

A SIMPLE-AS-POSSIBLE HOW-TO GUIDE FOR

Tranquility Meditation



TRAINING THE MIND TO REST IN CLEAR AND STABLE ATTENTION

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Table of Contents



What is meditation?	03
Why do people meditate?	05
How do I start meditating?	06
As you start	10
Calm abiding	10
Ending meditation	13
Got questions?	13

FIRST THINGS FIRST

WHAT IS MEDIATION?

WHAT IS MEDITATION & WHO IS IT FOR?

Let's keep it simple.

We humans have two kinds of attention: **passive and active**. You have no doubt experienced both. Ever drive home and wonder how you got there, because the whole time your attention was actually on what you were going to make for dinner? **Passive attention** got you home safely. (I don't recommend getting home with passive attention, but we've all done it.)

Active attention, on the other hand, is when you put your attention on something and you know, moment by moment if it remains on the object, or goes somewhere else. If you were ever trying to thread a needle and managed to do it, you were likely using active attention.

Meditation is a way of training the mind to stay in active attention at will.

There are many kinds of meditation training. This booklet is about Tranquility Meditation, sometimes referred to as Calm Abiding meditation. Calm Abiding meditation is useful for developing presence—a steady, clear mindfulness of what's happening at any given moment. We use it all the time in giving a speech, or being with someone when we want them to feel we are attentive and caring in the moment.

To develop both meditation and presence, practice is required, so we call a regular session, 'meditation practice.'



WHY DO PEOPLE MEDITATE?

WHAT'S THE MOTIVATION?

People do meditation for both secular and spiritual reasons. In the secular world, meditation is used for relaxing and resting. It's useful for creating and maintaining clarity of mind, too. It has proven benefits for both physical and mental health.

In the realm of things spiritual, meditation serves those same purposes, and it also helps us deepen presence—the clear, steady sense of where one is and what one is doing.

That presence and the ability to direct attention at will is also a support for overcoming habits that impact our ability to live the life we most value.

In that way, many people think of meditation as a tool for achieving a kind of freedom. It's hard to be free if you don't know where you are and what you're doing. It's hard to be free if your mind and life are driven by habits, mental patterns and strong, explosive emotions.

WHO MEDITATES?

Anyone who wants to be focused, clear, steady and relaxed might find developing the skill of meditation useful.

Tranquility meditation does not imply any particular belief, and should not conflict with any religious or spiritual tradition you may adhere to.

HOW DO I START MEDITATING?

CHOOSE A TIME

- Mornings are good if you are a morning person. You can get your morning practice in before you start your day. Morning practice sets a tone of alertness and evenness for the day.
- Evenings might be good for you if you are a person who begins to relax when the day's obligations are done.
- Mid-day is good for people who are sleepy in the mornings and who have control over their schedule and tend to not get lost in work or other obligations, forgetting other things that they wanted to do, like exercise or practice.

CHOOSE A PLACE

- The most important thing about place is that you use the same place each day—if it's possible—and it helps if the place feels relatively pleasant and safe.
- A quiet place is helpful for beginners.
- Some people enjoy a special place with objects that are meaningful to them, such as an altar or special photographs or things from nature, but this is completely optional.
- The place should be pleasant, ideally, it should feel comfortable and inspiring.

But the truth is, you can sit anywhere: inside, outside, even in your car. It can be beautiful, or dim or drafty or too hot. Your mind is the place you'll be visiting. The physical space is secondary.

BEFORE STARTING

SET YOUR POSTURE

- It's helpful to be upright, balanced and relaxed, so many people sit cross-legged on a cushion or blanket on the floor. But you can also meditate lying down, or in a chair. If you sit in a chair, it helps to scoot forward and sit on the edge of the chair, with your back not touching the chair back. But if your body needs a big, overstuffed chair, sit *there*!
- Spend a moment when you begin by scanning down through the body, letting go of tension and balancing upright posture and relaxation. The idea is to awake and receptive to whatever you meet in meditation. The body should feel soft and open, not rigid and stiff.
- Now let go of preoccupation with what happened before and what will come next. Settle into this moment, this place and relax, if you can. Let go of controlling the outcome. Be open and willing to meet each experience.

CONSIDER YOUR MOTIVATION

What do you want from your meditation practice? Do you want to be more calm, more attentive or more well? Do you want to be less harsh, more kind or more creative? Do you meditate for yourself or for others? What inspires you to take this time?

It's likely that your motivation will evolve over time. But the direction you set, is likely where you'll arrive, so be intentional.

EASING INTO IT

REST PEACEFULLY AWAKE FOR A MOMENT

This is your home-base. Here you are. Now see what arrives. Your two job are

- to notice what arises, without judgement or commentary and
- to not push away any experience, nor cling to it.

This simple ‘being’ is so precious! If you can learn to come back to simple being and rest there, you have a precious resource, whether you meditate or not.

Instead of ‘time out,’ you can go to ‘time in.’ Whatever comes—sensations, feelings, sense experiences like hearing and so on; thoughts, memories and emotions—and everything else—you can meet it in the spirit of just noticing, “Now this, now this.” This gentle presence is the very essence of peace.

Once you can do this, instead of checking out, you can ‘check in.’ It’s the most intimate way to relate to your life.

You let life flow, with all the attention it deserves, and you witness it, gently and respectfully. The result is often that a kind of simple, uncomplicated sense of satisfaction and relaxation arises. You don’t have to manufacture it. In fact, trying to relax often produces an opposite effect. Just maintaining this simple ‘being,’ relaxation arises on its own.

CALM ABIDING

CALM ABIDING - SHAMATHA - TRANQUILITY

This mediation goes by many names: calm abiding, shamatha, tranquility meditation, mind-on-the-breath meditation. Those all work.

- As you begin, you might like to check your posture. Are you upright and relaxed? Or lying down with straight back and relaxed?
- Now, take a few intentional breaths. Think of these as ‘welcoming breaths.’
- From this point on, let your breathing come naturally. Don’t strive for any particular kind of breath or breathing.

EYES OPEN OR EYES CLOSED?

in the beginning you can do either. Do what allows you to relax and be present. Later, you may like to meditate with the eyes half-closed.

- Now place your attention on something—like your breath. You’ll just be using the breath as the ‘object’ of your attention.
- Try to notice the whole breath: in and out and the space after the outbreath, without manipulating the breath itself.
- With your awareness on the breath, begin to notice experiences arising.
- Make effort not to reject experience nor cling to it. Try not to get lost in it, either.
- When you DO get lost—and it’s almost certain you will—the minute you notice you have drifted away from presence with the breath, just return! Set the attention on the breath and continue, without judgement or commentary.

ENDING A SESSION

HOW DO I END MY MEDITATION?

When your timer goes off, stop mediating and sit for a moment, feeling the satisfaction of having done something so wholesome and healthy. Appreciate your body and having found a way to take care of your body and mind. Then get up, straighten up your practice space and go out to meet the rest of your day!



GOT QUESTIONS?

WE HAVE ANSWERS!

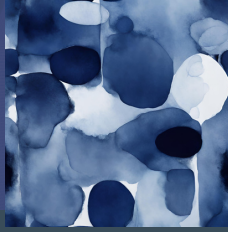
You can attend a Monday evening session at Dekleing on Zoom.

The links are on our website <https://dekeling.community>

There are other resources on our website, including

- more handouts
- schedules and links to more events
- links for appointments with a teacher
- recommendations for books.

Congratulations on giving meditation a try. If you decide it's not for you, that's OK! You could try yoga, running, walking, swimming or one of the many, many other options for nurturing yourself.



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