

Meditation



Week One - Intro to Meditation

Prework Expectation: Watch this video from Happify and ABC's Dan Harris.

[Meditation for Beginners](#)

Mediation is a great activity for attention training. Our lives, and especially our jobs, are filled with distractions and social scripts that encourage us to multi-task. Multi-tasking seems good on the surface but can put undue stress on our brains, causing us to be mentally overburdened. Meditation teaches us to use breathing as a tool to gain control of our attention.

One of the easiest forms of mediation is simply concentrating on our breathing. It turns out that when we are stressed, we take shallow breaths. However, deeper 'belly breaths' focus our attention and calm us. This simple tactic, used properly, can lower your stress levels and increase concentration either during planned meditation times or doing meditative breathing in the midst of stressful situations.

How can a practice of meditation help you manage stress at work?

How would you explain the importance of mindfulness to your friends, family and colleagues?

Today, we are going to focus on a specific type of meditation. This technique will teach us to focus on our breathing as a method of tuning out everything else. It will help us improve our levels of focus and concentration. We'll assume that each week we'll start with a new meditation practice for five minutes at first, then building to fifteen minutes by the end of the week. This method is just slightly more involved than the technique featured in the Dan Harris/Happify video.

1. Sit yourself down in a comfortable chair. (You needn't be sitting cross-legged on the floor but you can if you like.!) Sit straight up, put your feet flat on the ground, with your hands resting on the top of your thighs or knees. Now, take a few deep breaths. . . in. . . and. . . out.
2. With your eyes closed, and continuing to breathe in and out slowly, begin to consider your body from the top of your head all the way down to your heels and toes. Look for stress or tension in your muscles and bones. Sense any discomfort or pain. Acknowledge where your body is touching other things; the clothes you're wearing, your sit-bones on the chair, the bottoms of your feet touching the floor, etc. Keep breathing as each of these passes through your thoughts. Begin to concentrate now on your breathing. In through your nose and out your mouth. Make sure you're filling your lungs and expanding your diaphragm with each inhale and then imagine reversing that process as you exhale. You should be sensing a rhythm.

Meditation



3. Continue breathing and begin to be aware of that cycle, in and out, expand and contract. Concentrate on this rhythm and maintain it. If it helps, set a count to your inhaling, “one-thousand one, one-thousand two,” etc. See if you can make your exhales twice the count of your inhales. If it takes you a three-count to finish inhaling, intentionally slow down your exhale to a six-count. (This simple act has proven anti-stress benefits.)
4. As you continue to breath and repeat this pattern it will get easier for you to do without thinking so much about it. But here’s the fascinating part. As soon as you stop intentionally breathing, your mind will likely start to wander. You may find yourself suddenly thinking about that upcoming project deadline, or a budget review, or that new piece of equipment coming in next week. This is natural. Give yourself permission to let those thoughts come into your mind and let them pass through right away. Go back to your breathing and think of those inhales and exhales.
5. Make note of how you are managing all those thoughts. As you get further into a practice of meditation, you’ll get better a keeping all that noise at bay. Relax and keep breathing, in and out. Slowly, go back to considering how your body feels. Take in your surroundings; feel the temperature of the air on your skin, start to hear the clock ticking again, or the whir of the fan in the next room. Now, open your eyes and rejoin the world. You’ve just meditated!

Weekly To-Do's:

1. Get started on your 21-day Meditation challenge and keep it going!
2. Make sure to use your 21-day Challenge Journal to track your progress

Alternative Discussion

- Who do you know that meditates regularly?
- What role do you think meditation plays in their happiness?