form of relaxation and deep focus has been known and practiced for thousands of years.

If we perceive our world as having too much, too soon, too late, too fast, often in a hurry-up-to-wait syndrome. This creates a stressed environment for our physical and mental health. This can keep our Nervous system in a state of fight or flight response. Then add a diet of processed foods, too much sugar and too many coffees and we are flying high and can't slow down until we crash. Our modern lifestyle keeps our body and blood sugar in a stressed environment.

"One should meditate an hour a day, except of course, in times of much business and stress and then one must meditate 2 hours a day!" Old Chinese proverb.

Meditation can retrain and repair our nervous system. Meditation can help bring more clarity and ease to our hurried thinking. Meditation can allow us to know and remember what are the priorities in our lives.. Yes, we need to work, yes, we need money, yes, there are many activities and responsibilities, but first I need

my health, my sanity and mainly my peace of mind to be the kind of person I am striving to be *with* all of my responsibilities.

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Thich Naht Hanh*

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."
Aristotle

A moment of practice.

I would like to guide you through a gentle restful meditation as you read this paper.

✿ Physical posture A most important aspect to meditating is that one is sitting comfortably. If sitting in a cross-legged position on the floor is comfortable to you please do and please sit upon a cushion so that your knees can rest onto the floor. If you prefer a chair, position yourself so that your spine and neck are comfortably aligned, and that your feet are flat on the floor. One way to have more comfort in any sitting situation is to act as if you have a tuxedo on and you need to flip up the tails to sit down.... physically speaking you want to sit on your sits bones: tuberosities. This allows a greater base of support for your chest and breath and overall comfort. We let our lips be soft and our tongue relax. So that our facial muscles also rest and our jaw is more easily settled.

✿ Now take these next moments and remind your body that the chair/floor that you are resting upon can totally support you. Remind yourself that there is not any need to hold yourself up off of the chair/floor. So we suggest to ourselves to be present, we invite ourselves to come to this moment of sitting and allow ourselves to just sit there. No place to go. And we come back to this remembering as we begin to notice our breath. Where is it? How does it feel? What is its quality? Gentle inquiries. I rest I focus on my breath. I breathe in, I breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. And I let my breath become my focus. And as we sit here breathing in and breathing out, sometimes uncomfortable thoughts or feelings come through, we do not fight or try to get rid of these thoughts....we breathe in and say to ourselves 'an uncomfortable expression is being felt right now and breathing out 'I am aware that an uncomfortable feeling is taking place.' We keep it simple. We continue resting deeper into our bellies and onto our pelvis. And feel our bellies move as we breathe in and breathe out. And how our bellies engage our chest to move with our inhale and exhale.

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uncomfortable feeling/thought comes thru, just breath in and say a uncomfortable expression is being felt right now and breathing out that I am aware of an uncomfortable feeling taking place....breath moves along the feelings and thinking when we let our breath become our ally, as if they are low flying clouds gently being moved across the horizon with our breath.

. Let your breath awareness include all of you.

Deep Looking, Deep Action is meditation. The best way to be happy is to make someone else happy. Thich Naht Hanh

We are all focusing on our breath. The simplicity of breathing in Peace, Breathing out Love, Breathing in Peace, Breathing out Love...