



Meditation is *not* What You Think

To the body, meditation is the opposite of fight or flight or anger or anxiety. The physiological effects of meditation are deep relaxation coupled with a wakeful and highly alert mental state. In the Western world, illness has been called the most widely practiced form of meditation. Many people find it easier to practice meditation in a group, like singing in a choir, but the important thing is that you recognize the benefit of the relaxation response.

An easy way is to begin with a minimum ten-minute period daily for two weeks. Set aside a regular time and place for meditation, one that supports *your* lifestyle - a specific time, or *first thing in the morning, right after the kids leave for school, on my lunch hour, or just before dinner*. This will help you create a positive expectancy. Give yourself two days off per week. As you begin to enjoy the results, gradually increase the time, by adding five minutes and staying with that for two weeks before adding more time.

A structured meditation is one that carefully defines what the inner activity is you are working toward, such as counting or observing your breathing. An unstructured meditation allows you to choose a subject and just stay with it as you notice your reactions and feelings about it. This might be staring at an object such as a lighted candle, a flower, or a piece of art. Create a setting as free from interruptions as possible. When your awareness is pulled away, gently bring your attention back to your meditation without judging it in any way.

Just as you choose the time that is best for you, choose a posture where your body is able to be relaxed, stable, and comfortable, allowing you to hold the posture without any extraneous movement for the entire period. Sit in a comfortable chair, or use a recliner. You will breathe through your nose in a gentle and relaxed way, noticing your breath and the physical sensations you are experiencing throughout your body. Your attitude will be a balance between alert and receptive, not thinking, but noticing.

In *How to Meditate*, Lawrence LeShan introduces four paths of meditation from which you will choose:

1. Singing, chanting, or praying is considered the *Path of Action*, learning how to “be” by pure concentration on what you are doing.
2. Yoga, Tai Chi, progressive relaxation, or jogging is considered to be the *Route Through the Body*.
3. Inner work, monastic devotions, and self-help practices of learning to love self, others, and the Divine is considered the *Path Through the Emotions*.
4. The path of choice for most Westerners is called the *Path Through the Intellect*, and deepens the understanding of ways of perceiving and relating to the world. The world changes because you see things in the world differently.

As you start your practice, have a clear expectation, and appreciate that it is not about trying to do a meditation “well.” All disruptions may be thought of simply as “objects of awareness,” as you notice and gently let go. As a meditation is repeated consistently over time, you will derive maximum benefit. The benefit of the practice of meditation itself is the first effect of meditation.

SCS Matters, LLC

Subtle Communications Systems

4230 Lincoln Avenue • St. Joseph, MI 49085 • (269) 921-2217 • www.scs-matters.com
Debra Basham debra@scs-matters.com • Joel P. Bowman joel@scs-matters.com