

QUIET YOUR MIND CHATTER

INSIDER TIPS FOR MEDITATION

Using tools makes meditation easier. Here are my absolute favorites.

WHEN? WHERE?

Sit First Thing

- Meditate first thing in the morning, establishing quiet time as part of your daily morning spiritual practice.
- You can also block time on your calendar for later in the day.

Wait to Eat

- When possible, meditate on an empty stomach.
- Without the competing function of digestion, your body's energy can focus on meditation.

Move Your Body

- Prior to meditation, go for a walk around the block, do a few yoga postures, engage in a full cardio workout, or any physical movement that works for your body and your schedule.
- During your pre-meditation exercise, think of your movement as preparation for meditation. In this way, your mind will begin dropping into a state of stillness before you sit down.

Find a Quiet Corner

- Choose a regular location (or two), inside your home, your work place and/or a bench under your favorite tree.
- You can decorate your tranquil space with items or images that evoke positive feelings.
- You can also practice impromptu meditation while in transit (on a bus, plane, train or in a car) and while waiting (standing in line or while waiting for an appointment).

Get Comfortable

- Sit comfortably (but don't lie down) on your couch, a chair, a cushion, or a blanket.
- Position your legs however is comfortable.
- Keep your back reasonably straight.
- Place your hands on your lap, palms up. If it's more comfortable, place a pillow or folded blanket on your lap, and rest your hands on top of it.

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HOW?

Start by practicing the following tools in the order listed, which will provide a familiar structure, making it easier to drop into the zen zone. Later, feel free to retrieve individual tools from your meditation toolbox.

GO INWARD AND UP

Focus your attention on the space between your eyebrows, which is your spiritual eye.

With your eyes closed, gaze upward as if looking at the peak of a distant mountain.

TENSE THEN RELAX

On an inhale, tense every part of your body, holding the tension for a count of seven. Exhale and relax.

Repeat this seven times.

RELAX

With your muscles relaxed, breathe in for a count of seven, hold for a count of seven, then breathe out for a count of seven.

Repeat this seven times.

THINK I AM SPIRIT

For the next seven breaths, on your inhale, think **I am**, while pointing toward yourself with your finger. On your exhale, relax your finger and think **spirit**.

You can also use the Sanskrit words *hong* (which means *I am*) and *sau* (pronounced saw, which means *spirit*).

CONNECT

Make conscious contact with your Higher Power and your Higher Self. With or without words, say hello, ask for help, or simply connect.

Practice praying without separation, trusting that you are one with everything and everyone including God.

SIT QUIETLY

Practice viewing your thoughts with curiosity instead of judgement.

When a thought pops up, see it (through a loving lens) as a balloon that you are releasing, a cloud floating by, or an airplane towing a banner ad.

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BONUS TOOLS

EASY AFFIRMATIONS

Have Affirmation, Will Travel

Bring a written affirmation to your meditation location. Mentally read the affirmation slowly, pausing between the words. Really focus on the meaning of the words, letting the truth fill your body. When the affirmation is complete, sit quietly. When mind chatter disrupts, repeat the affirmation, pausing at the end to allow peace to enter.

If you are sitting for a short time, practice one affirmation. If you are working toward sitting longer, have multiple affirmations ready, progressing to the next one whenever your mind needs something new to latch onto.

Speak Truth into Being

When silent affirmations aren't drawing you in, use your voice to initiate engagement. First, say the affirmation loudly, then in a normal speaking voice, then in a whisper. Lastly, silently repeat the affirmation in your mind.

TOP 4 TIPS

For Improving Your Meditation Practice

- 1) Work toward a loving acceptance of whatever is happening
- 2) Release expectations of performance and outcome
- 3) Increase your willingness to see each moment as a fresh start
- 4) Keep practicing

You wouldn't expect to become fluent in a new language or a virtuoso on a new musical instrument after practicing for ten minutes a day for a month. Similarly, your meditation practice requires perseverance. To set your life on a foundation of peace, keep practicing.

Discouraged?

If you dread meditation, struggle while sitting, then feel disappointed afterward, take heart. Every moment that you practice meditation to the best of your ability qualifies as successful meditation.

Whatever happens inside your mind is exactly what should be happening. Regardless of your interpretation of the experience, any and all cushion time will positively impact your life. Stillness or turmoil will (in equal measures) lead you to your greatest good.

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