

Exercise: Meditation and Mindfulness

There are many types of meditation; if you already have a practice that you like, continue with it. I recommend starting with 15 minutes of meditation once or twice a day, gradually increasing your time to 30 or 40 minutes. There are stages and phases where we meditate more or less, depending on what is going on in our lives. An extended period of Being – taking a break from thinking – nourishes our deeper self.

Here is a simple meditation practice:

Sit comfortably with your spine erect, on the floor or in a chair. You should be sitting forward on the chair so your back is not touching anything.

Take a few deep breaths to settle; align your Hara. Feel the chair or cushion rising up to support you, and let your weight settle.

Focus on your breath, your Hara line, or your posture; this gives your mind something to do without wandering from thought to thought. When thoughts arise, observe them and imagine they are drifting away. Try not to attach to any particular thought. When you notice you are off on a train of thought, gently bring your focus back to your Hara, breath, or posture. This will be a constant process!

Don't judge the "success" of your meditation. If you intend to meditate and sit for the allotted period of time, that is a successful meditation. When we have lots of thoughts our meditation is still beneficial. Like bubbles surfacing from a pond, or toxic fumes out-gassing, thoughts and mental energy are being released from our physiology.

A new trend in western medicine is to encourage "mindfulness" and other meditation-based practices for their health benefits. Our physiology gets disturbed by negative thoughts, held and re-run emotional upsets, and relentless activity. Meditation offers a way to counteract the toxic effects of stress on our bodies. Mindfulness is not the same as meditation, though; in mindfulness you are engaged in activity, and are one with that activity – a focus that is relaxing for the brain. Mindfulness, meditation, and being present are all ways to describe various aspects of Being.