

# simple intentions™

## MEDITATION TIPS

There is a scientific definition of meditation as suggested by Julie Brefczynski-Lewis that states that meditation is about mental training practices. There are many types of meditation designed to train different faculties of the mind. In Mindfulness Meditation, our goal is to familiarize ourselves with two specific mental processes: Attention and Meta-attention.

### ATTENTION

- Attention is something we all understand. William James defines it as, “taking possession of the mind, in clear and vivid form”.

### META-ATTENTION

- Meta-attention is attention of attention, the ability to pay attention to attention itself. It's the ability to know that your attention has wandered away. For example, you are paying attention to an object, and eventually your attention wanders away to something else. After a while, there is something in your mind that “clicks” to let you know your attention has wandered. That faculty is meta-attention.
- Meta-attention is the secret to concentration. When your meta-attention becomes strong, you will be able to recover a wandering attention quickly and often. When you recover your attention quickly and often enough, you create the effect of continuous attention, which is concentration.

### WHAT DOES ATTENTION TRAINING DO FOR YOU?

- It helps you become alert and relaxed at the same time, it settles your mind. Your mind becomes increasingly focused and stable, but in a way that is relaxing.
- Snowglobe analogy: Imagine you stop shaking the globe and let it rest on a table, the snow settles, the water appears clear. This is an analogy to meditation: we temporarily stop agitating the mind and eventually our mind becomes calm and clear.
- And when the mind is calm and clear at the same time, you may find that happiness spontaneously arises as a default state of mind.
- When you notice this, you can also become aware that happiness is not something you pursue, it is something you allow. Happiness is just being.

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## THE MEDITATION PROCESS

1. Start by creating an intention, a reason for wanting to abide in mindfulness such as to reduce stress, increase wellbeing, create conditions for world peace on so on. (The act of creating good intentions is itself a form of meditation. Every time you create an intention, you are subtly forming or reinforcing a mental habit.)
2. Follow your breath. Just bring a gentle attention to the process of breathing. The classical analogy of this process is a guard standing at the city gates watching people go in and out of the city. He does nothing, he only watches people go in and out with quiet vigilance. In the same way, you can think of your mind as a guard vigilantly watching your breath go in and out.
3. At this point, your attention may gather. You may find yourself in a state where your mind is calm and concentrated. With enough practice, this state can last a long time. But for most people, this may go on for a few seconds and then we fall into distraction. We may start ruminating, worrying, fantasizing.
4. After a while, we realize our attention has wandered. The default reaction of most people at this point is self-criticism. The first thing to do is simply regain attentional focus by bringing attention back to the process of breathing.
5. Become aware of your attitude toward yourself. If possible, shift the attitude toward self-directed kindness and curiosity.
6. And finally, return to following your breath. And whenever it is helpful, remind yourself of your intention.

## POSTURE GUIDANCE

- You can meditate in any posture you want: sitting, standing, walking or lying down.
- The most important thing is to find a posture that is comfortable for you and helps you remain alert and relaxed at the same time.
- If sitting, you may want to have your feet on the floor, hands on your thighs. You can close your eyes if you wish, or keep them slightly opened, unfocused, slightly looking downwards. Either way is fine. Allow your spine to lengthen, your neck to lengthen. Shoulders relaxed. You may want to tuck your chin slightly. Closing your mouth, but not clenching your teeth. Again sitting in a way that feels both alert and relaxed.
- Find the optimal point between effort and relaxation. Too much effort makes it tiring and unsustainable, while too little effort causes you to lose your grip in your attention.