

Tips for Meditating

This article gives you tips to help your meditation practice be as beneficial as possible.

Meditation Basics

- **Let go of expectations.** All meditation sessions are good meditations. Trust that every time you meditate, you make gains – even if you felt tired, unfocused, distracted, or agitated during the meditation. It's similar with physical workouts. Not every day you lift will you be able to bench press your max weight, but every day you lift, you make gains.
- **Be patient for results.** The benefits of meditation will show up in your daily life, more so than in your practice. When you meditate regularly, you will find yourself being more patient, loving, compassionate, joyful, courageous, wise, peaceful, and focused, among other things. Such changes will often be gradual rather than sudden, so it is best to measure your progress in 6-month or one-year intervals. These are long-enough periods of time to really see clear progress in how meditation has improved your life and made you more joyful, wise, and resilient.

Once you are able to consistently meditate for five-minutes, four or five times a week, add one minute a week to your meditation session until you are meditating twenty or more minutes per session. As you experience the numerous benefits of meditation, you will come to appreciate these twenty-minutes a day as the best investment of your time for creating a joyful, fulfilling, and rewarding life.

- **Know your anchor.** All the meditations we teach have an *anchor*. An anchor is the place where you intend to hold your attention during the meditation. Common anchors are: sensations of the breath, sensations throughout the body, sounds heard, or present moment awareness (also called “bare awareness”) where you notice everything that arises in your awareness including all five senses as well as mental objects like thoughts, moods, and mental states.

Before You Begin

- **Meditate in a location where you feel safe.** Meditation helps us explore deep states of relaxation, and these are not attainable when we don't feel safe. You also want to feel safe enough that you can close your eyes for the duration of the meditation without worrying about your safety.
- **Get comfortable while remaining alert.** Find a position that you can comfortably hold for 30 minutes. You can sit in a chair, on a meditation cushion, or lie on the floor. Tips to get comfortable include:
 1. Remove your eyeglasses.
 2. If seated in a chair, uncross your legs and keep both feet flat on the floor.
 3. If sitting, maintain a balanced, upright posture.
 4. If you suffer from chronic pain, when seated, use a backrest, and whether seated or lying, use as many cushions, pillows, and blankets as you need to be comfortable.

Tips to remain alert include:

1. Only lie down if you are energetic enough that you won't fall asleep.
 2. When seated, don't use a backrest. Gently elongate and stack your spine so your torso and head are balanced and little effort is needed to hold them upright.
 3. If tired, keep eyes partly open and looking in a relaxed, unfocused gaze at something soothing about 5 to 8 feet in front of you.
- **Know the flashback-halting protocol or 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding technique.** It is rare, but some people with traumatic pasts may experience flashbacks during meditation. If during a meditation you start to experience something too disturbing to compassionately hold, then stop meditating and do one of these practices. If you are at risk for this, review your preferred technique before your meditation and keep the instructions for it at hand. Find the protocols and more info at BoundlessLoveProject.org/advisory.

During the Meditation

- **Dedicate your meditations to cultivating love and goodwill for all life.** Setting loving intentions for all we do is one of the skills that meditation teaches us. We ritualize this loving intention setting through an opening chant

that reminds us that meditation is an act of love and service for ourselves and all life. During the chant gently rest your awareness on your heart area and try to feel the meaning behind the words.

- **Maintain a full sense of freedom during meditation.** Consider the instructions to be gentle invitations. Only follow those instructions that feel safe, seem helpful, and align with your inner wisdom. If any instruction or comment is unhelpful, or does not apply to you, then compassionately ignore it.
- **If you ever start to feel a flashback arising, then stop meditating and do the flashback-halting protocol or 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding technique.** Then get up and do whatever you need to do to feel safe and in control.
- **Try to remain still.** Lovingly do your best to remain as still as possible. Remaining still will help the mind become calmer and more focused. When you would like to move, do your best to move slowly and mindfully.
- **Close your eyes.** If you are in no danger of falling asleep, and you feel safe enough to do so, kindly close your eyes so you can focus your attention inward. If you feel tired and at risk for falling asleep, it may be helpful to keep your eyes partly open, looking with a relaxed, unfocused gaze at something soothing, while holding the head upright in a balanced, comfortable posture.
- **Practice gratitude and kindness as you return to the anchor.** When you notice your attention has wandered away from the anchor, give thanks for the mindfulness that sees attention has wandered away. You can do this by silently thinking a short phrase such as: "Way to go, buddy." "Nice job, dear." "Good work, darling." "Thank you, love." Or similar. Ensure the tone of the thought is as friendly, kind, and warm as the words used. Do your best to feel the appreciation, joy, and love behind the words as you think them. After celebrating, calmly return your attention to the anchor.
- **Be mindful of mindfulness.** When mindful, you can see thoughts, emotions, and sensations arise without identifying with them, taking them personally, or believing the thoughts. Pay attention to that experience of mindfulness and try to live with mindfulness more and more in your daily life.
- **Practice peace and equanimity and letting go of craving and aversion.** During meditation, allow everything to be as it is. Kindly let go of the need to do, achieve, or accomplish anything, including the need to do the meditation correctly. Gently do your best to follow the instructions, while also allowing whatever thoughts, feelings, and sensations arise to arise. For example, if judgmental thoughts arise about meditation, then let them come, let them be, and let them go. Don't identify with them, believe them, or engage with them. Don't resist them, try to push them away, or berate yourself for thinking them. That is all craving and aversion. Instead, mindfully and compassionately notice them, then calmly and kindly return your attention to the meditation anchor. Allow the thoughts to come, be, and go in the background of your awareness.
- **Practice being relaxed and mindful.** If stress, struggle, worry, or anxiety arise, see if you can relax your effort so you can meditate with more ease. Whenever you notice stress or tension in a part of the body, kindly invite that part of the body to relax and soften as you exhale. The parts may relax a bit and tense up again mere seconds later. Lovingly and persistently invite them to relax whenever you notice they are tense again.
- **Practice love, compassion, and forgiveness for yourself.** Never judge or berate yourself for the mind and body's inability to follow the meditation instructions. This happens because you lack full control over them, so don't take it personally. If self-judgmental thoughts arise, don't identify with them or believe them during the meditation. After the meditation, mindfully investigate them to see how they are untrue, unkind, and unhelpful. Then respond to those thoughts with a loving and wise response that is true, kind, and helpful.
- **Practice Generosity.** Being generous helps us recognize the abundance in our lives while benefiting others. Because meditating brings us many benefits, we practice generosity by energetically sharing those benefits with all beings and life forms at the end of the meditation. This gratitude practice is ritualized in a closing chant. During the chant gently rest your awareness on the heart area and try to feel the meaning behind the words, of if you feel pleasant feelings, invite them to energetically radiate from your heart directly to all beings and life forms.

That's enough to get you started. Thank you for loving yourself enough to give meditation a try. We wish you all the best!

FLASHBACK PROTOCOL**

Flashback halting protocol reconciles experiencing self with observing self, (usually) quickly halting traumatic flashbacks.

Say the following sentences filling in the blanks, following the instructions:

- Right now I am feeling _____ ,
(name the current emotion, usually fear)
- and I am sensing in my body _____ ,
(describe current bodily sensations in detail),
- because I am remembering _____ .
(name the trauma by title, *only* — no details).
- And, *at the same time* , I am looking around where I am *now* in _____ (say the year),
- here _____ ,
(name the place where you are)
- and I can see _____ ,
(describe some of the things that you see right *now* , in *this* place),
- and so I know _____ ,
(name the trauma again)
- is not happening now/anymore.”

Rothschild, B. (2000). *The Body Remembers: The Psychophysiology of Trauma and Trauma Treatment*. New York: W.W. Norton.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 GROUNDING EXERCISE

HOW TO DO IT:

This technique will take you through your five senses to help remind you of the present. This is a calming technique that can help you get through tough or stressful situations.

Take a deep belly breath to begin.

5 - LOOK: Look around for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I see the computer, I see the cup, I see the picture frame.

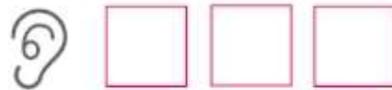
4 - FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and say them out loud. For example, you could say, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the hair on the back of my neck, or I feel the pillow I am sitting on.

3 - LISTEN: Listen for 3 sounds. It could be the sound of traffic outside, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling. Say the three things out loud.
2 - SMELL: Say two things you can smell. If you're allowed to, it's okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your 2 favorite smells.

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. It may be the toothpaste from brushing your teeth, or a mint from after lunch. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste.

Take another deep belly breath to end.

5 4 3 2 1 Grounding Exercise



Creating A Daily Meditation Practice

Answer these questions in your journal:

1. What benefits from meditation would I like to enjoy? List as many as you can think of, and be as specific as possible.

2. What possible times during the day could I meditate and set intentions? **Top tip:** Try to have these activities be one of the first things you do in the morning. The earlier in the morning you meditate and set intentions, the more they can positively influence the rest of your day. Link these practices to another already established daily habit such as eating breakfast or making the bed. Plan to do your meditation sit before or after the activity. In this way, your preestablished routine triggers you to do your meditation. Psychological research has found that such triggers greatly ease the establishment of a new habit. If you can't make the morning work, find another time to do it.

3. Of the answers given in number two, which time offers the best conditions for you to meditate? Which time will find you most calm, fresh, and alert; will minimize distractions; and is least likely to be interfered with or overridden by other priorities?

4. Given your answer to number three, where is the best location for you to do your sit at that time? Which location will minimize distractions, be as quiet as possible, and afford you the most isolation?

5. Given the time and location of your practice, what else can you do to further reduce distractions? Tell family members or roommates about your practice and ask them to not disturb you at that time? Turn off your cell phone and landline ringer during your sit? What else?

6. When and where will you do your daily intention-setting practice? **Top Tip:** If possible, do it as one of the first things in the morning, directly after meditating.

7. Given your answers above, create your specific intention. It is helpful for your intention to have three components:

1. It clearly defines a specific behavior that is easy to do and measure.
2. It is triggered by another event, location, or time.

3. It includes accountability by recording your progress.

Here is a sample intention to model yours after: I intend to do a 5-minute meditation sit each day (clearly defined, measurable behavior) *on the floor of my bedroom* (location) *after drinking my morning glass of water* (time triggered by daily event). *Then* (time trigger) I will *do my intention-setting practice* (clearly defined, measurable behavior) in the *bathroom* (location) looking at the mirror. Finally, I will *record them both in my meditation log* (accountability).

To create your intention, substitute in the locations and times you have decided work best for you. Use the meditation log to track your meditation and intention-setting.

Test Drive Your Intention

Bringing a new intention into your life does not always meet with immediate success. Unexpected things arise that sabotage your best intentions.

Any day that your intentions are unsuccessful, answer the following questions in your journal:

1. What prevented me from successfully completing my intention?
2. What can I do to prevent this situation from happening in the future?
3. If I can't prevent this situation from arising, what can I do to not let it derail me from completing my intention?

Be Flexible

You may need to alter your intention by changing the location and time of day, or by setting a back-up time should the original plan not work on some days. Continue to tweak your intention until you find one that works for you.

Also, whenever an emergency prevents you from meditating or setting intentions at the time and place decided, do your best to still get your formal meditation sit and intention setting in each day.



Tips for Using Your Meditation and Intentions Tracking Log

Use your log to track your progress with maintaining a daily meditation and intention-setting practice.

After you finish your daily **meditation practice**, write the number of minutes that you meditated in the meditation column for that day. So, if you do a five-minute meditation on the 1st of the month, it would look like this:

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
1	5			

If you do more than one meditation per day, separate them with a comma like this:

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
1	5, 5, 5, 30			

After completing your **intention-setting practice**, put a check in the "Int." column for that day, like this:

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
1		✓		

After every **Investigation** you do, put a line in the "Inv." column. If you did three, it would look like this:

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
1				

There are three kinds of **moment-to-moment insights and benefits** I want you to notice and log:

- 1. Pleasant experiences while meditating.** If you feel any moments of peace, calm, relaxation, joy, or other pleasant states while meditating, note them in the benefits section on your form.
- 2. Insights gained from meditating or mindfulness.** For example, say during a meditation you notice that your mind is racing and that you can't stop it, and it really hits you on a felt level that: "I don't control my own thoughts." That is an important insight, so write it down.
- 3. Small, incremental improvements in your daily life.** This includes any time you are slightly more mindful, skillful, or able to experience something with more joy, ease, or peace than usual. Let's say you tend to get stressed while commuting to and from work, but one day you notice you are slightly less stressed and more peaceful. This slight improvement would be a benefit to note as well.

When starting these practices, please don't expect or look for life-changing, dramatic, and permanent benefits. Dramatic, long-lasting, beneficial changes will come, but they require a regular, daily practice. Be patient. Do the work. Allow the practice to positively change you according to its own timeline. Don't be greedy for dramatic results, but do be on the lookout for small, incremental benefits in individual *moments*. For example:

Date	Med	Int	Inv	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
1	5	✓		<i>Calm, peace, joy, love. Everything changes. Was more patient with my spouse yesterday.</i>

Be sure to log **practices you missed**. If you did not meditate, complete your intention setting, or do your investigations the previous day, signify that by putting a zero in the box, as we did here for investigations:

Date	Med	Int	Inv	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
1	5	✓	0	<i>Deeply relaxing. I am not my feelings. Was more mindful and loving with my kids.</i>

Meditation, Intention Setting, and Investigations Tracking Log

Month: _____ Year: _____

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Meditation, Intention Setting, and Investigations Tracking Log

Month: _____ Year: _____

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
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Meditation, Intention Setting, and Investigations Tracking Log

Month: _____ Year: _____

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
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Meditation, Intention Setting, and Investigations Tracking Log

Month: _____ Year: _____

Date	Med.	Int.	Inv.	Moment-to-Moment Insights and Benefits
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The Mindful Pause Practice

Why Do Mindful Pauses?

Mindful pauses help us calm and soothe our mind and body throughout the day.

How Does One Do a Mindful Pause?

1. If able, kindly place your hands on your heart and belly.

To take a mindful pause, lovingly place one hand on your heart and another on your belly in a way that feels good. It may help to rub them in little circles, apply more or less pressure, or move them in another way that feels good to you.

The warmth and pleasantness of your touch will help both areas to relax, allowing your breaths to be deeper and longer, and your heart to be warmer and more open.

In daily life, there may be times – like when you are driving your car -- when you'll want to take a mindful pause, but positioning the hands like this is not feasible. Only use the hand placement when it is safe and it makes sense to do so.

2. If it is safe to do so, close your eyes.

Closing your eyes helps you turn your attention inward. Just as with the hands, if the situation does not allow for it – like when driving – keep your eyes open.

3. Rest your awareness on the sensations of breathing for 10 or more slow, deep belly breaths.

Gently place all (or most) of your attention on feeling the subtle sensations of the breath as it moves in and out of the body -- exactly as we learn to do in breath meditation.

Consciously breathe into the belly, and slow your breathing down. The hand placement helps you gauge whether your breathing is predominantly in your chest, (not ideal), or

your belly (preferred). Belly breathing helps soothe the nervous system.

Breathe like this until the body and mind have calmed down and you feel more resourced to skillfully respond to your situation. When learning this technique, aim to breathe like this for 10 or more breath cycles.

How do I incorporate this practice into my life?

Each morning, set an intention to do three or more mindful pauses a day.

Put the slogan “Breathe.” in places where you will see it throughout the day. Let it remind you to take a mindful pause.

Each day, pay attention to how this practice benefits you.

When to do Mindful Pauses?

Good times to take a mindful pause include:

- Whenever you see the slogan “breathe.”
- Whenever emotional or thought storms arise in the body.
- Whenever waiting (in line, on the phone, etc.).
- Whenever enjoying nature.
- When listening to others.
- Whenever you remember to do it.

What are the benefits of this practice?

Many people who regularly use the mindful pause find they live with less stress and anxiety, and more peace, serenity, patience, and joy.

But don't take their word for it, find out for yourself! Do this practice for 3 to 6 months before evaluating it. It takes time to create new habits and rewire our brains. Be patient to see the results. In the meantime, do the practice as best you can, and notice all the ways it benefits you.



Gratitude Intention Setting

Live with an attitude of gratitude

Instructions

To set your intentions for your day, do this activity as early as possible.

Preferably, read this while standing. If that is not an option, read it while sitting. Whether sitting or standing, be upright and hold a strong, confident, energetic posture. Then confidently read these intentions out loud with a kind, powerful voice. Read these intentions with meaning and feeling. If you find it helpful, read your intentions into a mirror while looking at yourself.

Before and while reading them, do your best to generate a feeling of joy and kindness in your heart. Also, keep your head held high as you read this.

If possible, read these intentions in a secluded place, away from other people so you don't disturb them. If they can still hear you, and this makes you self-conscious, consider turning on some background noise to make it harder to be heard. A bathroom fan or music should suffice.

As you do this practice day by day, do your best to read it from memory more and more. Aim to have it memorized within one to three weeks of practice.

Most importantly, put these wonderful intentions into practice throughout your day so you embody all of these beautiful qualities and live with an attitude of gratitude more and more! As you do this, mindfully notice the many ways these kind and wise intentions benefit your life.

Consider Personalizing These Intentions

The first day you do this activity, read these intentions using the beautiful qualities listed in parenthesis to get a feel for the activity.

Then, if you want, you may substitute the qualities provided, with three to five of your favorite qualities. Write them on the blank lines and read them instead. You can either list the same three to five qualities on all three lines if those are most important to you, or different qualities on different lines. Do whatever you find is most helpful.

Possible qualities to choose from include: love, wisdom, courage, joy, creativity, resourcefulness, resilience, playfulness, courage, persistence, skillfulness, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, compassion, generosity, intentionality, flexibility, friendliness, outgoingness, equanimity, strength, discernment, service, or any other qualities you admire.



My Intentions to Live with an Attitude of Gratitude

Read this script out loud. Instructions in italics, below, are to be followed and not read aloud.

Today and every day, I will live with an attitude of gratitude.

I will be on the lookout for all that is beautiful, wonderful, successful, and skillful, and I will give thanks for it all.

I will give thanks for the air I breathe, the food I eat, the energy in the body, the people in my life, and even the difficulties I face.

I will give thanks for all of the beautiful qualities I express such as:
(love, wisdom, courage, and joy.)

I will do everything with a playful, creative, inquisitive attitude and an open, courageous, and loving heart. I will see everything I do as an opportunity to play, create, and enjoy life.

I will celebrate my own successes and the successes of others. Their happiness is my happiness. Their success is my success. Their beauty is my beauty. Their skillfulness is my skillfulness. May their wonderful qualities and good fortunes continue, increase, and never end.

In a kind, playful, and joyful way, I will do my best to embody all of these beautiful qualities, and live with an attitude of gratitude more and more.

** Take a one-breath mindful pause **

Today and every day, I live with an attitude of gratitude.

I am on the lookout for all that is beautiful, wonderful, successful, and skillful, and I give thanks for it all.

I give thanks for the air I breathe, the food I eat, the energy in the body, the people in my life, and even the difficulties I face.

I give thanks for all of the beautiful qualities I express such as:
(compassion, friendliness, honesty, and integrity.)



people in my life, and even the difficulties I face.

I give thanks for all of the beautiful qualities I express such as: (mental strength and flexibility, kindness, creativity, and persistence.)

I do everything with a playful, creative, inquisitive attitude and an open, courageous, and loving heart. I see everything I do as an opportunity to play, create, and enjoy life.

I celebrate my own successes and the successes of others. Their happiness is my happiness. Their success is my success. Their beauty is my beauty. Their skillfulness is my skillfulness. May their wonderful qualities and good fortunes continue, increase, and never end.

In a kind, playful, and joyful way, I do my best to embody all of these beautiful qualities, and live with an attitude of gratitude more and more.

** Take a one-breath mindful pause **

Today and every day, I live with an attitude of gratitude.

I am on the lookout for all that is beautiful, wonderful, successful, and skillful, and I give thanks for it all.

I give thanks for the air I breathe, the food I eat, the energy in the body, the

I do everything with a playful, creative, inquisitive attitude and an open, courageous, and loving heart. I see everything I do as an opportunity to play, create, and enjoy life.

I celebrate my own successes and the successes of others. Their happiness is my happiness. Their success is my success. Their beauty is my beauty. Their skillfulness is my skillfulness. May their wonderful qualities and good fortunes continue, increase, and never end.

In a kind, playful, and joyful way, I do my best to embody all of these beautiful qualities, and live with an attitude of gratitude more and more.

** Take a one-breath mindful pause **

