

10 Surprising Secrets No One Told You Yet About Meditation

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For thousands of years and across countless cultures, humans around the world have been meditating. Whether you're new to meditation, or you've been practicing it for a while, there are always new and fascinating things to discover about this age-old practice.

To the uninitiated, meditation appears mysterious and downright strange. To the well-practiced however, it's just a normal part of their daily routine.

So how does meditation really work and how are you supposed to do it?

Read on to discover some surprising secrets about meditation.



Photo Credit: [Moyan Brenn](#)

1. Your Mind Will Quiet Itself

As opposed to actively trying to quiet your mind, when you meditate, your mind will quiet itself -- all on its own. Whether you are following your breath or chanting a mantra, you'll eventually start to just be present, to "just be." If you try to tame your thoughts, they'll just multiply instead. When you notice a sunset or you look up at the stars, all of your thoughts seems to disappear as you become more present to the moment. And that is how your mind quiets itself when you meditate, by becoming more present.

2. It Doesn't Have to Take More than a Few Minutes

There are no hard rules that your meditation session has to take 30 minutes. Who says you can't be present and meditate when you have a few spare moments to yourself? While a daily formal practice is preferable, you can be present while you're standing on line or waiting for a friend. You can incorporate meditation into your daily life any way that works for you.

3. It's as Simple as Observing Your Breathing

While meditation can seem mysterious and obscure to someone who has never tried it before, it actually couldn't be more simple. In Zen meditation, you simply observe your own breathing. You sit quietly and keep following and watching your breathing, as it goes in and out. In and out. And that's basically it. Easy, right? However, your mind will wander, you and you'll have to keep returning your awareness back onto your breathing. Simple, but not easy.

4. Noticing How You React When Your Mind Wanders

For most beginners, when you start meditating you'll notice that your mind wanders. Before you know it, you've been thinking about what to eat for dinner for the last few moments without even realizing it. If you get frustrated when this happens or if you beat yourself up, you'll create more distress. Instead, it's important to gently return your awareness back to

your anchor (your breath), with the warmest compassion you can give to yourself. This is part of the process of meditation.

5. Anyone Can Meditate

Contrary to popular belief, there are no age restrictions on meditation. Whether you're 90 years old, or your 5-year-old daughter wants to give it a whirl, go for it! There are very few limitations on who can meditate. There's no discrimination on your ethnicity or gender. Even if you don't consider yourself "spiritual," plenty of people who don't consider themselves spiritual meditate just for the health benefits alone. Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike can practice it. And if you have ADHD, research suggests that meditation will help you to concentrate and focus more.

6. You Can Meditate In Any Position

When you picture someone meditating, you usually imagine them in the lotus position, sitting cross-legged on the floor. But you can actually meditate in any position. The lotus position is usually recommended because it helps you stay focused. But you can also meditate while sitting in a chair, laying down, or even standing! Whatever body position you choose, you should feel comfortable and relaxed.

7. You Can Be Present Anywhere, Anytime

While I'm not suggesting that you try to meditate in the middle of a rock concert or while your 2-year-old is throwing a tantrum, you can be present anywhere, anytime. There is a very beautiful walking meditation in Zen, where you stay mindful of each step as you walk. No matter where you are, you can be mindful and aware of how you're feeling and what you're hearing and seeing. You can even meditate on a train or at your desk. Give it a shot.

8. Observe The Feeling Within Your Body

As [Eckhart Tolle](#) writes extensively about, being present is natural and actually easy when you bring your attention to what it feels like inside of your body. Even if you don't feel anything remarkable going on inside of you, when you bring your attention to the "aliveness" and sensations you feel within your legs, arms, and torso, you'll become more present, and your mental chatter will begin to quiet down. This is how your dog lives his life -- present to his body.

9. You've Always Known How to Be Present, You Just Had to Re-Learn

Have you ever noticed the look in a baby's eyes when they're looking into your eyes? There's no worry or regret, no disappointment or judgement. Babies are present in a way that seems very appealing to adults. They're not absorbed in their own thoughts like adults are. You've probably had this experience of "no thinking" right when you're about to fall asleep or after waking up. It can be argued that being present is our natural state.

10. There is No "One Right Way" To Do It

There are countless schools and techniques for meditation. According to an ancient Hindu text, the Vigyan Bhairav Tantra, there are 112 ways to meditate! In some traditions, you focus on the breath, while in others you focus on a mantra. There is Zen, Transcendental Meditation, Vipassana meditation, mantra meditation, and so on. You can experiment with different meditation techniques or even create your own.