

MEDITATION DEMYSTIFIED! - Part 2

By Georgina Gower © All Rights Reserved 2011

Last article we discussed what meditation is and why we do it. In this article we will discuss how to meditate.

So how do we “do” meditation? Well meditation has many techniques and it is about finding the style that most suits you. Meditation is a very personal thing and frequently different techniques are suited to different personality types. I am going to give you some examples of popular ways to do it but I urge you, if the ones I describe don’t resonate with you, that you do some exploring of other methods to find the one/s that do. And quite frequently, as you gain practice meditating, you may find your preferences changing.

To get the most benefit out of meditation it is advisable to get into the habit of meditating regularly, preferably every day. It doesn’t have to be half an hour every day but even 5-10 minutes in the morning or before you go to sleep is enough to start to introduce the benefits that meditation brings. Of course, the more you practice the more benefit you will gain, but a little meditation regularly is better than none at all. It is common to hear people saying “but I don’t have time to meditate”, “where am I going to find 30 minutes a day to meditate?” To that I say set the alarm and get up 30 minutes earlier, set aside time before bed, find somewhere quiet during your lunch break. It really is easy once you have made that commitment. I mean we set aside time to watch the news, or do our hair, have a shower, think of this as another essential activity for your health.

There really are many techniques but the ones I will be describing to you in this article are: guided meditation, Zen meditation, walking meditation and body scan meditation.

Guided meditation is by far the most popular way for the beginner to be introduced to meditation. Guided meditation is where your imagination is lead on a journey with the purpose of achieving healing and realizations through focused thought and reflection. You could have a teacher speak or read a guided meditation to you, listen to a professional CD or read your own script

onto a recorder and play it back to yourself. Many people prefer this method as it helps the mind to focus if it is so used to “doing” all the time.

Zen meditation is a technique to teach you to calm your body and mind and open yourself up to discovering “you” as I spoke about before. To do this you sit in a prescribed position and try to close your mind to any thoughts of the past or future. The objective is to clear the mind of any thoughts of what to cook for dinner, what to do at work the next day and to just focus on what is happening now. So you focus on the sounds around you or your own breathing or sensations in your body. You are simply being in and observing the moment.

Walking meditation is as it sounds, meditation whilst walking. It is similar to Zen meditation in that we want to clear our minds of all thoughts other than what we are experiencing at that time. We can do this in a variety of ways: you can focus on each foot as it connects with the ground or focus on your breathing or you can simply focus on your surroundings without thinking anything other than what is happening at that actual time i.e. just noticing the trees, birds, sounds etc. This technique involves deliberately focusing on the experience of walking itself, something most of us don't ever do.

With all the forms of meditation the mind will want to kick in and start it's chattering. This is OK but if this happens we simply acknowledge this, let the thoughts go and refocus on the now.

And finally the body scan meditation. This technique is a wonderful way to reconnect with our bodies and to achieve a deep state of full body relaxation. It is achieved by scanning each part of the body sequentially, starting with the toes and feet and working our way up the body to finish at the top of the head. Whilst scanning you bring your attention to each area whilst paying attention to your breathing. Any areas that are painful or holding tension you simply breathe into them, relaxing them and melting away any tension. It is a wonderful way to be present with your body and to acknowledge where you are holding any stress.

So we can see that meditation is not just for gurus and 'hippy' types. It is a very beneficial and powerful tool that we can use on a daily basis to improve

our health and wellbeing. I urge you to start meditating today and see for yourself the many wonderful changes it will make to your life.

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