

8 Essential Tips to Nourish Your Meditation Practice

Mindfulness is a present centered, non-judging awareness. With practice, you'll find you are increasingly at home in your life—peaceful, clear and openhearted. This allows for a natural connectedness and intimacy with others.

1. Practice daily, even if for a short time

The poet Rumi asks: *Do you make regular visits to yourself?* Whether it's 5-minutes, 15-minutes, or 45-minutes, what most matters is the rhythm of a daily practice. It's helpful to have a preset time, rather than leaving it for when you're "in the mood"; and to practice in a place that is quiet, protected and conducive to presence.

2. Attitude is everything

The biggest reason people quit meditation is because they judge themselves for how they are practicing. Please don't turn meditation into a "should," another domain of self-critique! Instead, choose to cultivate mindfulness because you care about living true to your heart. At the start of each sitting, remind yourself of what draws you to meditate. And then set your intention to be kind and accepting toward however your meditation unfolds.

3. Pay attention to your posture

When many people think of meditating, they imagine a yogi sitting cross-legged on the floor. In reality, you can meditate in any position that feels comfortable to you (including standing and walking) as long as it promotes a sense of alertness, openness, and ease. For sitting, you might choose to use a chair or kneeling bench, or a cushion on the floor. Sit upright, in a way that allows you to feel alert and relaxed. Let your hands rest comfortably on your knees or lap. Let your eyes close, or if you prefer, leave the eyes open, the gaze soft and receptive. Periodically come back to check your posture, as a way of staying connected to your senses.

4. Arrive in your body

Scanning your body with your awareness will help you shift out of thinking and connect with vitality, openness and relaxation. You might begin by bringing a smile to your lips, as this sends a message of ease to your entire nervous system. And then, starting at the scalp, move your attention slowly downward, relaxing and softening different parts of the body. As you relax, become aware, from the inside out, of the sensations and energy moving through your body.

5. Select an Anchor for presence

Your anchor is a “home-base” that you can return to when you notice that you have been distracted or lost in thought. This will help you quiet your mind and more fully open to the present moment.

Useful anchors are:

- The breath. You might choose to pay attention to the sensations of the breath as it enters and leaves your nostrils, or the rise and fall of your chest as you are breathing. For some, it is helpful to attend to the experience of the whole body breathing.
- The body. You might place your attention on the sensations in a particular part of your body – perhaps your hands, feet, belly or lips. Choose an area that feels neutral, not particularly pleasant or unpleasant. (You can combine body with the breath.)
- Sounds – Listening to the sounds around you as they arise and fall away.

6. Keep coming back

While quieting the mind supports meditation, there is a misconception that the goal of meditation is to get rid of thoughts. The mind secretes thoughts like the body secretes enzymes! Please don't be at war with thoughts. Instead of judging when

you find you've been distracted, bring an interest and friendliness to the shift from thoughts to presence.

When you recognize that you have been lost in thought, gently “relax back” by returning your attention to the sounds, sensations and feelings that are actually happening in the present. Allow your anchor to be in the foreground, and become aware of your changing moment-to-moment experience.

7. Deepen mindful presence with two key questions:

- ***What is happening inside me right now?*** This will help direct your attention to your inner experience. You might experiment with naming or noting strong waves of experience, — “fear” “sorrow” “tingling” “tightness” “sounds” “worry thoughts” — as a way to awaken a clear presence.
- ***Can I be with this?*** This will help you relate to what arises with acceptance. After naming an experience (such as fear or tension) you might explore whispering the word *yes*, or *it's ok*.

8. Remember Kindness

If you encounter difficult emotions such as fear, confusion, sadness or hurt, offer yourself kindness. You might put a hand gently over your heart and send a message of care to the vulnerable place inside you. Mindfulness and heartfulness are inseparable: the more you bring these qualities to your inner life, the more they will enrich your relationships and ripple out into our world.

For more comprehensive practice guidelines: <https://www.tarabrach.com/faq-for-meditation2/>