

**What is meditation?**

Using a variety of techniques, meditation trains the mind to focus attention, without force, on the present moment; whilst accepting, without judgement, thoughts relating to the past or present, that may wander into the mind. Regular practice can develop a deeper mind-body connection, provide a sense of calm and clarity, and improve one's overall sense of wellbeing.

**Where did meditation originate from?**

Dating back thousands of years, it was in ancient Hindu scriptures c. 1500-1200BC that the earliest written record of meditation was found. Over the centuries, meditation has become something that unifies many religions and groups, but remains secular and can be practiced anywhere, at any time, without the need for specific space or equipment. The benefits, regardless of a scientific or spiritual approach remain the same.

**What are the benefits of meditation?**

For many, the practice of meditation is the perfect antidote to the pressures of modern life, that present many of us with challenges that cause stress, anxiety, and an overwhelming feeling that there is simply too much to do all of the time. The positive influence meditation practice can have on an individual's health can be far reaching, with a range of recognised benefits to a person's physiological, psychological, and/or spiritual wellbeing.

**What do I wear to meditate?**

You can wear whatever you like so long as you're comfortable. It can help to remove shoes and loosen tight clothing.

**Do I have to breathe in a certain way or chant out loud?**

The simple answer to this is no. There are many different meditation techniques that can be used from breathing, to walking, to mindfulness, to mantras and so on. It's about finding techniques that resonate and work best for you. That said, the breath is your constant, often unnoticed companion, which can provide a bridge between your mind and your body; and so, drawing attention simply to the natural pace of your own breath, is often used as a method when working with beginners.

**How do I empty my mind?**

During meditation practice it is perfectly natural for the mind to become caught up in thoughts outside of the present moment - researchers call this the "default mode network." However, in the same way we strengthen our body at the gym, the more we practice various meditation techniques, the stronger our mind becomes on focussing on the present.

**How do I know if I am doing it right?**

Everyone can meditate. By intentionally paying attention to what's happening in your mind and body, you're meditating. You don't have to focus on your breath; you don't have to close your eyes; you don't have to repeat a mantra; you don't even have to sit still. It's also ok if thoughts enter your mind, in fact, you should congratulate yourself for noticing such thoughts!

**When is the best time of day to meditate?**

Meditation can be beneficial at any time of the day. For some mornings work because it's typically the part of the day with the least distractions, and by doing it first thing, you can ensure that it happens before other activities get in the way. For others, meditating during the day provides an opportunity to reset or stay on track, whereas an evening meditation can provide an opportunity to clear the mind and bring calm before sleep. Various techniques will deliver various benefits.

**Do I have to sit still and cross legged?**

Whilst grounding yourself and a straight spine is encouraged, the important thing is to find a posture that feels comfortable and is sustainable. An ideal meditation position is one that allows you to maintain a relaxed yet alert state. Commonly used positions include sitting cross-legged, kneeling, lying down, and even standing meditation.

**How can I find the time to meditate when I am already so busy?**

If you feel you can't find 10 minutes in the day to meditate, you probably need 20 minutes! It's possibly a sign you need to pause and take time for self-care. Making time to meditate can help you to appreciate the present moment and provide you with the capacity to perform at your very best at everything that you do.

Try to anchor your practice to another part of your routine, like brushing your teeth. Wake up and think meditate, brush teeth, drink coffee. And don't be frustrated if you miss a session. It happens. Just start again the next day.