

*What You Need to Know Before*

*Beginning*

*Meditation*



*Savannah Kruse*

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# *What You Need to Know Before Beginning Meditation*

## **The Origins of Meditation**

Meditation has been in practice for several millennia, apparently for even longer than recorded history can document. While we may not know exactly when it began, but we do know that many ancient civilizations contributed to today's meditation exercises.

India is well known traditionally for their meditation practices. Many Hindi scholars have written about meditation and its benefits for centuries. Some of the better-known Hindi texts include the Vedas and the Yoga Sutras written by Patanzali.

One of the most influential sources of meditation comes from Siddharta Gautama, also known as Buddha. In 500 B.C. his goal was to better life through the practice of meditation. His teachings spread rapidly throughout Asia and had spread throughout the world in short order.

Eastern cultures have practiced meditation for many centuries. The Western world didn't catch on to the benefits until much later. It was the mid 20th century before meditation became popular with Western cultures.

Once the many benefits of meditation became known, people from all walks of life began using meditation. Meditation is used in many religious practices, although some do not use the spiritual aspect anymore. These practices usually focus on the health benefit factors, and also find value in how meditation can help them in the fast paced world that we live in. today

Even if you do not use the spiritual aspect of meditation, it is still a great method to improve your health and well being. In fact, this is one of the core benefits of meditation.

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## **What is Meditation?**

A definition accepted in most dictionaries for meditation is “continuous and profound contemplation or musing on a subject or series of subjects of a deep or abstruse nature.”

This is really reflection.

Meditation generally involves one consciously controlling wandering thoughts while calming and focusing the mind, controlling the breath, and learning heightened sensory awareness.

Meditation results in reaching a state of mind\* that is a bit different from the one we usually function in. It is this state of mind that helps us integrate our conscious and subconscious, working to bring them into alignment with each other.

This technique is simple and takes only a short while to learn. It can help you feel better, relax away the stresses of everyday life, improve your health, and be happier – and those are just some of the benefits of meditation!

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## **What Can Meditation Do For Me?**

### **Practical Benefits of Meditation**

We live in a very fast paced world, and this can be quite taxing on our psyche. Things happen fast and there is a lot to take in around us constantly. Sometimes, we are not able to react as quickly as we would like. It is easy to become overwhelmed, and even possible to lose our ability to make split second decisions.

It doesn't have to be this way. We can learn to slow down and to calm our body. When stress builds up it can affect the way that we deal with other people and situations.

Meditation can help us become calm, and we can use it to carry that calm into stressful situations. When we are calm and in control of ourselves, it is easier to concentrate, focus, and manage all the stress and pressures that we deal with.

Because it has been associated with many religions, some people think that meditation is a religious ritual. This is not the case. Meditation can be used without a religious background or belief.

Meditation is a means to relax, focus, and rejuvenate one's self. It has been used to help control pain, relieve stress, quiet the mind, gain clarity and insight into the self or situations, and to improve health, amongst other things.

Many people practice meditation for different reasons. Even if you don't have any specific concerns at the time, this practice can help improve your health overall, simply because of the inherent ability of meditation to alleviate stress.

If your world has gotten so busy and full that you are finding it difficult to stay focused throughout the day, meditation may provide great benefits for you. The calm quiet state of mind it provides can help you sort through and prioritize your thoughts and time.\*



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## **Spiritual Benefits of Meditation**

Meditation is an art that has been around since the dawn of the age of man. This is because there is no substitute for meditation. Nothing else bestows the many wonderful blessings that meditation brings.

The mind of one who meditates is like the easy, leisurely flow of a large river. If your usual state of mind seems more like Niagara Falls to you, you will find that meditation can help you enter a state of mind that is peaceful, calm, and reflective.

Meditation opens up the channels of communication between all levels (or states) of your mind. You gain access to the guidance that is coming directly from your true self. This can help you make decisions you will be happy with in the future.

Meditation strips away the layers of false identity that mask your true self. Once you know your true self you can reside in your true nature. This brings forth joy and happiness as it allows you to be at ease with life, existence and yourself.

Finding your true self will give you insight into who you really are and what you really love in life. That is the secret of mastering the art of living and discovering your true talents, gifts and purpose. That which you love, you do for its own sake without the need for reward or accolades. Once you find this, you will live your life with passion, enthusiasm, and purpose.

Meditation improves brain function and physical well-being. Meditation will increase your awareness, allow you to think clearly, and reduce your overall stress level.\*

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## **But I Don't Have Time to Meditate!**

If you believe that you don't have time to meditate, you need to know this:

Meditation can actually help you find **more** time in your day.

How can this be? It takes time to meditate, and you are already so busy. How can taking more time to meditate provide you with more time?

Let's clear up a few things about meditating.

It is true that the first few times you meditate you will probably need to take more time. It takes time to learn any new skill, but as you practice you will become more adept.

It doesn't take long before you learn to reach the "quiet place." Once you learn to do this, you can do it almost instantly and almost any place.

Being able to meditate and reach the meditative state in moments allows you to use meditation to help you focus and get tasks done faster.

You can also use meditation to help you deal with difficult situations and people, reducing the time spent dealing with them. It can also help reduce your stress when dealing with such things.

All you need to get started is 20 – 30 minutes out of your day. If you are having trouble finding the time to get started, here are some suggestions.

Listen to the news on your way to work in the morning, and cut out watching the evening news. That's at least half an hour. Or just avoid the news completely for a few days - this has the additional benefit of keeping you away from the negative influences pervasive in the media.

Turn off the TV for just one show that you can live without for a short time.

Take a bag lunch to work, and use the extra time you would have spent going out for food to practice meditating.

Take a bath instead of a shower, and use the time to practice meditating.

Make a dinner that is a "set and forget" type of meal, and use the time while it cooks to meditate.

As you can see, finding the time to meditate is easy when you set your mind to it.

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## **How Do I Start Meditating?**

Guided meditations\* are a great way to get started meditating.

They are simple to use and walk you through the experience. This can be helpful when you are getting started, because you have a “guide” helping to make sure you are moving the right direction in your practice, and because it can alleviate any stress or worry you might have about getting started on your own.

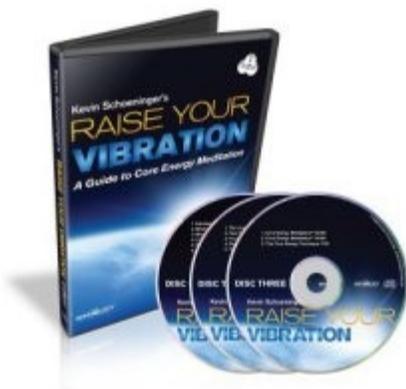
Possibly the hardest thing about getting started meditating is making the time and space to do it.

Set aside the necessary time. You don't need a lot, just 20 – 30 minutes to start with. Find a comfortable chair or other place to relax. You could also use a couch, bed, nice spot in the park on a pretty day, or any other place where you can be undisturbed during your meditation time.

If it helps, put a "do not disturb" sign on the door to the room you are meditating in. If you are having trouble finding undisturbed space anywhere else, try going to the public library and using one of the cubicles there.

Switch your cell phone to silent mode, put on your headphones, press play, and let your mind learn in the stress-free environment of a guided relaxation.

It's very simple and enjoyable to use a guided relaxation or guided meditation. It's very much like having someone there to hold your hand while you learn.



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Meditation is something anyone can learn. Practice these techniques whenever you feel stressed, and it will help you place things in perspective.

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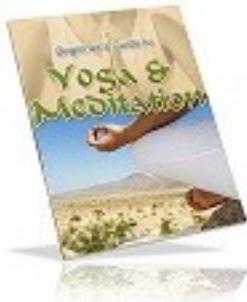
There are many ways to meditate, but all of them can provide similar benefits. The important thing is to do some sort of meditation everyday for a couple of weeks and learn to reach the proper state of mind\*\*. At the end of the two weeks, you may be surprised at how much better you feel about yourself and the things in your life.

This is something positive that you can do for yourself and your mental well being, and it will provide benefits for many years to come. Tell your friends about it, because they too can benefit from practicing meditation. Imagine how the world might change if we all learned meditation techniques that helped us remain calm and resolve problems!

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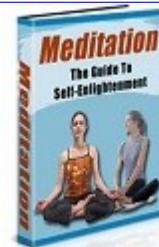


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## **Meditation and Breathing**

Breathing is quite possibly the single most important part of meditation, but it is something that many people who are new to meditation have difficulty learning to do properly.

You may want to spend some time practicing proper breathing techniques before you attempt to learn meditation. Performing breathing can be therapeutic, and with enough practice, this can become your standard way of breathing.

Practicing the breathing methods when you are doing meditation will help you to relax while doing the exercises. Breathing also plays an important role when you are trying to improve your concentration.

So what is the proper way to breathe while meditating?

You must learn to breathe using your diaphragm. To breathe using your diaphragm, draw air into the lungs in a way which will expand the stomach and not the chest.

Focus your mind and take in the air, passing it through your nostrils. Be sure that it is your stomach, not your chest, which is expanding. When you are ready to exhale, do so through your mouth.

The idea is to breathe the good energy in while inhaling, and let the negative energy flow away while exhaling.

It is best to perform these breaths as long, slow intakes of air, allowing the body to absorb all of the inhaled oxygen while simultaneously relaxing you. This will slow down your heart rate and should help you become more relaxed.

This may sound easy, but it can be quite challenging until you get the hang of it. If you are having trouble with it, try some of the following suggestions:

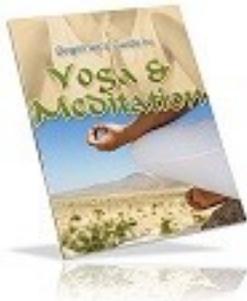
Loosen tight-fitting pants, belts, skirts, and collars as these can interfere with the body's ability to intake air.

Start out just taking slow deep breaths. Once you have the rate of your breathing under control, start focusing on taking air in through your nose and exhaling through your mouth. If you find yourself starting to breathe too quickly, go back to just taking slow breaths until you are breathing slowly again.

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Instead of focusing on inhaling and exhaling, just focus on the sensation of the air passing through your nose and expanding your diaphragm. This is a method you can use to help you “trigger” your meditative state later. It is particularly helpful when the situation is chaotic because it gives you a concrete physical sensation to focus on, making it easier to ignore the chaos and find your center.

Once you learn to control your breathing in this fashion, you can do this anytime and any place with ease. As you become adept with this breathing technique and meditation, you will be able to consciously invoke it, producing an immediate physical response. You can use it to retain control of yourself in any situation, remaining relaxed, calm, and able to think clearly and quickly whenever you need to.

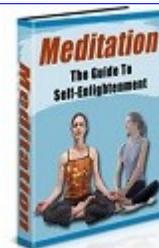


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## **Using Meditation to the Fullest**

Many people who try meditation do so for a short time and then stop. Some may get frustrated with not seeing the results they want quickly, and others may have trouble learning to quiet their mind enough to really get started. It is important that you keep trying!!!

You are a unique individual, and it may take you time to find a meditation that really works well for you. What works for someone else may not be right for you. If you are having trouble getting the hang of it, explore various methods of meditating. You will find one that works for you, and the rewards are well worth the effort.

While you are finding the best meditations for you, here are a few tips that can help you to make the most of your meditation time.

### **A. Use a quiet area when you are meditating.**

You are learning to keep your mind quiet and calm, and it can help you concentrate when you can meditate in a quiet place. Do your best to find a place where you will be free from interruptions and distractions.

### **B. Make sure the room is a comfortable temperature.**

The temperature inside the room you practice in can be quite important. Remember that you will probably be sitting quite still, so make sure the room is warm enough for you to stay comfortable, but not so warm that it will distract you.

### **C. Wear comfortable clothing.**

Tight, constricting clothing can become uncomfortable and distract you. The same may be true of clothing that is too loose and inclined to slide around. If clothing becomes a problem for you while you are learning to meditate, you could try meditating in the bath where you can wear nothing at all.

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## **D. Use a guru or guided meditation recording.**

If you are having trouble learning to meditate, you may want some extra help. A guru can guide you and help you get what you are looking for out of meditation. Guided meditation recordings can help reassure you and guide you through some sessions until you get the hang of it yourself.

## **E. Learn about different meditation techniques.**

Even if you have help, you may still have trouble with meditation. Learning different ways that people meditate can help you find one that works for you, or it may inspire you to come up with your own method.

## **An Important Note about Meditation**

Some people, especially those with significant psychological problems or a history of abuse, may experience feelings of emotional discomfort during meditation or relaxation exercises.

Although this is rare, if you experience emotional discomfort during meditation or relaxation exercises, stop what you're doing and consider talking to your health care professional.

When you meditate, you learn to remove the barriers between your states of consciousness. This means that if you have been keeping distressing things tucked away in the back of your mind, they will start coming to the front during (or sometimes after) meditation.

This can be a good thing, because once these things are back in your conscious awareness, you can start dealing with them in a healthier fashion. But depending on the severity of the trauma, it can be difficult and painful to deal with these issues as they come to the forefront.

If you are experiencing this, you may find that a counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or even a member of your clergy may be helpful in working through these things with you.

Remember, it is important that you seek appropriate help if meditating is causing you emotional discomfort. You are going through a healing process, but you don't have to do it alone.

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## **Sample Meditations**

### **So Ham Meditation**

This mediation technique is super simple yet very effective. It only takes a few minutes to learn and will help you relax away from the stresses of everyday life.

What is the name of this meditation? It is called So Ham, meaning “I am He, He am I.” It is both a prayer and a meditation mantra. A meditation mantra is a spiritually charged word or series of words used as a meditation theme.

To practice the So Ham meditation, do the following:

It is important for your body to be comfortable during this meditation. Find a comfortable chair or use the floor with a soft mat or carpet underneath you.

Sit up straight keeping your spine in a line. It is important not to slouch as it can interfere with your ability to breathe properly.

When you feel completely relaxed, command your mind to be silent, your emotions to be still, keeping your body as relaxed as possible. If random thoughts enter your mind, let them flow away again.

As you do this meditation, breathe slowly, imagining the air entering your nose and traveling all the way down into your lungs. This is the “So.”

As you slowly exhale, imagine the air traveling out of the lungs, up to your mouth, and out of your body. This is one “Ham.”

Silently say the word “So” with each inhalation and the word “Ham” with each exhalation. Continue in this way as long as you are comfortable. Start with about 5 minutes at a time and work your way up to 20 minutes at a time.

This is a good meditation for beginners, and also works well when you are seeking to achieve a calm and quiet state of mind.

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## **Sand Meditation**

Once you have gotten the knack of it, you can meditate anywhere during any activity. Some readers have succeeded in reaching this altered state of conscious while reading about my sand meditation. It is recorded here in the hope that it may help you realize and understand this transformational state of consciousness meditation can provide.

Sometimes meditation opens a door into the mysteries of creation. If we allow ourselves to pass through this door there is no telling what we may encounter on the other side.

Do not become discouraged if your meditation attempts in the past have not produced the results you were hoping for. Meditation is a mystical process; it may take awhile to learn how to quiet your mind and open yourself to all the present moment has to offer you.

In the movie *Peaceful Warrior*, Nick Nolte says "There are no ordinary moments." Let the following meditation help you gain some insight into what he meant in that statement.

My meditation began while sitting on a beach. My hands were sandy. I rubbed my thumb and forefinger together feeling the grains of sand between them slipping away until only a single grain of sand remained.

I could feel the shape of the grain of sand distinctly as I rolled it back and forth between my thumb and forefinger.

The longer I rolled the grain of sand about the more defined my awareness of the grain of sand became. The more detailed my experience became, the larger the grain of sand appeared to be.

The grain of sand continued to grow, encompassing the beach and then the world. Before long the grain of sand had grown to an infinite size and it now encompassed all of creation; yet I still held the tiny grain of sand between my thumb and forefinger, rolling it about across the grooves and ridges of my fingerprints.

The tiny grain of sand was intimately connected to every part of creation and all of creation existed within it, even as it existed within my grasp. I communed with the grain of sand, aware of its infinite connections to everything else; through the medium of the grain of sand I became aware of my own infinite connections with all of creation.

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The sand spoke to me of eternity. It told me tales about creation and the infinite nature of our existence in creation. From the grain of sand I learned that every part of creation, no matter how large or small, is a living being experiencing and sharing in the process whereby creation makes everything manifest.

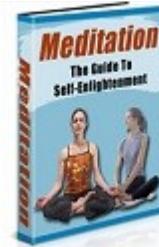
My meditation with a grain of sand produced an intense feeling of bliss. It was an eternal meditation, transcending the time and place where it began and continuing throughout all of creation.

From time to time I return to this meditation, never ceasing to be engrossed by the wisdom and experience gained from a single tiny grain of sand.

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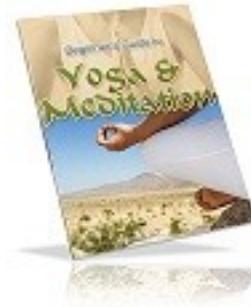
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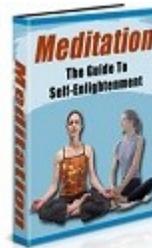
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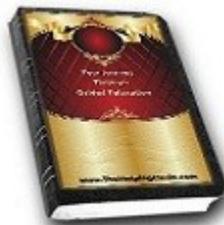


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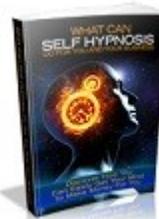
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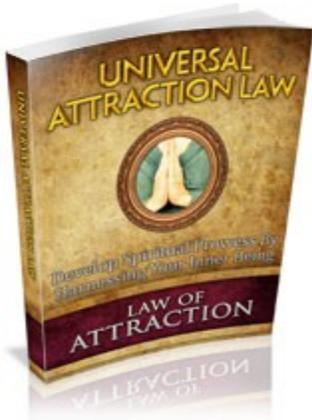


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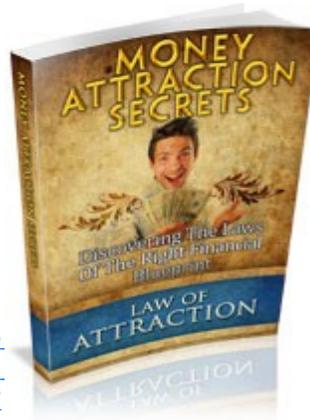
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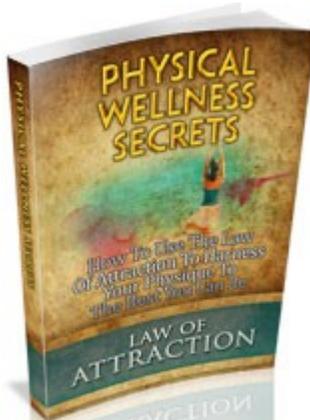
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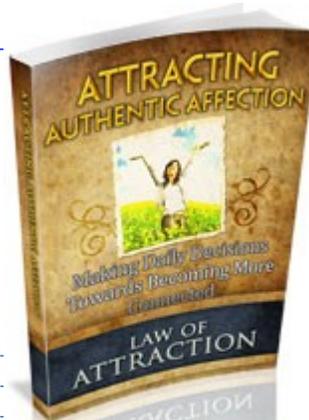
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