

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MEDITATION

*Essential mindset
shifts and tips to
experience the peace
of the practice.*

By Suzanne Heyn



THE GIFT OF MEDITATION:

Peace with what is

Meditation is one of the most profound practices you could ever incorporate into your life. It helps you develop peace and equanimity, enhances intuition and connects you to your true self. It's profound yet simple, and that apparent contradiction confuses many people when trying to start the habit.

Maybe you've tried sitting and focusing on your breath, but your mind won't stop chattering away, and you think, "This is it? What good is this? How do I quiet my mind and experience the peace of the practice?"

And then you grow frustrated because your mind won't shut up. But this is the start of the practice: sitting there, with all your chatter and all your thoughts and simply becoming aware of it.

It may seem pointless, like nothing is happening. But you're developing patience and the ability to sit with discomfort. Eventually, you will cultivate a part of you who watches these thoughts, who can notice them without identifying them.

This happens over time, by simply showing up every day no matter what. (And if you miss a day, simply begin again.)

If the innermost part of your being, your soul, your true self, was the sky, the

thoughts and emotions you notice are like clouds, even if sometimes dark, heavy clouds that cause a considerable amount of turbulence.

Don't worry about getting rid of the clouds. Let them move through on their own. Does the sky grow frustrated when a storm comes? No, it simply exists, always calm beyond the clouds and ever-present when the clouds blow past.

Wishing the clouds weren't there is resistance — pining for a reality that's different from what it is, judging yourself for what is, thinking you're wrong.

Open your heart to your own chaos. Enter it. Sit with it until it slows. Then you will find peace.

This is where the practice starts! Notice your self-judgment and tune into your higher self to recognize that this chatter is natural.

In the beginning, you'll need a dash of blind faith that the chatter will quiet and peace will come. Soon, you'll have the experiences to support this belief and persevering will become easier. For now, allow blind faith to light the way.

Let your heart fill up with the belief in your own potential. Know that everyone experiences chatter. Your task is to sit with whatever arises. Be kind to yourself every step along the way.

Meditation is a practice of learning to accept.

The only way to learn to accept is to sit with what is. People always ask how, but it's a matter of doing. You must dive in and learn how to swim. It's not always a pretty process, a comfortable or fast one, but it's a very effective.

Trust that this is innate to you, and that as you continue to show up for yourself, your practice will deepen.

As with many other things, consistency unleashes the true power of meditation. To experience the benefits, you must commit to a daily practice and show up regardless of whether you feel you're making progress. Changes are happening, they just happen more slowly than we'd like. It's the pace of nature — slow and steady.

The thought patterns and ways of being that you're changing have evolved over decades of life, perhaps even past lives. They take time to unwind.

Keep in mind that going through the process is part of the process. Developing the patience to show up no matter what will help you develop the patience to sit through each individual meditation session.

And as you develop patience to sit in meditation, you develop patience in other areas of life.

There is no goal in meditation, no place to go. It's simply a practice of showing up, sitting with what is, and cultivating curiosity. Nothing is so bad that you can't be curious

about it. It's about developing awareness so you notice what's happening to you, and of opening towards it instead of recoiling, wishing it was different.

One day, you'll grow really angry at something, and a part of you will watch yourself flip out, and wonder if there's a better way, even in the midst of the flipping.

And maybe some time after that, you'll notice your anger and then notice space in between your anger and reaction. You'll have expanded your awareness, making it possible for you to feel your anger, breath into it, accept the discomfort, and respond in a way that doesn't involve flipping out.

Of course, you'll go back and forth between progress and seemingly backwards movement, but, just like the stock market, the dips and rises typically yield an overall gain.

This patience develops from sitting with your chatter, from continuing even when you feel frustrated, full of doubt and the desire to walk away. Especially then. That's when the good stuff is happening! Precisely when it feels chaotic.

It's like building muscle. When your weakness becomes apparent while gripping a heavy weight, that's when your muscles are actually growing.

Peace isn't the opposite of this internal noise. Peace is the process of sitting with this internal noise until the volume lowers. It's not that you're failing because your mind won't quiet, it's just that you haven't sat for long enough.

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Don't worry about how long it takes. Take however long you need. The process cultivates patience as opposed to needing patience to practice.

You'll get frustrated. It's fine. You'll think nothing is happening. It's fine. You'll grow annoyed, angry, occasionally feel peace and experience grand epiphanies. It's fine. It's all the same. Notice it, thank it, and sit with it.

As this skill of acceptance increases, so will your peace. More on the benefits later. For now, let's dive into some questions.



Q: What is meditation?

A: Meditation is a state of being. It's when your body, soul and mind unite completely with the present moment, when the mind calms and your emotions are at peace. It's a state of being in the flow, when the entire power of your mind is concentrated on the present moment.

Meditation practices and techniques, such as guided meditations, walking meditations, directions to focus on the breath or visualize balls of light — these tools merely exist to guide us into a meditative state of being. They're all equal tools.

The technique is not important. Find what works for you, what brings you peace.

That said, know that this state of connection is the flower that blossoms after many, many hours spent growing roots in seated meditation practice.

When mental chatter arises, don't judge yourself for not being in a state of meditation. Or if you do judge yourself, simply acknowledge the judgment and allow yourself to find humor in it.

Acknowledge that you're in the right place, a place where you can learn to exist in the space between thoughts and emotions. That's where peace is, in the space between.

Just as you wouldn't judge a first-time yoga student's inability to do a handstand, don't judge your mind for thinking. That's what it does. The answer is not to stop practicing, but to practice more.

When someone is enlightened, like Buddha, she or he lives in a perpetual meditative state. The mind is quiet and life is lived fully in the present moment, no past or future. Only now.

That's the promise of meditation. Not even a goal because a goal is something to accomplish. Attaching to the desire for accomplishment creates inner turmoil while meditation is a non-doing, a relaxation into the present moment while full of peace with what is.

If you're worried that sounds boring, or the stuff of laziness, don't worry! It takes most of us many lifetimes to achieve this state. The good news is that meditation can help you feel more peaceful even if you aren't enlightened.

Meditation is not about forcibly quieting the mind, but sitting with the mind until it quiets.

In this state of meditation, thoughts quiet. It's very difficult, if not impossible, to be fully aware in the present moment and be caught up in thought. When you think, you naturally fall out of the present moment.

Partly for this reason, the meditative state of being involves complete acceptance of the present moment. Thoughts and feelings typically develop from resistance. As our level of acceptance increases, thoughts and feelings of suffering diminish. It's resistance that elongates their lifespans.

That said, if uncomfortable thoughts or feelings arise during your seated practice, don't resist them. This only strengthens them and prevents the proverbial clouds from moving through as intended. Accept them with curiosity, not judgment. Know that everything passes. This is one of the gifts of meditation — a deeper understanding that everything passes.



Q: What different types of meditation are there? Is one better than another?

A: So many different types exist! There are active meditations, sound meditation, mantra meditation, guided visualizations, breath meditation, focusing on your feelings, chakra balancing meditations... The list is infinite.

The key is to find something that works for you. The technique is irrelevant. What's

important is finding something that connects you to your heart, that gives you a tool for sitting with what is until the quiet comes.

Feel free to experiment, and know that just because a type of meditation works for one person doesn't mean it will work for you. Although, I will say that if you experience strong resistance to a particular type of meditation, that could indicate its potential to provide powerful medicine for you.

There's a difference between preferring one practice to another and actively resisting a specific technique.

In yoga, it's said that the poses we don't enjoy are those we most need practice, and it's often the same for meditation. In fact, many people resist any type of meditation (I know I did), and this is a strong indication the practice itself holds massive healing potential.

It's okay to feel resistance, just develop the ability to sit with it so it doesn't control you anymore.



Q: What are the benefits of meditation? What is the point?

A: Meditation brings peace and healing. It strengthens your intuition and helps you grow roots in stillness so that no matter what tornado of chaos swirls around, you stay centered.

Meditation helps you come home to yourself.

As you meditate, problems literally fall away because you stop attaching yourself to all the drama that circulates both inside and outside of you.

You realize how little life's annoyances mean because everything is so temporary. Meditation gives you perspective and penetrating insight. You develop the ability to pull others into your peace instead of the world pulling you into its chaos.

When bigger problems like death and sickness enter our lives, meditation gives us a place to process our emotions and heal. To connect to the impermanence of existence and understand that no matter how big something is, it too will pass.

Meditation transforms life into the grandest of adventures, a journey within. As you connect to your own heart, it becomes your guide along this wild path.

As you deepen your peace and heart connection, you more effortlessly gravitate to that which serves you and allow the rest to fall away. The practice trains your attention to stay in the present moment, where all potential lies.

Meditation's greatest gift is the gift of awareness. Our days are no longer an infinite chain of unconscious reactions. Instead we become aware of our thoughts, feelings, behaviors and motives, always working to shift our responses for the better. We work to understand ourselves, which in turn injects our lives with more meaning.

We stop fearing ourselves, increasing our

capacity for self-love and adoration of life itself.

The skill of patience directly impacts our lives. Let's say you're in a conversation and someone says something really annoying or rude.

Instead of reacting unconsciously, you will eventually grow your capacity to tolerate your discomfort to this comment you dislike. You'll have the patience to notice your internal discomfort, and then respond in a proactive, rational way instead of blurting out something ridiculous that only adds to the absurdity.

This warning sign of discomfort would also signal an opportunity to inquire within. Outside circumstances only hurt when they highlight unhealed parts of our own psyche.

You would respond in a way that reflects an unshakeable belief in your own divinity rather than in a way reflecting a wrong belief that you're flawed.

As we heal internally, fewer things bother us. We can only be offended if we believe something is true. Instead of seeking to change the outside — typically a losing battle — you can shift within.

Recognizing your own wounds through increasing awareness and seeking to feel any pain that arises in meditation ushers in a marvelous opportunity for healing. The next time something similar happens, perhaps it won't bother you. Perhaps you will manage it without the corresponding emotional pain.

So instead of asking, "why won't this person stop talking?" you might ask, "What is this comment highlighting within me that's causing pain? Why do I care?"

This doesn't mean that you allow people to speak to you rudely. Not at all. But you would

better recognize improper behavior and respond in a conscious way instead of reacting in an unconscious way. You would respond in a way that reflects an unshakeable belief in your own divinity rather than in a way reflecting a wrong belief that you're flawed.



Q: For how long should I meditate?

A: Ideally, it's best to meditate for at least 10 minutes a day, but you can practice for much longer if you desire. At the beginning, the most important thing is to develop the habit without causing too much resistance.

It's a balance, a practice of finding the edge. You want to sit with your resistance, but you also want to be kind to yourself and avoid going crazy, which is easy to do. So if you can sit for one minute, sit for one minute. If you can sit for five, sit for five.

Over time, you will experience benefits and feel more stillness, and this will inspire you to sit for longer. There's no rush. Do more than you're ready for but less than what will cause harm.



Q: Does it always have to be done seated, in a quiet room with the eyes closed?

A: No! Many active meditations exist. This is a course designed to teach seated meditation, and I believe that is the most effective type, but many other ways exist. A great book that explores types of active meditations is *Meditation: The First and Last Freedom* by Osho.

Quickly here, walking can be a meditation, for example, by relaxing into the act of walking. Slowly, mindfully place one foot in front of the other. Notice the birds chirping, the feel of the breeze against your skin. Notice everything around you and sink into the body — that's meditation.

Another option is to dance, wildly, as hard as you can for 10 or 15 minutes, and then allow your body to sink into meditation for another little while.

A third type is known as the gibberish meditation. For 15 minutes, say gibberish — any nonsensical word or phrase or noise. Say it out loud, moving around however your body moves, and then, for 15 minutes afterward, lay still.

Keep your eyes closed the whole time. This sounds really weird, but we did it during my yoga teacher training and some people had very cathartic experiences.



Q: What should I meditate on?

A: So a lot of times, people, including me, will say, "Meditate on this idea," and this practice of sitting with a thought, holding space and seeing what arises is a wonderful way of gaining insight into a circumstance or uncovering a new idea from deep within. But technically, this is not meditation. (No wonder people get so confused!)

Be okay with what happens, even if it doesn't fit your image of how meditation is supposed to be.

Again, it's not bad to do this and it can be very useful, but it's not meditation. Include it in your practice, but don't limit your practice to it.

Meditation is not a process of sitting with your thoughts or contemplating anything. It's a process of relaxing into the present moment, accepting whatever arises, and opening up to the place inside of you that's beyond the mind. It's a process of expansion as opposed to focus, which has a constrictive energy to it.

To help the mind quiet, it's good to give it a job, to pay attention to the breath or your inner emotional state, and eventually, when the mind quiets way down, the stillness expands. When you fall into stillness, you can release the point of focus and just enjoy the stillness.

The point of focus is a tool to help the mind relax to enjoy stillness.

It's a process of letting go, dissolving tension and resistance and ultimately expanding into a vast energetic experience of peace. You'll know it when you experience it. It's definitely not something to force, but to relax into.

In the meantime, know that focusing too much

on your thoughts can become a trap. Insights can and will arise, but try to not attach yourself to them. Allow them, notice them, but then release them, like a balloon floating up toward the sky.

You can get addicted to these insights: "Look at this epiphany I just had! I'm so smart and spiritual!" But then you get caught in the mind and stay there instead of expanding past the mind.

Simply notice this attachment, notice any judgments about that attachment, and keep relaxing into the experience.

I've gone through many meditation sessions attached to my mind and its epiphanies, so don't worry how long it takes. Eventually, as you keep showing up and releasing attachment, your mind will quiet and you will go deeper.



Q: I don't understand how to "focus on my breath." Are you supposed to take deep breaths or just breathe however you breathe?

A: Just breathe however you breathe! You will definitely notice your breath more and this can make it tricky. You might feel like you're short of breath or question how to breathe, but that's simply because you're shining your awareness on a normally unconscious process.

The idea of focusing on your breath is about simply noticing how the breath feels filling your belly, entering and existing your nose.

It helps to give your mind something to focus on. Ideally, this helps quiet your mind. It can be incredibly relaxing to simply watch your breath.

In my experience, watching the breath is one of the more difficult places of focus. It's personally hard for me to keep my attention there and that's why I like to focus on how energy feels flowing through my body.

There are other benefits to this practice called the Feeling Awareness meditation, but one of them is that it's sometimes easier to focus this way.

I'll alternatively connect to my breath and scan my body for any sensations of emotions or heavy or dense energy throughout the meditation. It's okay to have more than one area of focus. Whatever gives you the experience of connection is good.

The key is to experiment and find what works for you. We're all on different paths, and what works for one person won't work for everyone.



Meditation doesn't develop from a quiet mind. A quiet mind develops from meditation.

Q: Sometimes I feel silly sitting there. What am I supposed to be thinking or saying?

A: Nothing! Meditation practice is about sitting with the thoughts until they quiet. It helps to have a point of focus, such as the breath, the heart, a visualization or a mantra, which is a word or phrase.

Sometimes people will talk about meditation saying, "I really enjoyed spending that time with my thoughts," or, "I will meditate on..." but meditation isn't a time to focus on your thoughts. It's a time to sit with your thoughts and feelings until they quiet and allow you to enter the space between.

Meditation is a process of connecting with your energy, which is your true self. Your soul. Your heart.

And deeper, the infinite source of universal energy.

The space between thoughts and feeling is where the power of our lives lies — it's the present moment. Our brains are very smart organs and they like to have a job to do. They're like dogs in this way.

Give your brain the job to focus on your breath, or a mantra if you wish.

If you do use a mantra, be sure to sit in silence for a few moments after. It's amazing how repeating a mantra for 108 times will quiet the mind and allow you to sink into stillness. It gets easier over time, so keep up with the practice!

If you feel silly, or enter mental chatter about how you're a fake or a weirdo or silly for

believing this stupid habit will do anything for you — who do you think you are? — just watch those thoughts.

Label them — "Oh that's my friend fear telling me I'm an idiot. Hi fear! Would you like to meditate?"

This is the process of aligning with your higher self, your soul, and over time you'll be able to notice those thoughts and easily dismiss them as untrue. When that happens, you'll be able to let them go very easily.

For now, just try to cultivate awareness of those thoughts and then remember: Just because it's a thought doesn't mean it's true.



Q: How do I stop the endless mental chatter?

A: It's very simple: sit with your thoughts! Your mind will quiet over time. Don't let thoughts make you think your practice is failing.

Let your thoughts inspire you to meditate more because if you meditate more, your mind will quiet. If you have problems sitting still, notice the restlessness.

Trying to stop your mind from thinking causes resistance and suffering. It makes you feel like you're wrong. Let your thoughts flow around you.

It's like when you're enjoying a day at the beach and you hear people chatting in the background. You can barely hear them, and the background noise becomes a hum representing a relaxing day at the beach.

Allow your thoughts to flow. Simply stop paying so much attention to them. Expand your attention so you simultaneously notice your thoughts, breath, heart, or whatever it is you're focusing on. This takes practice, but it will come.

You'll often hear meditation teachers say to avoid following your thoughts. This means if you think, "Hmm. I wonder what I should have for dinner," you would ideally notice that thought and then bring your attention back to a point of focus, maybe the breath, the belly or the heart.

Following the thought would involve, for example, contemplating specific recipes you might want to cook or foods you may or may not have in the house. Even if you do end up making grocery lists for 10 minutes, who cares? You showed up, and that's the important part.

When you find it difficult to motivate yourself, think of why you want to meditate.

Trust that over time, your mind will quiet.

Know that the mind is used to following thoughts, and you'll likely automatically begin to contemplate what you would like to eat. This

is probably where you begin to feel resistance. You don't want to follow your thoughts, but you are. So what do you do?

Simply notice it all. Notice yourself thinking, notice your resistance, your desire to eat. You're expanding your awareness to notice it all. Maybe you'll get caught up in it; that's okay. Simply come back as soon as you notice you're caught up.

Over time, practicing this way makes it easier to release the thought without following it. But it takes time.

Today, just sit with the chaos, cultivate compassion for yourself, the one who suffers amid all this noise, and allow your mind go haywire. Just breathe. Try as best you can to focus on your breath, but surrender to the chaos. You spend so much of your energy fighting. It's time to learn how to let go.

This is the practice, showing up, sitting here, no matter what happens. Be okay with what happens, even if it doesn't fit your image of how meditation is supposed to be.

We are natural rebels; if we tell ourselves, "Don't think!" we will do nothing but think. This creates resistance and suffering, and meditation is about the release of resistance and suffering.

The more you meditate, the more your thoughts will quiet, but don't become attached to that ideal. Keep sitting with yourself, keep showing up, and the rest will come.



Accept that you resist the practice. Accept that it's going to be difficult the first little while. And then sit.

Q: If I'm aware that I'm thinking, aren't I still thinking?

A: There's the part of you who thinks and the part of you who observes yourself thinking. The observer is your awareness, your higher self, the force of energy that powers consciousness itself. This is the objective witness that meditation helps us cultivate.

But, know that there are two different types of thinking: One type is when you know you're thinking. The other type is when you don't know you're thinking.

The first type is connected to the witness, the impartial part of ourselves that observes everything we do. It's knowing that you're thinking.

The second type of thinking is the type that consumes most of the day. Thoughts, endless chatter. Only most of the time, you're not conscious of it. You're caught up in it. You identify with it, believe every word and consider it to be part of who you are.

But suddenly in meditation, you're thinking, thinking, thinking, and then all of a sudden you think — "Oh my gosh! I've been thinking. I haven't been present at all!" That moment you notice that you're thinking — that's the witness. That's the watcher.

That's the part of ourselves we deepen during meditation. That's the part of ourselves that carries vast potential of peace, heart-felt connection, love and unity.

As you notice you're thinking, return to a point of focus. Over time, this muscle will strengthen, and you'll notice you're thinking

much more quickly. You'll develop the ability to let the thoughts flow over you, like a river, while you watch from the shore.

Meditation practice isn't about quieting your thoughts — a quiet mind is a result that happens when you sit in meditation practice.

By sitting and practicing non-judgmental awareness, you gradually quiet the mind because you become more present. You expand this observer, this watcher. You become more connected to awareness itself.



Q: Ok, but really. How do I quiet my mind?

If your thoughts become a significant problem, you're welcome to recite a mantra a few times to help quiet it down. I like the mantra Sa Ta Na Ma, which represents the cycle of life, death and rebirth. This mantra brings you in harmony with the universe.

When you do this, touch the thumb tip to the tip of the index finger on "Sa," and middle, ring, and then pinkie on subsequent syllables. Repeat as long as desired; feel free to drop the mantra as soon as you feel ready.

Another way to encourage a quiet mind is to meditate after yoga practice or any other type of physical movement. The physical practice of yoga, asana, was originally designed to prepare the body for meditation, both physically and mentally.



Q: What should I focus on?

Besides a mantra like Sa Ta Na Ma, two easy places to focus are the breath or heart center.

If you focus on the breath, follow the cycle as air enters and leaves your body. Feel your belly expand, your chest expand. Feel the breath sail past your nostrils and become aware of the air sliding down the back of your throat.

The heart center is another wonderful place to focus. This is the basis of the Feeling Awareness meditation technique that I teach. It's a process of noticing and healing your emotions. As you sit with the physical feeling of these emotions (energy in motion) in your body, they dissolve, leaving space, wisdom and peace behind.

When you notice thoughts arise, simply return to your point of focus, even if it's a guided meditation.

That said, if something else arises, allow your attention to move around as feels natural. You might begin listening to your breath, move to your heart, then feel your belly contract and expand — there are no rules. It's truly a practice of sitting with yourself and cultivating curiosity for the present moment.

Adopting a rigid attitude about where your point of focus should be defeats the purpose meditation!



Q: I find it hard to concentrate if traffic goes by or noises interrupt. What should I do?

A: This is a perfect complement to your meditation practice! Life is full of disruptions, and through meditation, we can develop the ability to remain calm in the face of them.

Simply shift your mindset: these noises aren't interrupting you. They're part of your experience and you must work to accept them. They're part of your reality at that present moment.

Expand the container of your awareness so it's big enough to include these noises.

Practice sitting with the irritation and this will deepen your peace once the irritation leaves. Of course, it's good to have a quiet place to meditate, but sometimes noises are unavoidable.

A short story: I enjoy a dedicated yoga and meditation space in my home. It's very sacred to me and generally, my husband (and dog!) know not to interrupt me when I'm in there. But my dog likes to bark and sometimes my husband comes home when I'm meditating.

As soon as the garage door opens, my dog starts yapping away! He's only 20 pounds, but sounds like a really vicious creature.

At first this really annoyed me. "How am I supposed to find any peace around here?" I wondered, even cringing as I imagined my husband coming to interrupt me during this sacred time.

Then, I realized that first of all, I was imagining something that hadn't happened yet, and might not ever happen. I was leaving the present to worry about the future. This became a wonderful opportunity!

Ultimately, the interruption became part of my practice. I continued to search for my breath, even amid my dog's incessant barking. I let him bark; it was not my problem, and that felt good.

I worked to find peace even while he was barking, and that gave me such a sense of personal power, to know that my dog can bark and I can still feel peaceful, even amid the noise.

One day you'll be standing in line at the grocery store or sitting in traffic at a red light, and you'll notice yourself breathing.

Next, I even let my husband walk into the house without my responding. I watched the world go on without me. My participation was not required, and that felt good. I practiced letting others be as they are while I continued to sit as I was.

This sense of separation is healthy in so many ways. But overall, any noise or interruption is a great opportunity to deepen your experience of stillness.



Q: I worry that I'm not doing it right. I constantly lose focus.

A: It's so funny because everyone worries that they're not doing it right when sitting in meditation is the most natural thing in the world.

I really feel like this fear emanates from the deep-seated fear that we are not right, that there is something wrong with us, that there is something wrong with our minds or our souls making us different from others.

We fear we suffer more or have more anxiety or have a more difficult time experiencing this esoteric experience others talk about.

So meditation, for me, on any given day looks like this: "Okay, sit and breathe. Ahh, this is peaceful. Oh no! I have this idea and this idea and I need to do this thing! Oh no wait! I'm supposed to be meditating. Okay, focus on the breath. Ugh, this is so boring — why am I even doing this?"

It's true. And I have had moments of profound peace, bliss, deep insights, those things happen, but they are the exception and not the rule.

Most of my practice involves me watching my

wandering, sometimes obsessive, sometimes happy, sometimes sad, mind.

Over time, you start to distance yourself from your mind, and even if you don't barely notice any spaces between thoughts and feelings during seated meditation, you will eventually notice them when you're not meditating.

And that is the true gift. One day you'll be standing in line at the grocery store or sitting in traffic at a red light, and you'll notice yourself breathing.

You'll think to yourself — I am always breathing, and I never notice it. But I just noticed it right now and that's because I sit with myself and my wandering mind and sometimes aching heart. Every day.



Q: How do I create the habit, find the motivation and have the patience to practice regularly?

A: A few suggestions. First, create a ritual. Select a specific time of day when you will meditate. The worksheets provided with this course guide you through the process of establishing a routine that works for you.

Find a time of day that works. Figure out how you can make more time, whether that's by showering at night to meditate in the morning or spending 10 fewer

Prioritize your spiritual practice and everything will unfold as it's intended.

minutes with technology.

Meditating first thing in the morning is ideal. Not only is your mind the most quiet then, but fewer things can interrupt you. No matter what the day holds, you'll feel satisfied knowing you already practiced.

The second tip is to meditate for a tolerable amount of time. Don't suffer. If you can meditate for one minute, meditate for one minute. Just practice every day. Your sessions will grow longer as your peace increases. Even one minute is better than nothing.

A third tip is to give yourself permission to meditate for varying lengths of time. Some days, I meditate for five minutes and other days I meditate for 20.

Before closing my eyes, I always ask myself how much time I feel comfortable giving to the practice. Some days I'm really busy and I congratulate myself for meditating five minutes. It's okay. I showed up.

Deciding before I begin that this day will be a short practice helps me avoid the feeling that I'm failing myself. Instead it feels good, like I'm getting what I need.

On the other hand, sometimes I decide to meditate for 20 minutes, and I stick to this decision even when five minutes passes by and I'm bored already. Sometimes we give ourselves breaks and other times we push through the resistance.

Having a community of support and motivation is also powerful, and that's why I created this course with a community that

helps solidify your habit during the all-important first 30 days.

I urge you to participate in that community as much as possible because it will greatly help you stick with the program.

Science is divided upon how long it actually takes to form a habit, but 30 days should be a long enough time for you to experience some benefit from meditating. As you experience small benefits, this will inspire you to continue practicing.

When you find it difficult to motivate yourself, think of why you want to meditate. Hold the image of you, feeling peaceful, calm and joyous in your mind, and allow that image to inspire your continued dedication.

Before closing my eyes, I always ask myself how much time I feel comfortable giving to the practice.

If you don't practice for a day, or a few days, notice yourself growing irritable, stressed, depressed, anxious or angry. Then, compare that sense of irritability with the peace you feel after meditation.

Noticing that you feel irritable because meditation has been absent from your life would actually be a great sign! It would mean you're aware enough to recognize that you feel irritable and detached enough from self-judgment that you realize why.

Overall, I recommend igniting a burning yes to return to the practice.

In life, we're always saying yes to something, even if it looks like a no. Saying yes to meditation is saying yes to living life as the best version of you.

Saying no to meditation is actually saying yes

to something else — to watching an extra 10 minutes of television, scrolling on social media or sleeping.

These choices aren't necessarily bad, but cultivate awareness of what you're saying yes to. Make sure those yeses reflect your true priorities.

Ignite a burning yes for greater inner peace. If you have that yes burning bright within you, it will be easier to say no to everything that distracts you from that peace and find the time for meditation.

As for patience, it's a learned skill. As you commit to sitting with yourself in meditation, you will develop patience.

If you're restless, be restless and accept your restlessness, try to observe it. But do the best you can to stay seated for the amount of time you committed to when you sat down.



Q: I would like to have that habit in my daily routine but I always forget it or, when I remember, it's when I'm in bed and get sleep.

A: Once you establish a routine, it will be a habit, like brushing your teeth.

This is the benefit of practicing with the group and having the community for accountability, and the daily emails to remind you.

However, if that isn't enough, I recommend setting a daily alarm on your phone, "remember to meditate." Set an alarm for when you wake up or even write on a piece of paper and keep it on your nightstand, "remember to meditate."

"Entering that stillness is not a goal, but an intention that nourishes us as we practice."

If you're in bed and remember, you have a couple options. One is to get out of bed and meditate for even five minutes before going to sleep — it will help you sleep better.

A second tip is to ask your subconscious, "Please help me remember to meditate in the morning."

I find this technique highly effective, and maybe you will to. But of course you can always set the cell phone timer or write yourself a note and place it where you will see it.

One addition — when you see that note, you will tell yourself, "I don't really need to meditate. It's not that important." And then you need to recognize that voice as belonging to the lower self, as opposed to the higher self and meditate anyway.

You'll have days where your lower self wins, but keep growing your awareness and your desire to meditate, and over time, the higher self will emerge victorious.





Q: How do I overcome the resistance to meditation?

A: In *The War of Art*, Steven Pressfield writes: “Rule of thumb: The more important a call or action is to our soul's evolution, the more resistance we will feel toward pursuing it.”

I'll tell you a story about my own practice, but first a quick perspective shift: When I resist

meditating, I always tell myself, I have no trouble spending 15 minutes (often much, much more) scrolling on social media or reading or doing any number of things. If I can do any of those things for 15 minutes, I can sit with myself for that amount of time.

Yet, I resisted meditation for four years, and my life shifted so dramatically after beginning that I can only wistfully wonder how life would have unfolded if I'd begun sooner.

Four years is a heavy dose of resistance, so just know that you aren't alone. Also know that if you're seriously resisting the practice, it only signals how much your soul craves it.

My personal journey of overcoming resistance was to keep moving slowly towards meditation, inch by inch. I meditated for one minute, and then three. My practice lengthened over time as I nurtured the ability to sit with myself without going crazy.

If you're resisting meditation, first drop your resistance to the resistance. You know you want to meditate and yet you have this resistance. Your desire and your resistance clash, creating even more resistance.

Accept that you resist the practice. Accept that it's going to be difficult the first little while. And then sit—every morning so it's sure to get done, even if only for a minute.

The only way to melt resistance is to enter it, sit with it. Show it you're not afraid. Cultivate the courage to show up anyway. Don't hide behind it as an excuse. Meditate anyway!

The only way to melt resistance is to enter it, sit with it. Show it you're not afraid. Cultivate the courage to show up anyway.

That said, if you skip it for a day or a week, don't be hard on yourself. Just return to the practice as soon as you can. Don't

allow your journey towards peace to cause inner turmoil. That defeats the purpose!



Q: How can I see results? I want to learn more about my real wants and needs. How can meditation help me listen more deeply to my heart?

A: Meditation helps you listen more deeply to your heart by helping you learn how quiet the voices in your head, sit with the emotions in your body, and enter stillness. This stillness creates space to hear your intuition and your heart's messages.

During seated practice, you connect with your true self, which is your energy, and this energy may condense into thought form, such as epiphanies or ideas. The difference between a regular thought and an epiphany is how it feels.

You'll feel epiphanies deep within you. The voice of an epiphany will be clear, calm and confident. Unshakeable. You'll just know.

Intuition is different for everyone — it may be a thought, feeling or vision.

However, another way meditation strengthens your intuition is by teaching you to sit with your thoughts and emotions without judgment. Over time, you become less reactive to the world around you. Your presence increases, helping you notice those subtle intuitive messages from deep within.

You may start noticing more signs from the universe like numbers or seemingly random messages that speak directly to a situation you're experiencing.

Through meditation, you also become more in tune with your emotions, which are essentially intuitive messages from the soul. You'll develop a greater connection to your emotions, and they will tell you how you feel about the circumstances in your life. This is one form of intuition.

On an energetic level, meditation strengthens our spiritual cord. We all have energetic cords emanating from our crown chakra at the top of our heads through which life force energy

flows.

Practices like yoga and meditation strengthen this cord, filling you up with more life force energy and helping you learn more about your true desires.

Meditation also strengthens the third eye, the ajna chakra. This area located in between the brows is the energy center of seeing beyond the material world. It's the center of subconscious knowing and a seat of intuition and clarity.

As far as results, this is a tricky thing. Sometimes when people first start meditating, after sitting through the initial restlessness and resistance, they'll have profound spiritual experiences.

The practice is so powerful that when we first begin, the effort to enter stillness is so dramatically different from how we normally live, that we may have a quantum leap in awareness.

This may or may not happen, so don't worry if it doesn't happen to you. It doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong, just that this isn't part of your current experience.

When I first started meditating, I had several interesting experiences. One day I was petting my dog and the outer boundaries of my body seemed to dissolve. I felt so clearly that everything was awash in energy.

And I got attached to that experience. It puffed my ego up, like "Look at me! I'm spiritual!"

This is sometimes known as spiritual materialism, when we get attached to specific

The practice is so powerful that when we first begin, the effort to enter stillness is so dramatically different from how we normally live, that we may have a quantum leap in awareness.

experiences thinking they vouch for our awesomeness as spiritual beings.

And then, after that initial experience, maybe a long time goes by and you don't notice any concrete results. It doesn't mean nothing is happening.

The thing about meditation is that progress is so slow it's imperceptible.

Ultimately, it's not about progress, but about showing up for the practice.

Entering the stillness is not a goal, but an intention that nourishes us as we practice.

As a result of setting the intention to enter the stillness and practicing relaxing into it, we ultimately experience greater peace when we're not intentionally connecting to it. The connection slowly seeps into our entire being. Over a very long time.

It's a journey of not even a lifetime, but many lifetimes.

All the while, you're becoming calmer, more intuitive, more loving and kind, but the process happens so slowly that you may not realize it until you miss a few days and you start to feel off.

As you develop awareness, you can notice that sense of off-ness, and instead of judging yourself, tune in and remember, "Oh yeah, I haven't meditated in awhile."

So occasionally you will notice a change, but try to let go of the need to see results.

Prioritize your spiritual practice and everything will unfold as it's intended.



Q: Sometimes I feel anguished or nervous while trying to meditate. I always worry about doing other things. It's like my mind resists surrendering. What do I do?

A: It's totally natural for the mind to resist surrendering. The mind fears silence because it fears nothingness. Because the mind fears nothingness, we think we fear nothingness because we associate with the mind too much. In truth we emerged from that nothingness.

So the first thing is to remember that this is the most natural thing in the world, for the mind to resist surrendering.

Surrender would not even be necessary if there was no resistance, so you don't have to feel like you are especially flawed or messed up because you're experiencing this resistance. Sometimes just knowing that you are not the only one experiencing this helps to dissolve that resistance.

A little blind faith will help. Have faith that it's okay to feel this way, that it's part of the human experience. Also have faith that this practice will work because it's worked for so many others over thousands of years. Ignite the fire of desire within to experience that peace for yourself.

Over time, you will have your own experiences of peace and you won't need blind faith anymore. It will be replaced by inner

knowledge. But in the meantime, accept your doubt and choose to believe anyway.

Consciously remind yourself that this is an important practice. Consider how you'll feel at the end, perhaps telling yourself that whatever you're thinking of now will no longer matter.

Have you had the experience of worrying about something and then forgetting all about it after a good workout or a good night's sleep? The same will be possible after a peaceful meditation practice. Simply connect with your higher self and, if you're having a rough time, sit for one little minute. Or maybe three little minutes.

Simply dig deep within and ask yourself, "Can I sit here for three little minutes?" You can do anything for such a short amount of time.

Allow the desire for peace and connection to override any concerns that there are more important things you could be doing. In truth, everything can wait! The world will go on

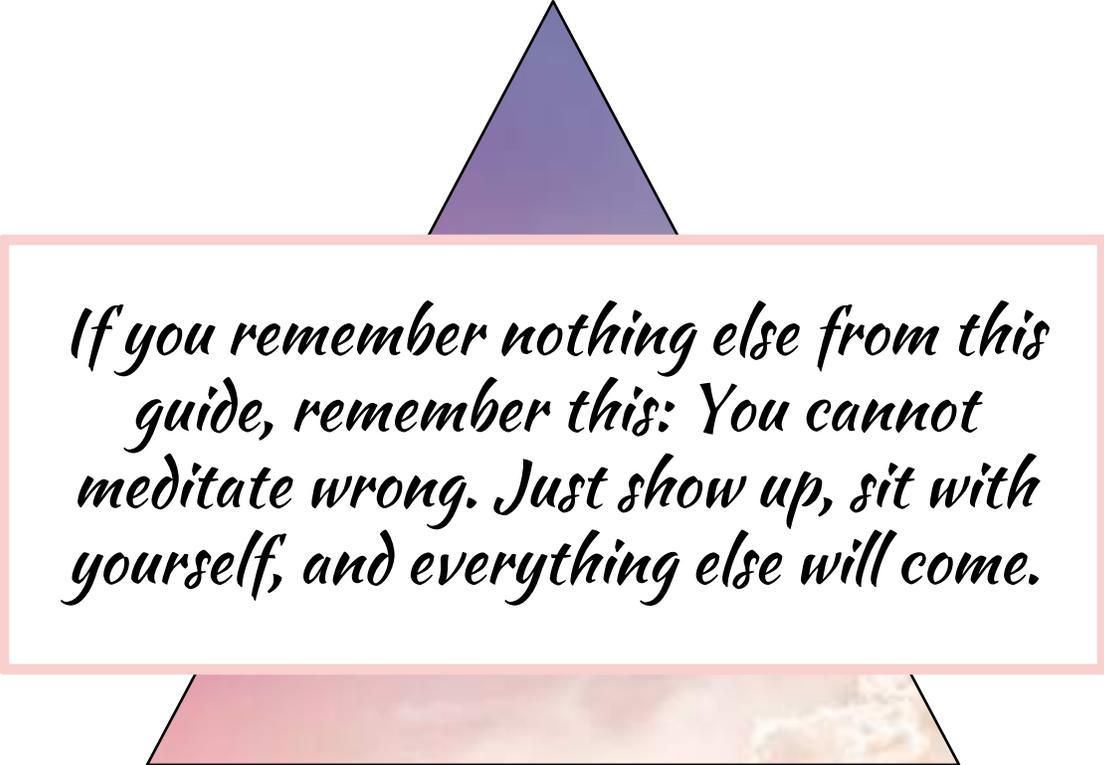
without you.

Another thing to try is to simply sit with this nervousness or anxiety. Maybe you spend your whole meditating resisting or nervous. That's okay! The process is about accepting whatever your reality is at that present moment.

Watch your anguish, watch your nervousness. Where does it appear in your body? How does it feel? Is it heavy or light? Begin to separate the emotions — they physical sensations in your body — from your thoughts. Strive to observe what's happening in your body and mind.

This takes time. And again, if you spend the entire time struggling against yourself, be proud that you continued practicing anyway.

Prioritize showing up and everything else will fall into place. Show up again and again, and eventually these feelings will fade. Eventually you will find peace. Eventually you will come home to your heart.



If you remember nothing else from this guide, remember this: You cannot meditate wrong. Just show up, sit with yourself, and everything else will come.