

Learning to meditate is a gradual process.

If you learn meditation from a book, you may be tempted to read it all in a week. You might rush through the early exercises in order to experiment with later ones. That is rather like leaping onto a 1000cc motorcycle and hoping to roar off into the sunset - before having learned to ride a bicycle without training wheels. You need substantial experience with each exercise to obtain the benefit it provides - and to prepare you for the next exercise. The earlier exercises are not mere preliminaries. They are central methods in their own right to which you will return repeatedly - no matter how advanced your practice becomes.

It is useful to keep a meditation notebook in which to record your goals, experiences, and reflections. If you use a computer frequently, you might keep your records in a text file. Or, you may prefer to write in a paper notebook.

Either way, *right now* is the time to start. Create the file, or locate a pad of paper. Start with today's date - and for your first entry, record your motivations for starting to meditate. Alternatively, if you have already been meditating for a while, write what has motivated you to start this course.

If you re-read this entry in a few weeks or months, you may discover something surprising. You may find that your motivations for continuing to meditate have shifted from your reasons for starting. As your meditation practice develops, you are likely to find that it has rewards you cannot expect at this present moment in time.

Meditation is deceptively simple. In a sense, the complete instructions are: 'Be here - now!'

That may seem nonsensical. You could reply: "I *am* here, now. How could I be otherwise?" The rest of this course is devoted to explaining how you may *not* be fully here, now - and ways of coming back to here and now.

There is much to say about meditation - enough to fill many books. Meditation can seem complex - but that is only because the concepts we use to understand our minds are complex. During this course, you will learn how to strip away those concepts and to look at your mind directly. You will learn to experience the simplicity, clarity, and power of your own un-conceptualised mind.

Each week, you will learn more about what it means to 'be here—now'. This week's meditation technique is a first experiential explanation of that phrase.

Meditation

Sit somewhere quiet. Total silence is not necessary - but music, television noise, or people talking will be distracting. Some types of meditation can be undertaken whilst listening to music - but not this method.

Sit comfortably. Sitting in a chair is fine. If you are used to sitting on a cushion on the floor - and can do so easily - that is another possibility. Sit reasonably upright, but do not strain to achieve any particular posture.

Wear loose, comfortable clothes. Loosen your belt if it is tight.

Close your eyes almost all the way, so that a little light enters but you cannot see anything clearly.

When thoughts come - let them come. When thoughts go - let them go. If you find yourself involved in a stream of thoughts, let go of your involvement with them. Keep letting go of involvement. Remain uninvolved. Just let go. Whatever happens - let it be as it is.

If you feel good - do not hold on to those positive thoughts. If you feel bad - do not reject those negative thoughts. Especially important: if you feel nothing in particular - do not drift into numbness and lack of presence.

Remain alert.

Try this for five minutes. If you feel ambitious, try ten minutes. See how it goes.

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