

MEDITATION GUIDELINES

Meditation is an ancient practice with many expressions and benefits. While some consider contemplation and introspection as meditation, we will dismiss them as representative of meditation in the spiritual tradition. There are meditations that use mantras while others use none. Mantras are sounds that have known effects. There are thousands of mantras for meditation. A mantra may be indicated for some persons while not for others. Some mantras promote transcending. Transcending means experiencing the ultimate state of our being—a state of no thoughts and restful alertness. This is a state of unboundedness, omnipresence, omniscience, eternity, omnipotence, and of all possibilities. It is the state of perfect health and happiness. The goal of meditation is to experience this state and to know it. To experience it is to become it. The benefits of meditation are so numerous that they can not be enumerated here but they include mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual parameters. Research on one popular technique has shown that the state of rest achieved while meditating may be twice the level of deepest sleep. Yet complete mental awareness is maintained during the entire process. From the perspective of rest we can see that meditation provides a profound level of rest—an opportunity to cleanse, to repair, and to rejuvenate the entire mind-body system. What follows is a listing of things to be aware of surrounding the practice of meditation.

1. Sattvic food and lifestyle make meditations more beneficial—practice the yoga yamas and niyamas.
2. The time of the day best suited for meditation is the Brahma muhurta--3AM to 6 AM (vata time).
3. Meditate before rather than after meals—the metabolism of eating will interfere with the resting metabolism of meditation and create more mental activity.
4. For best results meditate regularly twice daily around the same time.
5. Meditate in a space that is relatively quiet—one that will not have disturbances.
6. Always use the same place for meditation, if possible.
7. Always attend to nature before meditating.
8. It is best to avoid having pets in the same room while meditating.
9. Set aside a time that will be free from impending or other disturbances such as the telephone.
10. Meditation is best done sitting in an erect, comfortable posture—this facilitates the flow of energy along the spine, promotes unimpeded breathing, and avoids the “sleep response” natural to the supine posture. The lotus posture or half-lotus are best but cross-legged sitting on the floor; or sitting in a chair with legs parallel may also work well. The use of “back-jacks” is discouraged as a reclining posture is promoted by this apparatus.
11. You will feel fresher and more relaxed if you sprinkle the face and hands before starting to meditate.
12. Some find additional benefit by rinsing the mouth and brushing the teeth.
13. Generally, it is a good idea to do āsana and prāṇayāma before meditating; gentle stretching and some deep breathing may work well, too.
14. Remove shoes, glasses, or other uncomfortable items before meditating.
15. In starting meditation close the eyes and bring ones attention to the body and breath—abdominal breathing is best at this time, too.
16. Have the intention that one is about to meditate.
17. Prior to starting the practice chant “AUM/OM” gently, three times.
18. If one is using a mantra then easily allow the mantra to begin—if it does not come then “help it” by easily thinking the mantra.
19. If thoughts come during this process of meditating do not mind them—easily come back to the mantra or to the breath or other vehicle of the meditation.
20. Do not judge the meditation—you may feel relaxed or not; there may be many thoughts or none. Every meditation is successful if one only begins properly—by sitting quietly and feeling the silence and the breath (and mantra). If one judges the meditation then expectation will be present and this will bring effort to the process. Any effort will defeat this process.
21. Take each breath, each thought, each repetition of the mantra as it comes.
22. Do not attempt to alter the breath, its pace or depth.
23. Do not attempt to control the intensity, pace, or even the sound of the mantra.

24. Do not use an alarm for the purpose of timing the meditation—just have the initial intention that it will last the proper amount of time—20 minutes or as instructed.
25. If one must attend to disturbances during meditation it is best to meditate for about 5 minutes after the disturbance is over.
26. Always rest lying down after meditating— rest 1 minute for each 5 minutes of meditation.
27. Gentle stretching after the meditation is beneficial.
28. Do not rush into dynamic activity immediately after meditating, as this will promote physiological discomforts such as headaches and irritability.