

## Learn to meditate

Meditation can be practiced anywhere, anytime. It is the best method I know for strengthening self-confidence.

There is no right or wrong way to meditate. The only rule is to do what works for you. Therefore, most of the questions listed below allow for several answers. The answers I offer simply reflect my own experience.

An important point in meditation – if not the key point – is breathing. Breathing is made up of three actions: inhaling, retention, and exhaling. An Indian text teaches that when we inhale, we take in universal energy (the future). When we hold our breath, we gather this energy (the present). And when we exhale, we release the spent air (the past). I like this theory, because it also teaches us to let go – of our anxieties for the future, our obsession with the present, and our chains to the past.

Meditation is a technique of concentration.

One form of meditation is mantra meditation, which focuses on a phrase or an object – for example, a candle, a shadow, a light, or a spot on the wall. Whenever your thoughts begin to wander, they need to be led back gently to what you are focusing on.

Another form is “Association Meditation.” In this form, you reflect on a particular thought, a person, a problem, a symbol, or an idea (for example, God is love). In other words, you meditate on something specific – perhaps a problem you are dealing with at the moment.

Meditation can become an essential tool for you. Following are my answers to the most important questions I have been asked on this subject.

**QUESTION:** What is meditation?

**ANSWER:** The exact definition is controlled thinking. My personal definition is that it is all of the following: a way to the inner self; a prayer; and a means to achieve balance, obtain answers, find peace, and reflect on oneself. Another very different, but still accurate, way to describe meditation is as an anti-stress method without side effects.

**QUESTION:** What does controlled thinking mean?

**ANSWER:** When meditating, we try not to think about anything, thereby becoming open to hearing our own “inner language.” This takes a lot of practice, because our minds like nothing more than to divert our attention. It is relatively easy to learn the technique of not thinking of anything, however. We can concentrate on our breathing and let our thoughts pass by like clouds. Thinking of nothing has a welcome side effect, one that millions of people have experienced as a common result of meditating: a greater ability to concentrate and a stronger memory.

**QUESTION:** Are there any rules to meditating? Is there a required meditation posture?

**ANSWER:** There are no rules. It is important only that you feel comfortable. You can meditate standing, sitting on a chair or couch or on the floor, sitting cross-legged (lotus position), lying, kneeling - whatever suits you.

**QUESTION:** What are the types of meditation?

**ANSWER:** There are two types of meditation:

Quiet meditation, which does not seek concrete answers.

Focused meditation, which concentrates on an issue you want to deal with at the moment

**QUESTION:** Would you explain this further?

**ANSWER:** Quiet meditation is more popular. It is about listening to your inner voice. Focused meditation tries to find answers to certain issues. The technique is the same as that used in quiet meditation, but instead of only listening to your inner voice, you meditate on an issue that is on your mind. It is advantageous to summarize the issue into one sentence (a mantra), repeating it quietly several times at the beginning of the meditation period.

**QUESTION:** How long should I meditate?

**ANSWER:** That is irrelevant. What is important is that you meditate regularly, if possible daily. It is up to you whether you meditate for two minutes or two hours. Once you have developed a taste for meditation, you will look forward, most likely, to meditating fifteen to thirty minutes a day.

**QUESTION:** What will I gain from meditation?

**ANSWER:** A lot. You will be more composed and react more deliberately. You will be able to let go, look at your problems from another perspective, and be at peace inside, thereby gaining in self-confidence. Meditation will also help you achieve personal balance.

I would be delighted if you would give meditation a try.

All my best wishes,

Bruno Gideon