

Meditation Types & Practice Tips

Meditation Types

Focused Attention

Focused attention practice builds focus and stability of mind. It involves choosing a focal point such as the breath and placing all of your attention on that focal point. Then, when you notice your attention has wandered, you simply bring your attention back to the focal point.

Open Awareness

Open awareness practice develops the capacity to stay present and observe whatever is happening in the moment. During practice you might be aware of a thought, in the next moment a physical sensation, then an emotion, or perhaps an insight. Instead of "attaching" to any of these experiences, simply remain as the observer. It is often associated with the metaphor of one's mind being like an open-sky.

Body Scan

Body Scan practice helps build a higher-resolution awareness of the body, including the physiological signs of emotions. It's like being a map-maker for your body - moving systematically from top to bottom or bottom to top, exploring every area to gain more awareness of what's there. As you scan through your body, simply notice and experience whatever is present, without trying to change anything.

Seeing Similarities

Seeing Similarities practice builds compassion and the awareness and understanding that we human beings are similar in fundamental ways, no matter how different we perceive ourselves to be. Practice involves bringing individuals to mind and thinking phrases such as, "This person has feelings, emotions and thoughts, just like me. This person has at some point been sad, disappointed, angry, hurt or confused, just like me. This person wishes to be safe, healthy and loved, just like me."

Loving Kindness

Loving Kindness practice cultivates compassion and focuses on developing feelings of goodwill, kindness and warmth. The practice involves using phrases or kind wishes that express the intention to move toward compassion and understanding of ourselves and others. As you bring yourself and then others to mind, repeat phrases like, "May you be well, May you safe and free from suffering, May you be happy."

Walking Meditation

Walking Meditation serves as a bridge for bringing sitting practice into action. The focus is on walking itself, not walking in order to arrive somewhere. Practice keeping attention on your whole experience while walking: the feeling of the ground under your feet, the sensation of movement, your breath, thoughts, and feelings as you move. It can help to walk slowly so that you can be even more aware of these sensations.

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Practice Tips

Consistent Time

You'll find it easier to keep going if you do your dedicated practice at a consistent time each day. For example, first thing when you get out of bed, or at night before going to sleep.

Do what you can

If you need to skip a day and rest, that's fine. Like learning anything new, you'll feel highs and lows in your energy and motivation. Don't worry about it, just keep coming back as you can.

Peaceful Place

Pick a place where it's easy for you to relax and settle in. A park bench near your workplace, a special chair in your home, or on the bus with headphones on.

Sit Comfortably

Sit on a chair or cushion that allows you to sit upright and alert. Sitting should feel comfortable and natural, not rigid or stiff. The aim is to find a rested state while at the same time having an active body.

Feeling Sleepy?

Before meditating, move your body a little to wake it up. maintain good posture-sitting with back upright and feet flat on the floor can help you stay alert. If still feeling too sleepy, try a walking meditation. If you're consistently sleepy, you may need more sleep.

Feeling Discomfort?

It is normal to occasionally experience a little discomfort during practice. If you notice an itch or a little soreness in your body, try to sit with that sensation for a little while and observe it. Chances are it will change or disappear before too long, but if not, it is okay to shift your position or scratch that itch. If you do move, maintain your practice of attention as you move.

Celebrate Success!

Don't forget to enjoy the ride and appreciate the effort you've put in.