

Clare Badham - YogaBreeze

## BE KIND TO YOUR MIND

Why is it that finding time to meditate is so difficult? Is it because every minute of the day is crammed and full of productivity and busyness? Perhaps we're not sure how to go about it, or can't see the benefit so put it way down the list of 'things to do'.

I'd like to show you that putting some time aside to 'just be' will be an investment for your peace of mind which will enhance all elements of your life; family time, relationships, work, health, eating, decision making, to name just a few.

But firstly, what exactly is meditation? As a yoga teacher, I was taught that meditation is the seventh of the Eight Limbs of Yoga, the profound state of being leading to a state of Enlightenment, whereby the yogi enters a state of meditative consciousness, stilling the mind. However, for us mere mortals, the mind cannot be stilled, we can only hope to lessen the constant chatter of thoughts – after all the mind thinks – that's what it does!

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So nowadays, the word 'meditation' is used to describe a formal practice of one pointed concentration, which anyone can do, but what makes it really beneficial is to do it regularly and find a method which fits into your daily routine. I'm going to give you some tips so that it will become a really integral part of your day, one that you'll look forward to and will be right at the top of your list of priorities!



It seems like we're always being told about the benefits of why we should meditate. Here are just a few reasons – find the one that matters to you most and make this your reason to start.

- 1. Reduces stress and stress related conditions such as IBS, insomnia and PTSD
- 2. Controls anxiety caused by irrational thoughts, phobias and panic attacks
- 3. Improves emotional health by supporting a more positive outlook
- 4. Enhances self-awareness, developing a stronger understanding of who we are
- 5. Improves attention span and concentration
- 6. Creates an ability to make choices for our greater wellbeing, for our best self
- 7. May reduce Age-Related memory loss
- 8. Control of pain through understanding and acceptance
- 9. Improves sleep
- 10. Teaches us to see clearly, recognising truths instead of imagining worst outcomes



This will be different for everyone. It's a well researched fact that for a new habit to be formed, doing it at the same time each day helps to imprint it into a schedule. You could even formally add it to your daily planner as an appointment not to be missed. Obviously things crop up, but you really do stand a better chance of meditating regularly if you write it down, at least whilst the habit is forming.

Time of day really doesn't matter. Before committing to a time, start to notice little pockets of space in your day – before work, after the school run, after breakfast, before dinner. 'When' doesn't matter. Would it be easier for you to get up 10 minutes earlier and meditate upon rising? Or perhaps go upstairs to bed a little earlier and practice then? Or pop it in after brushing your teeth at either end of the day. On that subject, you don't have to write down when to clean your teeth so the aim is to make your meditation practice as habitual as that!



Again, this is a personal choice, but if meditation is new for you, 5 minutes will be a good place to start. 10 minutes is a good length of time to allow the magic to happen and some will be happy to go longer – 20 to 30 minutes. I recommend starting small and increasing the time as you get more into it and start to feel the benefits.





It's essential that you're not disturbed!

It's easier for a habit to form if you manage to practice in the same place each time. Whilst it might be lovely to find a quiet beach, hillside or meadow (and if you find yourself in such a place, go ahead), most of us must find a special place at home. Outside on a bench or patio chair is good and you can always dress according to weather conditions. Inside, find a quiet space and make it special with objects than are meaningful to you, such as flowers, shells, ornaments, photographs or

## crystals.

You can sit in a chair, or on a cushion if comfortable and I like to have a shawl or wrap to put around my shoulders to 'set the scene' and signal to myself that it's meditation time. If you're more likely to be out and about at your mediation time, carry a small object around with you like a pebble or crystal to place or hold.



It really doesn't need to be complicated!

The wonderful thing about starting meditation is that there's nothing complicated to learn. You don't have to be able to sit in the Lotus Position and chant mantras (you can, but you don't have to!). You just notice what's happening right now, by connecting with your environment through your senses. When your mind wanders, just notice your thoughts, then come back again, and again to the moment.

You're not trying to empty your mind, just thin your thoughts to bring clarity and peace. That's not to say it's easy – and this article is designed to set you on a path where you may well be inspired to explore the subjects of Mindfulness and Meditation more deeply.

Read on and I'll guide you through.....

Find a comfortable upright sitting position, which might be on the floor on a cushion, or sitting in a chair with your feet on the ground. It's essential to find a position where you won't need to fidget. This is to keep you steady and grounded; lying down is not recommended in case you fall asleep! Set yourself a timer – most phones have suitable tones which you can set to chime after your allotted time.

Begin by noticing the feeling of the ground supporting you. Notice your feet in contact with ground, or the support of your cushion. Become aware of any physical sensations, like your hands on your lap, clothes and air touching your skin. You're noticing the moment through your sense of touch.

Now notice the feeling of your breath – your natural breath, breathing through the nostrils. You're not trying to breath in any special way. When you breathe in, know that you're breathing in. When you breathe out, know that you're breathing out. You might notice the temperature of your breath, it's texture, rhythm and quality. Is it deep or shallow? – follow its journey in and out. If, or rather when your mind wanders onto other things, notice that it's happened, then bring your attention back to your breathing. Over time and with practice, you may find that fewer thoughts interrupt your breath awareness. When your alarm signals the end of your meditation, take some deeper breaths, reconnect to your environment through your sense of touch (like you did at the start) and then continue with your day.

Of course, there are many, many ways to meditate, including numerous Apps and recordings, but my aim is to make the practice easy to remember and fully accessible – and completely free!

Namatse,

Clare