

MEDITATION 101

getting started



WHAT IS MEDITATION?

Meditation is the formal practice of training our minds to reduce stress, enhance our health and wellbeing, and live happier and more fulfilling lives. Just like learning to play an instrument or a sport, meditation is a skill that we can develop over time with consistent practice.

WHY MEDITATE?

Thousands of neuroscience studies demonstrate how meditation positively impacts the structure of our brain and helps us proactively take care of our mental and physical health.

Some amazing benefits include:



Reduced stress, anxiety, and fear



Better sleep



Strengthened immunity



Less reactivity, wiser decisions



Increased happiness



Greater resilience

HOW TO MEDITATE

1 STEP 1: Find a comfortable, alert posture (sitting, standing, or lying down)

You don't have to sit like a pretzel to meditate; an office or desk chair works great. In any seated posture, it's best if your knees are below your hips, so you might try putting a pillow or blanket beneath your bottom.

2 STEP 2: Choose an anchor to focus your attention

Your breath, body sensations, or sounds are always happening in the present, so you can use these as an anchor for your attention. To start, it's best to choose one - for example, pay full attention to the sensations of your breath - following the inflow and outflow and feeling your body inflating and deflating.

3 STEP 3: When you notice that your mind has wandered off, gently return to your anchor

Your mind will inevitably wander - that's what minds do! Each time you bring your attention back to your anchor, it's like doing a little mental pushup, strengthening your ability to focus and be present. We recommend setting a timer for 5 or 10 minutes OR listening to a guided meditation, especially if you're just getting started.



Common Misconceptions



I can't meditate because I can't stop my thoughts.

It's actually rarely possible for ANYONE to stop their thoughts, even seasoned meditators. In meditation, you're not trying to stop your thoughts. Instead, you're learning to notice, work with and relate to your thoughts (and your mind) more skillfully, in a way that supports your wellbeing.



Meditation is totally "woo-woo" and out there.

It's common to think of meditation as a magical, mystical, far-out practice. However, practically speaking, meditation is as useful and normal as exercise (and now there's plenty of science to prove it). Meditation is all about becoming more awake, aware, and in tune with whatever is happening in your life. You're not trying to escape reality. Instead, you're training your mind to be less reactive, calmer, kinder, and more focused so you can meet life's ups and downs with greater ease.



Meditation = relaxation.

Meditation can be incredibly relaxing – AND, that's not always the case. Relaxation is often by-product of practice, but if you go into meditation trying really hard to relax, you'll trip yourself up (like trying really hard to fall asleep). Our minds and nervous systems are used to busyness and activity, so sometimes slowing down feels strange and uncomfortable. Be patient with yourself and know that if you don't feel relaxed, it doesn't mean you're doing it wrong.

Tips To Get Started



Like any other habit, consistency is key! Set aside 5-10 minutes each day to meditate and use a guided recording for support (*free recordings at [pausemeditation.org/stress-relief](https://www.pausemeditation.org/stress-relief)*)



Choose one activity in your day to practice mindfulness. This could be washing your hands, brushing your teeth, or drinking your morning coffee. Bring your full awareness to the activity and when you notice your mind has wandered off, gently and kindly bring your attention back to the activity.



Find a community to practice with. Meditation can be done solo, but it's far easier and more likely to stick when you have community support. Join Pause, or find another group that you love!