

## Meditation for Beginners

### Getting comfy and setting the scene



*... choose a peaceful environment and take a mindful approach to distractions ...*

#### Phones on silent

For meditation, you want to have a peaceful environment with as few distractions as possible, and mobile phones are a huge distraction. Even on silent, the vibration, flashes and temptation to check who's calling or sending you a message is too great and will negatively impact your success. If you can, leave it in another room, so it's out of sight and out of mind. If you need to practice (i.e. as a timer or for guided meditation), then put it into aeroplane mode.

I know life is not perfect and the environment in which you practice isn't always going to be perfect either. You may hear the house phone or someone's else's mobile phone ring during your session, but try to allow yourself to listen to the sound without being anxious about it.

#### Comfort is key

When you start to meditate, you will notice that when your body is at ease, your mind will follow. The mind and body are connected, and so if your mind is racing, your body will be agitated and unable to get comfortable. Getting physically comfortable will, therefore, allow your mind to stop racing.

Don't be afraid to shift your body if you are in any discomfort, or experiment with different positions until you find one that allows you to feel at ease, relaxed and alert.

#### How long should you meditate for?

If you're starting out, I recommend anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes a day. You can start with even less. Maybe try it for 2 minutes in the morning. And when you can sit still and relax for that long, move to 3 minutes. And then increase your time every day as you get comfortable with the practice.

There are no hard and fast rules here, the most important thing is just to start. The next thing is to be consistent, especially while you are setting a new habit. The way I think about it, 5 minutes is 100% more than no minutes. And so is 1 minute. You just need to do it. You need to start, and you need to keep going. Pick the amount of time that works for you and do it every day.

To monitor your time, you might want to place a watch in your space or set the alarm on your phone, then as you progress you can listen to your own internal clock.

### **Find your meditation space**

Although you can practice meditation anywhere, if you are sitting for meditation, you may want to find a quiet corner or dedicate a space for your practice. Perhaps your favourite chair, or a cushion on the floor where you can feel calm and centred. You may also find you have a 'ritual', like wearing the same clothes. Some people find listening to music can help, but choose something without lyrics with the aim of pulling you into a calm state, not taking you away from it.

**Helpful hint** – socks and a blanket are meditators essential tools. When sitting still, you may be aware of even the slightest draft which can make you feel chilly, so stay warm with comfortable blankets and socks.

### **Are you sitting comfortably?**

As the aim is to stay alert and focussed, ideally you should have your back straight, shoulders relaxed. Choose a position that feels natural and comfortable to you. You might like the couch, or a chair, both are excellent choices for seated meditation, or you may prefer the floor. Although the lotus position offers a certain challenge, sitting cross-legged is equally beneficial.

**Hand placement** – this is simple, whatever feels comfortable for you. Keep them light and relaxed. You can rest them on your knees or loosely in your lap. Palms up or palms down, experiment and see what works for you.

**Eyes open or shut?** – This probably depends on the type of meditation you are practising. If you are focusing on an object in front of you like a candle, then you might want to keep them open with a light gaze. If your eyes are closed, you want to be focusing on your breath or guided meditation to stop you drifting off.