

# Meditation Handbook

A student helping student project.

Meditation is inner astronomy. You discover the stars, the moon, and the sun are all inside you.

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## What is Meditation?

Most dictionaries define the Western (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) meaning of the word 'meditation,' but usually do not describe the Eastern (Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist) concept of meditation. The most appropriate dictionary definition I could find reads as follows. "If you meditate, you give your attention to one thing, and do not think about anything else, usually as a religious activity or as way of calming or relaxing your mind." This definition implies that meditation means thinking about something, be it religious or mystical in nature, and that a constant thought process goes on while one meditates. The purest Eastern definition of the word 'meditation' means not thinking at all, but rather focusing consciousness on the cosmic whole, "the all and the everything" as George Gurdjieff called it, without thought, judgment, or distraction.

We can define 'meditation' as the art of consciousness becoming aware of itself on the grand and cosmic scale. Meditation cannot be called a science as yet, because science requires objective testing with objectively proven methods and results. Meditation is on the road to becoming a real science, however, and not just an intuitive art veiled in mystery. [see [brain scans prove meditation changes the brain](#)]

## Why meditate?

Meditation brings a sense of fullness and completion and is the only permanent source of tranquility available to human beings. All other forms of serenity are temporary and dissolve into conflict and chaos over time. The euphoria of drugs quickly lead to misery and self-destruction. The wholesomeness of love, so beautiful and ethereal, is a relatively short lived and fleeting experience. As J. Krishnamurti said, meditation brings order and "That

order is the order of the universe. It is irrevocable and doesn't depend on anything." Meditation is the eternal essence of nature taking on conscious form within the mortal human frame.

Meditation is an adventure of self-discovery. How can you live without knowing who or what you are? If someone asks you who you are during the day you may state your name, as if a temporary label actually means something important. Ask yourself who you are when you are in deep sleep, unconscious, and without even a dream to prove that you exist at all. Ask yourself who you were ten months before you were born, and who you will be just one moment after your body dies. Meditation increases awareness of the natural phenomena that is actually going on behind your own eyes. Self-knowledge has intrinsic value, even without the indescribable bliss nature generously unleashes in those who practice meditation with sincerity and patience.

### **Sitting Meditation**

Classic sitting meditation is a vital part of all meditation traditions and has taken many forms, some more effective than others. Some traditional approaches demand that the student sit motionless for hours on end, as if becoming a frozen human statue is the key to enlightenment. A more scientific approach does not make the human body our enemy, but rather works with our natural physiology to allow more intense meditation with less effort and discomfort. Masochism is not an effective path to self-realization.

Begin by finding a relatively quiet place to meditate where you will not be disturbed. All forms of classic sitting meditation should be done in silence with no background music. You can sit cross-legged Asian style on a meditation pillow on the floor, or use the Recliner Chair Method described below. Eyes may be fully open, half open, or slightly open, letting in just two small slits of light. Meditating with eyes fully closed is fine as long as the room remains brightly lit, so that enough light passes through the eyelids to keep your brain alert. I use a powerful 500-watt halogen touchier lamp to illuminate my meditation room, and this lamp projects a pleasing yellow-orange glow on my closed eyelids.

Meditating in a darkened room presents fundamental physiological problems. When you sit quietly with your eyes closed in darkness your brain

interprets this situation as a signal to start shutting itself down for sleep. Sleep inducing hormones such as melatonin are released at the same time your heart rate and circulation are reduced due to lack of movement. You feel swept away on a sea of quiet relaxation. This pleasant experience may be light sleep state hypnosis, not meditation at all, and thus does you little more good than taking a nap. Meditation means that you are relaxed as if sleeping, but your consciousness is fully and intensely awake. Therefore, if you meditate with your eyes closed the room must remain very brightly lit so that a significant amount of light passes through the eyelids.

### **The Sit-Stand Method**

Another defense against sleepiness is to break up your formal meditation into three fifteen-minute sessions that are easy for your body to tolerate. Sit in quiet meditation for fifteen minutes. Then stand for two minutes. Then sit for another fifteen minutes. Then stand for two minutes. Then sit for a final fifteen-minute session. This forty-nine minute technique can be done once, twice, or three times a day for intense practice. You can time yourself by making a tape recording with the sound of a bell or a gong to let you know when to stand up, sit down, and begin and end meditation sessions.

The sit-stand method largely eliminates the problem of cramps, soreness, and numbness in legs often experienced by students attempting to sit for longer periods of time than the body was naturally made to sit. The standing breaks increase blood circulation, which helps wakefulness. Comfort is maintained and we avoid the light sleep state hypnosis problem mentioned earlier.

The transitions between sitting and standing in this method are an opportunity to practice meditation in action. Normally, unless we are physically ill, our waking lives are spent in motion and activity. Meditation must not be thought of as something that is only done in a physically rigid state, far removed from the world of work and play. The goal is to become meditative continuously so that your very being becomes cosmically conscious permanently and irrevocably. When you stand up and sit down during meditation sessions, feel the inner flow of meditation continue. Observe that your body is moving, but your basic existential identity remains the same.

## **The Recliner Chair Method**

Sitting for long periods of time in the traditional Asian cross-legged position is uncomfortable for most Western students of meditation. This physical discomfort, which does nothing in itself to aid meditation, can be entirely eliminated through the use of a recliner chair. The Recliner Chair Method is the most healthful method of sitting as it avoids blocking vital blood circulation in the legs, yet has 100% of the benefits of sitting on the floor in the full lotus position with back held rigidly straight.

Every living cell in your body produces energy, and when you increase blood flow to your legs you increase the amount of energy produced by your leg muscles. This is significant because during meditation sessions you become acutely aware that your entire physical energy output is one unified phenomena. Using this method students who cannot comfortably sit for 20 minutes on the floor are often able to sit for one full hour or even longer without back pain, numbness, or leg cramps. I highly recommend the Recliner Chair Method as the first choice sitting method for all Western students of meditation.

Contrary to popular belief, sitting with the back held rigidly straight does nothing to aid meditation. The energy that rises up the back during meditation sessions is like water in a garden hose. If you gently bend the hose into a mild arch the flow of water will not be affected in any perceptible way. With the Recliner Chair Method the back is held fairly straight in relationship to itself, but rests at an off-angle in relationship to the floor rather than exactly perpendicular to the floor as in the full lotus position.

In addition to the solid physical body that has weight and form, human beings have a second body of energy created by the active energy content of the total human nervous system. The electric like energy of the second body is constantly being washed out through our hands and feet. Locking the hands and feet together can stop this energy loss, creating a closed loop of energy that builds up over time. The conserved energy is needed to strengthen the second energy body and push us higher into meditation. The Recliner Chair Method is more effective than the full lotus position in recycling second body energy, and is therefore the fastest acting and most powerful sitting method available. [See an explanation of the second energy body in [\*The Realms of Consciousness\*](#).]

With this method you sit in a recliner chair with the bare soles of your feet pressed against each other and your legs relaxed, knees pointed out to the sides of the chair. Shoes and socks should be removed for best results. If your feet

get cold, drape a towel or light blanket over your feet to keep them warm. Hands can be locked together, lying comfortably in your lap, or better yet, pressed against the center of your chest, one on top of the other over the center of your emotional heart. By using this technique energy that is normally washed out through your hands is channeled directly into your heart center, which fortifies both your heart center and your hara (belly center) simultaneously, as all of your centers are connected. The exact internal wiring of your centers and their electrochemical relationships to corresponding nerve bundles in the brain are not currently understood. Fortunately, you do not have to scientifically understand the phenomena of internal psychic centers to enjoy their benefits.

The Recliner Chair Method can be used in conjunction with any of the sitting meditation techniques described on this Web page and usually eliminate the need for the sit-stand method mentioned earlier. On occasion I have had such intense meditation sessions using this technique that I lost track of time and meditated for two hours straight without the slightest physical discomfort. At the end of the session I easily stood up, with no numbness, soreness, or physical discomfort of any kind.

### **What do you do while sitting?**

The most basic approach to meditation is to relax, let go, and do nothing. Surrender to the moment and watch yourself as a silent witness. If thoughts come to mind, then observe the thoughts without adding to them by your active participation. Be a detached and passive observer and simply feel your most basic fundamental being. This inherently immense entity has been respectfully called "the ground of being."

The enlightened teacher J. Krishnamurti used the term "choiceless awareness" to describe his own meditation method. This means being conscious without the thought process choosing something smaller than your vast fundamental being to focus on. Consciousness is like a glass ball floating in the depth of space. Light and sensory input flows into the field of consciousness from all directions. When you think, you focus your attention on just one area of sensory input, or you create a thought from memory stored within the brain. With choiceless awareness you are not thinking or remembering, just floating and letting sensory input flow through you from all

directions without manipulating that input with the thought process. You live in the moment and become totally open. This openness attracts energy from all sides of the universe, which pushes you even higher.

Krishnamurti's choiceless awareness is the same "methodless method" that Zen monks call "mindfulness." Hindu yogis sometimes call it "one pointed vision." A more accurate term might be **one object vision**. This means that you observe yourself, the sky, the trees, and the entire universe as one object. You no longer see the world as a multitude of parts and disconnected events. Instead, you accurately perceive the observer and the observed as exactly the same thing, with no artificial wall of separation blocking the limits of consciousness. This singular entity becomes acutely aware of itself in all its vastness. The one cosmic being, as Krishnamurti said, is "beyond time" and is "untouched by thought." The revered sage Ramana Maharshi described it as "infinite" and "bigger than the human race."

Another useful method is to lend special awareness to the breathing process felt in the belly. Just behind and below your navel (belly button) lies the hara, which is felt as an ethereal ball of energy. The hara is a natural balancing point of your consciousness that can be thought of as the center of your being. Subjectively and poetically speaking, the hara is where man and universe meet. It is the gateway where we merge and become **man-universe** and **universe-man**. No one really knows what the hara actually is, but we can use it to our full advantage. Consciously developing a powerful hara center is the most important secret of meditation.

When your consciousness is centered in the hara instead of the head, your thinking process slows down and you can relax in the expanded world of pure being. Trying to stop distracting thoughts through will power alone leads to more thoughts and a self-defeating inner struggle. By transferring your center of awareness to the hara, thoughts gradually disappear on their own without inner conflict. That is why you see Buddha statues with a big belly. It is an esoteric message that the hara is the key to meditation.

Sit quietly and focus on your belly as it moves in and out as you breathe. Over time the hara point will become more noticeable as your meditation grows stronger. Sudden emergencies, such as near collisions on the highway, tend to activate the hara center. We often get a "gut reaction" from sudden danger. You can nourish the feeling of the hara by simply paying passive attention to it. This relaxed concentration is very close to doing nothing, yet it is still a subtle effort. Drinking herb tea or hot water before meditation sessions

relaxes the gut and facilitates awareness of the hara. Overeating and consuming cold drinks tends to make hara awareness more difficult.

Here is a [picture of Ramana Maharshi](#). If you look deeply into the photograph you can sense his hara point. Energy from all corners of the universe is flooding into his powerful hara center. Observe the look of sublime contentment on his face. Those interested in the phenomena of the hara may be amused by [my unproven theory about the hara](#).

One can also concentrate on the heart center or the forehead center during formal meditation sessions. The forehead center may simply be the frontal lobes of the brain, which are known to become activated by meditation. I refuse to use the corny old "third eye" label. The hara, heart, and forehead center are all somehow connected, but I suggest you maintain healthy skepticism as to the old Asian explanations of exactly how they are connected. If you activate the heart or forehead center, the hara will automatically become energized.

The forehead center can be physically stimulated by gently rubbing the fingertips on the skull at a centerline spot just above the hairline. The forehead center internally feels like it is just behind the upper forehead, but I have found its most effective finger stimulation spot to be higher into the front of the hairline. If you use the full palm of the hand instead of just the fingertips, however, then placing the palm directly on the upper forehead seems to work best. This may vary from person to person as our skulls and exact brain locations are all a little different. I therefore suggest you experiment as you gain progress. Trying to stimulate the forehead center before you feel a great deal of inner energy is probably a waste of time. It is not the physical touch that does the work. It is the energy coming off the palm and fingers that reaches the target.

### **Sweeping House**

This easy technique is designed to quickly sweep the clutter of thoughts from your mind. It is one of my favorite techniques, and I am continually amazed at how much it helps with so little effort. It can be used at the start of formal sitting meditation sessions, or you can continue repeating the method every ten minutes during the meditation session itself.



Begin by placing both hands behind your head. Rest your hands at the point where the neck and head meet. Then quickly sweep your hands over the top of your head. Imagine that your hands are gathering up all your thoughts as they move across the top of your skull. When your hands reach just below your forehead, use a flicking motion to throw your hands away from your face. Feel as if all of your thoughts are being swept out of your head and thrown out into empty space. Repeat this rapidly between ten and thirty times as needed. While accomplishing the sweeping motion, feel that your center of consciousness is dropping down from your head to your hara center in your belly. Rest in your hara center as you continue to meditate.

### **Sweeping House with a Kicker**

A variation of the sweeping house technique is to add a breathing stage after the sweeping stage is complete. Place your right palm (reverse hands if you are left-handed) on your upper forehead and place your left palm on the back of the right hand. Now take four to seven deep breaths through the nose and feel as if you are drawing the air all the way down to your belly. Fully exhale in a normal and relaxed fashion after each breath. This breathing technique is not the bastrika method used in traditional yoga. It is ordinary deep breathing done with intensity and fullness. After exhaling the last breath, sit motionless for a few moments with your hands still on your upper forehead. Cooperate with any upward flow of energy you may feel. This energetic method can be done every ten minutes during an hour long sitting meditation session to create a safe and effective kundalini technique.

**WARNING:** Avoid the use of mantras and long repetitive chanting. Repeating the same words over and over is a method of forgetfulness that will bore the mind and leads to the light sleep state hypnosis problem mentioned earlier. I would define a mantra as the repetition of words, usually meaningless, for a period of two minutes or more. Mantras have traditionally been used for hours on end by students who become mentally calmed and dulled by their use.

Mantras have proven to be medically helpful for some because they can unleash hormones that temporarily calm the mind. Mantras are healthier than taking tranquilizers, but are fundamentally different from meditation, which relies on the purifying fire of self-observation. Self-observation is a difficult



task that requires courage and an endurance of character and spirit. Real meditation has the real payoff of leading to a naturally calm and expanded state of consciousness, not just an artificially silenced mind that remains fundamentally shallow.

### **A Self-Inquiry Incantation**

The use of meaningful incantations is quite different than mantra use and can help bring consciousness to greater clarity. Words can help because our minds are organic hybrid analog-digital computers that process symbols, and words are symbols. The words that deepen meditation form a strategic questioning, not a mantra.

Ramana Maharshi was a beloved Indian teacher who reached enlightenment through self-inquiry, by asking the most fundamental question "Who am I?" Here is a self-inquiry technique that expands Ramana Maharshi's method to make it even more powerful. Speak out loud the following incantation with total intensity before and/or during formal sitting meditation sessions. By the term "total intensity" I mean the same level of intensity you would feel if you were just told that you only had one hour left to live. Be emotional, be Italian, use your hands and body language if it helps. Plead with the universe the following question.

**What is this ball of consciousness? What is this ball of consciousness?**  
**What is this ball of consciousness?** - *You can repeat this question more than three times if the spirit moves you. Go with the flow.*

**I am not this library of memories. I have no history. I have no biography.**

**I am the space. I have always been the space, and I crush these bonds of attachment now!**

When speaking the words, "**I crush these bonds of attachment now!**," make your right hand into a fist and hit your upturned left palm with it like a hammer hitting an anvil upon saying the word "**now!**" Reverse hands if you are left-handed. Do not overdo it and hurt your hands. Just hit forcefully enough to produce a cracking sound, which adds drama and helps wake up the central nervous system.

Resonate the words deep inside you without thinking of intellectual explanations of who you are. Just asking this question is purifying and ennobling. Self-inquiry is an innocent and fundamental endeavor, and you need an innocently naked mind to see reality directly without the distortions of memory and thought. You can use this questioning technique only at the beginning of formal sitting meditation sessions, or you can repeat the incantation every ten minutes during sessions to help keep your energy focused.

Over time you will find the words become a trigger mechanism, which allows you to instantly drop all peripheral involvement and come home to your primordial eternal being. We all have the same essential being and that being is cosmic. No one is left out of this universe. If you are part of the universe, you are all of the universe! The small 'I' is dropped and only the big 'I' remains. Then you can have a good belly laugh, and that is the way I end most of my own meditation sessions. I meditate until I start laughing from the hara center. Then I know I am cooked!

A gentler, less rigorous approach to this method is to simply repeat the question, **"What is this ball of consciousness?"** about a dozen times. This small amount of repetition will enhance and center your consciousness rather than dull it. For many students this softer approach is all that is needed.

Word exercises are not for everyone. If you try them and feel nothing then concentrate on other methods first. As you slowly change your methods will change with you. A method that is unusable now may be of great help to you in the future.

## **Mirror Gazing**

Some students find the use of a mirror virtually doubles the power of their meditation sessions. Sit in front of a mirror and gaze into the reflected image, setting your focus just above the head so that you view the wall behind you. Looking directly at the face or eyes may be too intense an experience for many students and may lead to silly concern about personal appearance. Using this technique one only views the physical body as a shadowy peripheral silhouette. Continue gazing for twenty minutes, allowing the eyes to deeply relax their focus.

Enjoy the mirror gazing for twenty minutes, then stand for two minutes, maintaining the heightened awareness as you change position. Then resume sitting in quiet meditation for a further twenty minutes with eyes closed. This mirror gazing technique takes forty-two minutes, but may be extended to one full hour if desired, with eyes open and eyes closed sections remaining equal. Please practice this mirror gazing method no more than once a day to avoid eyestrain. Strong meditation techniques are medicine and you should not overdose on any one particular method.

Mirror gazing is a form of **tratak**, the ancient yogic practice of fixing one's gaze on an object with total intensity. You may practice tratak by staring at a candle's flame, a distant tree, the picture of an enlightened teacher, or any object that is pleasant to view. While practicing tratak one must remain motionless and allow oneself to become totally absorbed by the object you are viewing.

### **Eye Gazing**

To practice this technique you must have a partner of the opposite sex, preferably someone you love. It is similar to the mirror gazing technique described above except that you look into the eyes of your loved one. Sit together, staring softly into your partner's eyes for twenty minutes. Then stand silently for two minutes. Then sit in quiet meditation with eyes closed for a further twenty minutes. This technique can readily lead to romantic intimacy, so pick your partner carefully.

### **Cathartic Dancing Meditation**

Cathartic Dancing Meditation is a cosmic powerhouse that can be used by students in good health with a normal cardiovascular system. As it is a physically strenuous exercise, one should get a complete physical examination by a competent doctor before experimenting with this technique. Explain the method to your doctor and ask if it would be physically dangerous for you to do. He probably won't understand your motives for wanting to do it, but he can tell you if he thinks your heart can safely handle it. As with jogging or mountain climbing, you must practice this method at your own risk.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation is similar to Rajneesh Dynamic Meditation but is simpler, easier to do, and is more likely to keep you interested month after month, year after year. Neither method is really new. Sufis, Druids, and countless other esoteric and tribal cultures have used similar techniques for centuries. Most students will benefit from doing Cathartic Dancing Meditation daily for a period of between one to five years. After five years it has usually done its job and the student can then concentrate on more subtle meditation methods.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation changes you from head to toe and benefits all the other meditation methods you practice. It also helps develop a powerful hara center. I am reluctant to bring up the subject of kundalini (see definition near the bottom of the page) because of the common misrepresentations of its manifestations. I feel compelled to inform you, however, that this physically vigorous meditation method is the most powerful kundalini awakening technique I know of. Cathartic Dancing Meditation has three stages and lasts for 40 minutes.

**Stage #1 (ten minutes)** Start by standing with your eyes closed and breathe deep and fast through your nose continuously. If you are only physically capable of doing deep breathing for five minutes, then reduce the length of the first stage without feeling guilty. Remember that you are doing this method to help your meditation, not to physically injure yourself. Allow your body to move freely as you breathe. You can jump up and down, sway back and forth, or use any physical motion that helps you pump more oxygen into your lungs.

**Stage #2 (twenty minutes)** The second stage is a celebration of catharsis and wild and spontaneous dancing. Totally let go and act as an ancient human being dancing in tribal celebration. Energetic, nonverbal background music is recommended. African tribal drum music works especially well. You may roll on the ground and do strange spontaneous body movements. Allow your body to move within the limits of not hurting yourself or others. For once in your life screaming is encouraged. You must act out any anger you may have in a safe way, such as beating the earth with your hands. All the suppressed emotions from your subconscious mind are to be released. If at anytime during the second stage you feel that your energy level is starting to decline, you can resume deep and fast breathing to give yourself a boost.

**Stage #3 (ten minutes)** This stage is complete quiet and relaxation. Flop down on your back, get comfortable, and just let go. Be as if a dead man totally surrendered to the cosmos. Enjoy the tremendous energy you have unleashed

in the first two stages and be a silent witness to it. Observe the feeling of the ocean flowing into the drop. Become the ocean.

This spontaneous dancing meditation technique is intended to grow with the student and change as the student changes. After a few years of vigorously practicing this method, the first two stages of the meditation may drop away spontaneously. You may then begin the meditation by taking a few deep breaths and immediately go deep into the ecstasy of the third stage. If practiced correctly this method is health giving and fun.

Almost all Westerners are head oriented and emotionally repressed. For us a chaotic, spontaneous, and emotionally cleansing technique like Cathartic Dancing Meditation is vital for serious progress to be made quickly. The physical benefits of this technique obviate any need for hatha yoga or traditional kundalini yoga methods. I strongly recommend that the Cathartic Dancing Meditation technique only be used in combination with traditional quiet sitting meditation methods. While active meditation methods can be very helpful, they are not complete systems in themselves. If you rely on active meditation techniques alone you will only be doing half of the internal work that needs to be done.

**WARNING:** Obviously, one must practice Cathartic Dancing Meditation in a safe location and not near the edge of a cliff or on a hard surface where one might fall and break one's skull. A large room or hall with thick carpeting is good. Outdoors in the early morning on a soft and well-tended lawn with group participation is best. Do it on an empty stomach and avoid falling into dangerous objects such as windows. It is allowable to briefly open one's eyes occasionally to maintain your location. Create a safety zone around your dancing and spontaneous body movements. Be courteous to neighbors and delete the screaming if others will hear it.

### **Total Awareness**

This advanced method is recommended for those students who have practiced other meditation techniques long enough to gain a feeling of floating bodilessness. Begin this method by sitting with eyes fully open. Softly gaze at a blank wall, or more preferably, look out a window at a distant vista. With the mind's eye (the eye of consciousness behind your body's purely physical eyes)

define your field of visual consciousness as a circle. Imagine the top of your field of consciousness as the 12 o'clock position on a clock, and the bottom of your field of consciousness as the 6 o'clock position. With your mind's eye, not your physical eyes, slowly sweep your attention clockwise from the top 12 o'clock position down to the 6 o'clock position, then on to the 9 o'clock position, and then back up to the 12 o'clock position. Repeat this process in the counterclockwise direction. Mentally strain to observe the very outer edges of your visual field of consciousness where the light of consciousness turns into the darkness of empty space. Go on repeating this process until you feel you have had enough.

This is a powerful awareness exercise, not an eye exam, and that is why it is recommended only for students with a number of years of experience in meditation. After practicing this method for some time one can begin to transform the method into one of sudden expansion of awareness. You can gain the ability to perceive the complete 360 degrees of the outer edges of your consciousness in one jump. This feels like stepping back, literally out of your own mind, and looking back into your mind from a close and friendly distance.

You become identified with the Void, and the perception of deep space around the flame of consciousness makes the flame grow brighter. This esoteric method is difficult to fully explain, and there are aspects of it that you will have to learn on your own through practice.

One discovers from this technique that our visual field of consciousness is roughly football shaped, with greater width than height. This is because our brains evolved out of a need to look for food and danger more on the horizontal axis than on the vertically axis. To survive you need to be aware of what is on your right and left more than what is directly below your feet or above your head. This powerful awareness method has a deprogramming effect that allows one to appreciate the play of existence as an ever-changing drama. You feel as if you are in it but also out of it and beyond it.

### **You can be creative**

After you have become comfortable with the meditation techniques individually, you can learn to incorporate them simultaneously to multiply their effectiveness. For example, combining hara awareness and the use of the self-inquiry incantation can be an extremely powerful method. There are no rigid one-size-fits-all meditation techniques. Follow your intuition and let the methods evolve to fit your own individuality. Don't take the time suggestions

for methods as set limits. If you desire to extend your meditation sessions, then go with the flow.

### **How long should I meditate?**

The time a person needs to spend in formal meditation sessions to gain maximum benefit depends on ever-changing individual circumstances. If you are meditating with a group you will gain from the group energy and go further with less effort. If you are fortunate enough to be living close to an enlightened teacher you may be able to absorb some of his high energy without any effort at all. If you are meditating alone, without support from others, you will have to do all the heavy lifting yourself.

My general recommendation is that a single forty minute meditation session practiced every day is a minimum effort, and scientists have proven that amount of meditation is enough to physically enlarge portions of the brain involved in awareness. Meditation only works for those who are hungry for it, and if you cannot spare forty minutes a day you will probably not gain substantial benefits. If you wish to go faster, with clearly recognizable progress, then I suggest two or three formal meditation sessions every day. A specific recommendation for young, physically fit beginners would be to practice Cathartic Dancing Meditation in the morning and one of the quiet sitting meditations at night.

It is of paramount importance to practice mindfulness throughout the day. To be of any real value, meditation must become a full-time way of living rather than a strictly segregated activity. Choose methods that make you feel more positive. Meditation should be a form of cosmic hedonism, not a penance one must perform as an obligation.

### **The wanting mechanism**

What keeps us diverted from meditation in the here and now? Look inside your mind and find the wanting mechanism. The wanting mechanism continuously constructs images of new experiences the mind desires, derived from memories of the past. The mind becomes enamored with these new fantasy images and is diverted away from what actually is, here and now. The eternal cosmic consciousness exists here and now, never in the future and never



in the past. Future and past are illusory and do not exist in any real physical form outside of projections of our own minds. What exists now is everything, and you already have it.

Wanting is part of life, creativity, family building, wealth creation, and the survival instinct. In the sense of preserving the human race on planet earth, wanting is a very good thing. In the sense of an individual becoming an awakened Buddha, wanting is a hindrance. Wanting creates duality, the wanter and that which is desired. Siddhartha Gautama taught that desire is a root cause of suffering. The question is, how many of us can and should take the last steps to enlightenment by dropping the wanting mechanism entirely?

Not wanting means not wanting anything; not just dropping the desire for sex, money, and power, but also dropping the desire for justice, family, and nation. It is not what you want that matters, it is the wanting mechanism itself that is the barrier. Deep meditation is a giant leap beyond logic and the norms of society. It is dissolving into infinity and oblivion and not coming back. Very few humans have been able to manage that radical transformation totally, and that is why enlightenment will always be an extremely rare phenomenon. Ending the wanting mechanism brings time to a halt, annihilates the future and the past, and expands consciousness to the far reaches of the universe.

If everyone in the world suddenly became enlightened, in my opinion, the human race would come to an end. There would be a lack of sufficient desire to keep people motivated enough to have families, raise children, grow crops, and protect society from all the natural threats, from disease to ecological disaster. That said, I certainly believe that enlightenment is a desirable goal for those who really want it. But you can see the impossibility of the situation. When you "want" enlightenment your wanting mechanism is still active and enlightenment will not happen to you. So we can breathe easy that everyone in the world will not become enlightened, all at the same time, anytime soon.

Ask yourself these questions.

- 1) If you want something, how can you stop thinking about it?
- 2) If you don't want anything, what is there to think about?
- 3) If you don't want anything, is there anything to be angry about?
- 4) If you don't want anything, is there anything to make you unhappy?

Rocks and other inanimate objects do not want and they do not suffer, but they are unconscious and dead. How does a living human being enter a no-wanting state while fully conscious and filled to the brim with life energy? That is the incredible contradiction and difficulty in becoming enlightened.

At some point in your own practice you may clearly see that wanting is a barrier to meditation. That realization may hit you suddenly like a freight train (my blood is still on the tracks) or gradually creep into your consciousness over time. Only when you can perceive this very clearly should you try to step back from the wanting mechanism, otherwise you will suppress desires and lead a false life. Stepping back from the wanting mechanism is a form of intense self-observation, not suppression.

### **Things to do, things to avoid, and things to consider**

- Work in groups when possible as group energy can multiply the energy of an individual many times over.
- Remember that meditation is an escape to reality, not an escape from reality. Avoid any guru or group that asks you to deny truth.
- Don't limit yourself to just one teacher. The single guru approach can lead to cult thinking with its small mindedness and us vs. them syndrome.
- Hatha yoga can make you more energetic and fit for long meditation sessions, but do not take it too seriously or become obsessed with extreme gymnastics. The easy and basic hatha yoga exercises work best. Extreme kundalini yoga exercises that involve fast breathing in bizarre positions may be dangerous and are not recommended. Men should never sit with their heels pressed behind the testicles, as some yogis and Buddhist monks instruct, as this practice is unhealthful and can cause sterility.
- Having a separate room used exclusively for meditation can be very helpful. It is possible to build up a vibration in a room so that the moment you enter it your mind becomes silent and ready for deep meditation.
- Avoid fads (see [New Age therapists kill girl](#)) and complicated philosophies that give your mind more to think about. Meditation is a step beyond the thought process. No philosophy can adequately describe man's place in the universe. Concentrate on meditation in this moment and not on ancient scriptures. Many old scriptures were written by

madmen and fools and have gained respect from society simply because they are so old and dusty.

- It is essential to maintain a nutritionally adequate diet without becoming a food fanatic. Most people find that a semi vegetarian diet supplemented with dairy products and eggs is generally best for meditation, but not essential. If you have a medical problem, such as hypoglycemia, you may have to eat meat just to survive. Even the Atkins high fat, high protein diet is perfectly compatible with meditation.
- Food should not be made the fundamental basis of your practice of meditation. Adolf Hitler was a vegetarian, yet his diet did not make him virtuous or even nonviolent. Most Tibetan lamas and Asian Zen monks eat meat, so obviously meat consumption is not a serious obstacle to cosmic consciousness. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that a vegetarian diet extends lifespan or improves health. Nations with the highest longevity rates, such as Japan, Sweden, and Australia are all populated by avid meat eaters.
- Fasting is a waste of time and will weaken you physically. Like taking LSD, fasting creates strangely entertaining short-term experiences but produces no long term benefits and can cause permanent neurological damage. When you fast your body literally feeds upon itself. If your brain needs protein for repair work, your body will be directed to eat away its own muscles, or worse, your own peripheral nerve cells. People fast because their heads feel cluttered with thoughts and they hope planned starvation will purify their minds. The human body is made of mud (water and dirt), so the idea of a perfect, spiritually purified physical body is misguided. The way to end the cluttered feeling is to change the way your brain and energy body function, and this can be accomplished through meditation techniques.
- I do not recommend solitary meditation retreats longer than seven days duration. To maintain health one must eat a balanced diet and get rigorous physical exercise every day. To maintain full brain function one must also get mental exercise through interaction with other human beings and through problem solving. If you meditate in isolation for months or years your body and brain will become deconditioned and atrophy. You may develop strange hallucinations and delusions and come back physically weaker with a measurably lower IQ.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. Carlos Castaneda was a talented fiction writer who misled many people. Drugs are not an effective path to enlightenment, but they are a quick path to misery and insanity.
- Have sex when you wish and do not force celibacy upon yourself in the hopes that it will lead to enlightenment. To meditate one must be in a

very natural and relaxed state of mind without repression or tension. Celibacy can only be of value if it occurs spontaneously without effort. The majority of famous Eastern gurus who have claimed celibacy publicly have practiced intercourse privately. Why make sex a big secret and why have two faces? Many fully enlightened humans have had sexual relations even after enlightenment.

- Practice choiceless awareness (one object vision, mindfulness) throughout the day. Meditation must become as continuous and spontaneous as breathing.
- Don't make meditation a competition and drop any hidden agenda you may have to use it to control others. Legitimate motives for meditation are the desire for tranquility and ecstasy, freedom from suffering, and the adventure of self-exploration.
- Don't turn your meditation into a business. People who make a profit from intercourse have turned something beautiful into something ugly. Those who make money from meditation have transformed a noble path into a sordid back alley. Whether you are a sexual prostitute or a spiritual prostitute, the fundamental quality of your mind is the same.
- Be completely honest and have just one face, not two.
- One of the most dangerous thoughts you can have is to think that you have lost your ego!
- For every action there is a reaction, not just in theoretical physics, but in ordinary human life as well. When you create positive actions you will eventually reap positive reactions for yourself and for others. In this way what we call ethics and morality are woven into the very fabric of the universe, right down to the subatomic level.

## **Enlightenment**

The fastest meditation method is to live in the company of an enlightened human being. Enlightened teachers can expand your consciousness without the slightest effort on your part. All you need to do is to be open to the spontaneous transfer of energy. Fully enlightened human are very rare. There may have been as few as seven fully enlightened teachers in the now past 20th century. I do not know of any fully enlightened teachers still living today (perhaps U.G. Krishnamurti?), but that does not mean they do not exist. More enlightened teachers will be coming in the future and it is your challenge to find them while avoiding the many fakes.

When it comes to gurus, even fully enlightened gurus, take the best and leave the rest. No human being has ever been perfect and without major flaws and limitations. [see [\*The Ridiculous Teachings of Wrong Way Rajneesh\*](#)] Only myths can give you the illusion of perfection. That is why most of society continues to worship invented myths rather than accepting reality, as it is, warts and all. Enlightened humans are vastly expanded human beings, not perfect human beings.

It is my educated opinion that the traditional guru-disciple relationship is now passé and inappropriate for Western students of meditation. The East has always had an imperial and authoritarian model for the teacher-student relationship. The West must develop its own more democratic traditions based on science and fact, not on myth and tradition. Be a devoted disciple, but make your guru the total life experience itself, not just a single fallible human being. Use human teachers as temporary tools on your path to self-realization, but do not allow yourself to become the captive servant of one fallible human mind.

\* Definition: kundalini (kɔ̃n'de-lê'nê) noun of Hindu origin. The ancient Hindus defined kundalini as a process whereby sexual energy that lies dormant at the base of the spine is activated and directed upward to the top of the head. A scientific, neurology based explanation for the kundalini experience has not yet been found.

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## Useful links

[U.G. Krishnamurti](#) speaks more truth than any teacher I know of. I have never met him and do not know if he is "enlightened."

[Jiddu Krishnamurti](#) was a dry, publicly humorless teacher who was uniquely lovable. His powerful vibrations can still be felt at Arya Vihara, Krishnamurti's former home in Ojai, California.

[Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti](#) This intriguing book is about J. Krishnamurti's personal life.

[Ramana Maharshi](#) Every major religious group in India agreed that Ramana Maharshi was enlightened.

[The "God" Part of the Brain](#), by Matthew Alper. Alper details the logical scientific argument that spirituality is the product of genetics and biochemistry, and that God, soul, and reincarnation are inventions of the human brain, used as a device to relieve the tremendous stress of death awareness.

**Note** Opinions expressed on this page must be viewed as the ideas of an ordinary student of meditation. While I truly believe everything I say, you should not believe anything unless you see it, feel it, and know it for yourself. I make no claims of infallibility. In fact I absolutely claim fallibility.

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