

## Meditation Everyday

In our busy lives, it is important to find some time for yourself. Between work, traffic, and family demands practicing meditation is a great way to get calm and relax. It has been shown that daily meditation can decrease blood pressure, increase immune system function, decrease stress and increase concentration. Consider these tips so that you can keep up with the pace of life.

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# A beginner's guide to meditation



by Sarah McColl, Shine staff, on Wed Mar 17, 2010 8:07am PDT



Recently in my favorite, final moments of a yoga class, I was stretched out under a blanket, enjoying the treasured minutes of meditation before I returned to the decidedly unrelaxing real world. And then, pouring through the window that had previously only ushered in sunshine, came the unmistakable sound of a jack hammer. My body tensed with irritation and incredulity --- *doesn't the world know I'm meditating!?* --- until I had a profound and necessary realization: the outside world doesn't stop for our inner moments of peace. We have to carve our own quiet mindfulness out of a loud, messy, stressful world that never lets up. And herein is the beauty of meditation: it can be a doorway that we step through anytime, anywhere, into a room of focus and relaxation.

There are **more reasons to meditate than you can shake a stick at**, including lower blood pressure, increased concentration, reduced stress, and an improved immune system, but if you've ever tried to sit still for 20 minutes and focus on your breath you know that, though simple in concept, meditation can be challenging. Here are some ways to ease into a practice that can improve not only your physical health, but your emotional well-being, too.

### **Guided meditation.**

If you're new to meditation, a guided version is a lot less scary version than walking into the dark woods of your mind alone. And here is yet another reason why the internet is really the coolest thing ever. There are great guided meditation podcasts you can download for free:

- **Meditation Oasis**: Mary Maddux leads guided meditations with her soothing, peaceful voice on everything from "Simply Being," "Gratitude," and "Body Awareness."
- **Lovingkindness Meditation**: A metta, or lovingkindness, meditation is a beautiful way to start meditating by focusing loving attention on yourself, someone else, and finally towards all sentient beings. Lisa Dale Miller leads this very accessible meditation.
- **Meditation Station**: Led by Stin Hanson, these guided meditations are a great way for beginners to get into meditation with a focus on everything from depression, addiction, healing, and self-esteem.

### **Walking meditation**

If you find that sitting still makes you antsy and anxious, a walking meditation might be more your bag. Instead of trying to still your brain chatter, you give your mind a point of focus --- in this case, walking --- that helps you to be more present in the moment and in your body. Go outside and give yourself 20 minutes. Begin walking at a normal pace, but focus your attention on the physical sensations: feel your feet strike the ground and roll to the toes, notice the way your arms and hips swing. Do a body scan by bringing your attention from the feet to the ankles up through every part of your body to the top of your head. As you notice any tension in the body, breathe awareness into it and then let it go. When your mind wanders to the sights around you, gently guide your focus back to sensations of walking. Don't get frustrated -- you may have to do this dozens of times, but that's part of the practice.

### **Active meditation**

Truly, any activity can be a meditation as long as we bring a focus of mindfulness to it. What does that mean? It means being utterly in the moment while you're washing the dishes, brushing your teeth, or taking a shower. Use all your senses to keep your mind focused on the the task at hand: feel the warm sudsy water in the sink, notice the color of the soap as you squeeze it onto the sponge; be aware of the way the shampoo smells, how the toothbrush

feels in your hand, or the sensation of the hot water hitting your back and shoulders. As you do this, try to keep your focus soft and diffuse, rather than lasering in on one thing. Bringing this kind of attention into small moments throughout the day is a challenge, but it brings with it a deep sense of peace.