

# *THE* MEDITATION HANDBOOK

*A FIELD GUIDE FOR  
SUCCESSFULLY CHOOSING  
THE RIGHT STYLE AND  
EXPERIENCING REAL  
RESULTS*



## Introduction

Meditation has quietly become one of the most important practices of our time, embraced by children, educators, business professionals, and people from all walks of life. This makes complete sense as research continues to demonstrate its benefits for mental, emotional, physical, and cognitive health.

Add to this the number of celebrities and successful people who credit meditation as being a major contributor to their achievements and you have a once esoteric activity now taking the world by storm.

However, a gap remains between those that begin to meditate and those that continue a practice to reap the greatest rewards. In my experience, this gap is usually the result of three misperceptions:

**A misunderstanding about what meditation is.** If you believe meditation means only sitting cross-legged in silence, then you've excluded dozens of styles that might fit your personality better.

**Mismatch with goals.** If your practice doesn't line up with what you truly want, it's easy to lose motivation. Whether that's calmness, energy, focus, or healing, the practice should match what you are after.

**Practical barriers.** Not everyone has time for long retreats, access to a teacher, or the ability to fit meditation into a rigid schedule. Some physical limitations restrict sitting or conversely restrict moving. The good news is that there are meditative styles that accommodate everyone.





## Why This Guide Matters

This handbook offers a broader view that is as diverse as the kinds of people who meditate. Meditation can be quiet or moving, sound-based or breath-based, solitary or communal. By pairing modern science with global traditions, you'll discover why meditation works and how long it takes to work so that you are not operating on faith alone.

**At its heart, meditation is possibility. It's the possibility to improve health, strengthen focus, lower stress, and live a rich, balanced life.**

- Meditation can turn you into a valued employee as you *respond to opportunities* rather than *react to problems*.
- Become the parent that maintains a sense of calm.
- Gain continual access to creativity and enjoyable flow states with powerful focus so that you can produce something of value.
- Become aware of exhaustion and overwhelm so that you are less susceptible to checking out mentally with food or screentime.

Clearly, all of us can benefit from meditation and all of us will be better off if more people around us are in a better place mentally, emotionally, and physically.



## The Payoff

So, why meditate?

**For your health.** Stress fuels heart problems, headaches, gut issues, poor sleep, and weight struggles (Mortada, 2024).

**For your mind.** It cuts through noise, lowers anxiety, and creates space for focus and creativity.

**For your autonomy.** Instead of reacting out of fear or irritation, you learn to respond with clarity.

**For your goals.** Whether it's healing, better relationships, peak performance, or spiritual growth, meditation puts you in the right state to make it happen.

## Your Roadmap is This Guidebook

There isn't one "right" way to meditate. That's why this guide introduces **15 distinct styles**—from classic mindfulness to newer tools like tapping and sound baths.

Each chapter will show you what the practice is and why it's unique, a little history for context, the science that validates it, step-by-step basics to try it out, and why it might (or might not) be right for you.

After that, you'll discover three bonus practices: tones, breathwork, and brainwave entrainment that can enhance any meditation style you choose.

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## Rethinking Meditation

The most common idea about what meditation is usually includes someone sitting quietly and working to clear the mind. And the usual outcome for people trying to meditate with this perception is frustration and the belief that they can't meditate.

The truth is, meditation has never been about emptying your head. It's about **directing awareness** and deciding where to place your attention while learning to return there gently, again and again.

And there are many ways to do this:

Sitting or standing still

Moving as in tai chi, qigong, or walking meditation

Using sound such as chants, mantras, or music

Quiet reflection, prayer, or contemplation

Breathwork and energy-building practices

Across cultures, meditation has taken on countless forms. Christians meditated on scripture, Muslims practiced muraqaba, Buddhists developed mindfulness and loving-kindness, and yogis refined pranayama and stillness. Each one looks different, but all aim at clarity, calm, and balance.

By widening your definition, you gain dozens of entry points to build your own practice. You don't have to force yourself into a posture that feels unnatural. You can start where you are.





## What is Meditation?

### From Textbook Definition to True Understanding

Meditation is the art of holding, observing, or releasing attention through stillness, movement, sound, or breath. At its core, it is the simple act of noticing where your mind is and choosing where to place it. Whether your focus rests on breathing, a phrase, or gentle movement, meditation is awareness returning to awareness itself.

Traditions describe meditation in different ways. Some emphasize concentration, keeping attention on a single object such as a candle or mantra. Others focus on observation, watching thoughts appear and fade without judgment. Still others aim for release, allowing awareness to expand until there is no separation between self and surroundings. All share the goal of clarity and calm.

Modern psychology now recognizes meditation as a tool for health and emotional balance. Programs such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy reduce anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress (Hoge et al., 2014; Khoury et al., 2013). Neuroscience shows that practice reshapes the brain, strengthening areas linked to focus and emotional control (Hölzel et al., 2011).

Across cultures, meditation has meant connection with God, wisdom, nature, or one's own breath. Each time attention returns, awareness strengthens, and life becomes steadier and more present.

## Why is Meditation Important?

Meditation doesn't replace hard work or discipline. It just makes those efforts easier, clearer, and more sustainable.

On the health side, meditation reduces heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and calms inflammation, supporting recovery and resilience (Mortada, 2024). On the mental side, it reduces fear and limiting beliefs while boosting creativity and clarity. On the emotional side, it creates space between stressful events and our reactions. Add these three together, and the result is less resistance and greater ease working at whatever is important to you.

The key is consistency. Benefits accumulate slowly, like priming an old water pump. At first the effort feels wasted, but persistence produces a steady flow of improvement. Miss too many sessions and you may have to work to become consistent again. However, once momentum builds, it sustains itself.

Meditation isn't about experiencing "success" every time. A restless session often signals that your mind is processing stress in the moment rather than spilling it into your day. Progress is less about perfection and more about showing up.

I want this point to settle in because it was a huge stumbling block for me. I tried learning to meditate and abruptly quit multiple times because I didn't understand that purpose of the initial sessions.

At first, my meditation sessions were not enjoyable and seemed to make me more frustrated than relaxed. But I realized that while the sessions themselves were difficult, the rest of my day was superb. It was as though I needed to process a day's worth of tension at once to be present and calm afterward. When I began looking at meditation like an investment that paid dividends later, I was hooked.

The second (and larger) roadblock to becoming a committed meditator was having a really limited view of what meditation was. Once I saw meditation in its vast array of sitting, standing, laying, and moving routines, I was able to match it to my schedule and needs at the time and truly flourish. This epiphany has also enabled me to guide attendees of my tai chi class towards permanently adding meditation to their life.



## Why Meditation Works

One of the most surprising truths is that “doing nothing” can change everything. Sitting, standing, or moving quietly with awareness rewires both brain and body.

It works because meditation interrupts the cycle of stress and overthinking. Imagine your body as a factory: when stress runs high, resources get drained, workers get sloppy, and output suffers. Meditation gives the “factory” time to reset, repair, and work at its best.

That’s why so many people, from athletes to business leaders, credit meditation not as a shortcut, but as the tool that helps them stay consistent, resilient, and creative.

## Why Meditation *Doesn't* Work (at First)

Here’s the other side of the story: meditation isn’t always blissful at the beginning. In fact, many people quit right before the benefits show up.

Bad sessions feel like failure, but they’re often your brain processing stress, releasing old thought patterns, and clearing space for deeper calm. What feels like “I can’t do this” is usually “this is working, but it’s uncomfortable right now.”

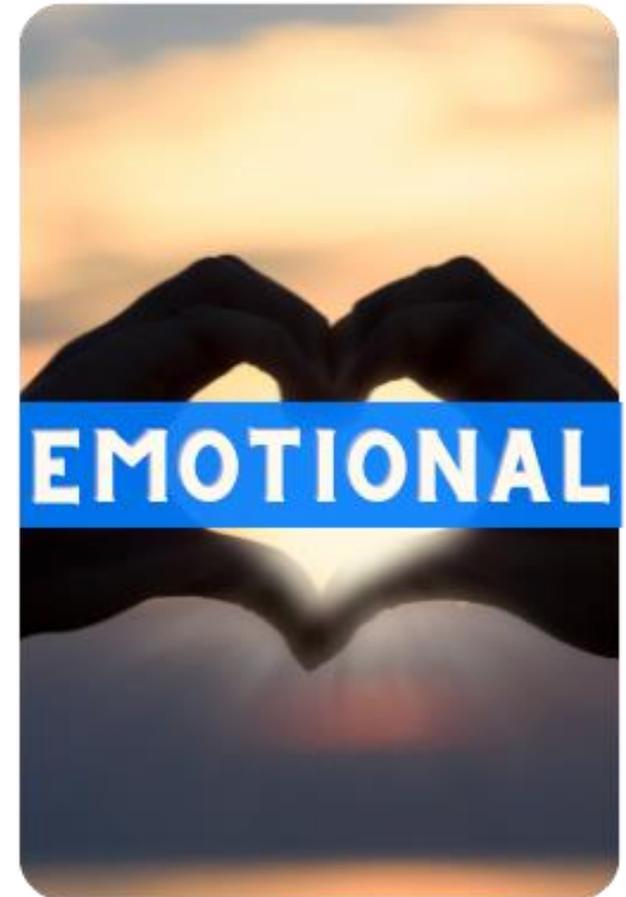
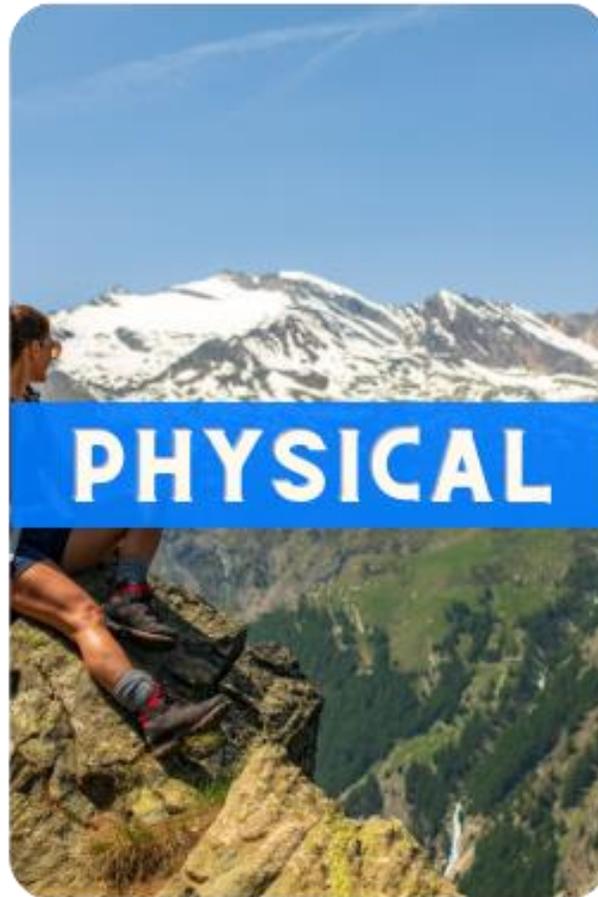
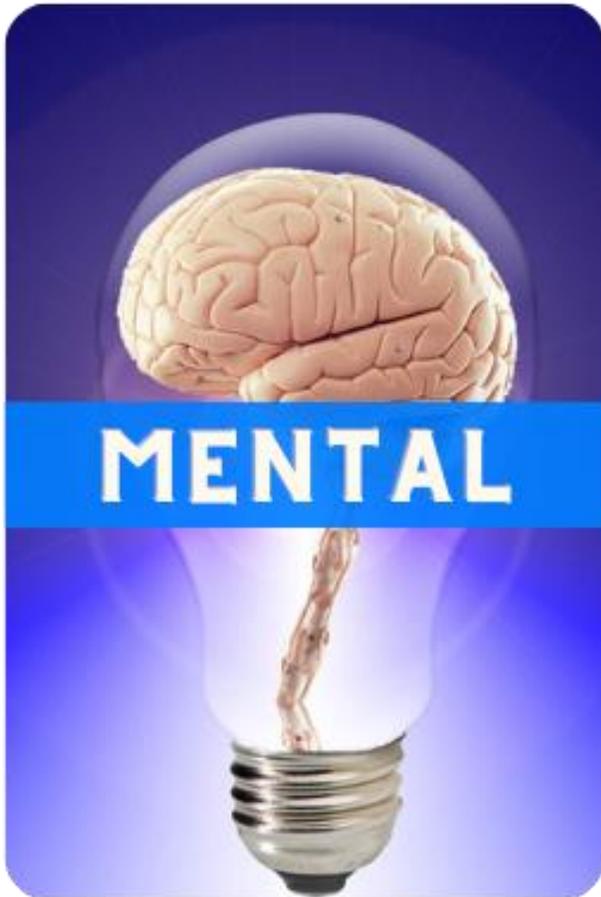


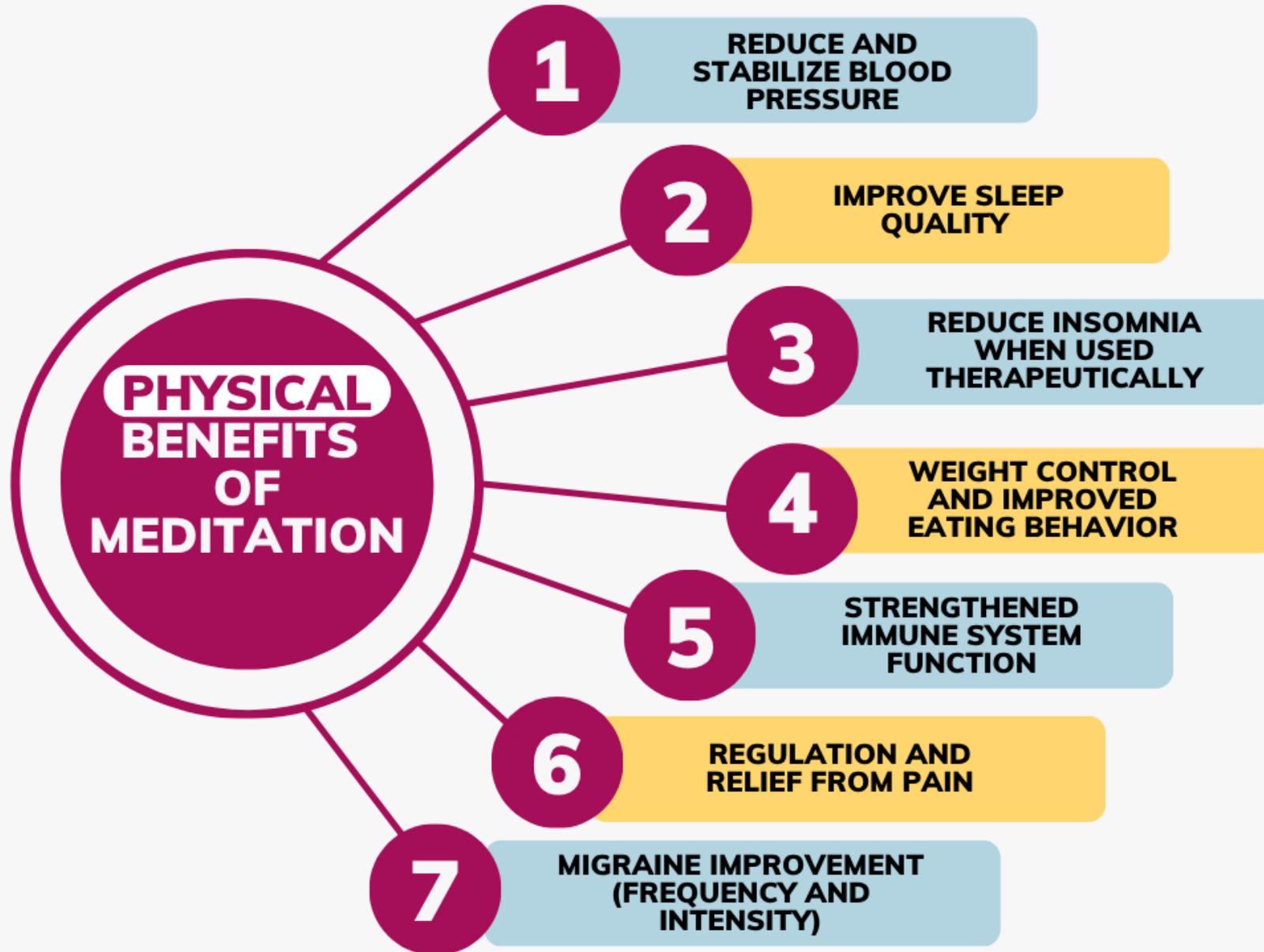
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Research-Backed

## Benefits of Meditation

To understand the benefits of meditation let's explore the hard evidence. This section gathers findings from psychology, neuroscience, and medicine into clear infographics and summaries so that you know exactly what to expect to gain by meditating.





# Physical Benefits of Meditation

Meditation doesn't just calm the mind, it measurably impacts the body. Researchers across medicine and psychology have tracked how consistent practice improves key health markers, from blood pressure to immune strength. Here's what science shows:

## **Improved sleep quality**

Systematic reviews of randomized controlled trials demonstrate that meditation improves multiple aspects of sleep, including efficiency, duration, and reduction of disturbances (Rusch et al., 2019). This makes it particularly beneficial for people with sleep disorders.

## **Relief from insomnia**

Mindfulness meditation has been tested as a therapeutic tool for chronic insomnia, with trials showing improvements in sleep onset and maintenance compared to control groups (Ong et al., 2014).

## **Strengthened immune system function**

By lowering stress responses, meditation supports immune resilience. Research demonstrates that stress management through mindfulness can positively affect immune markers and reduce inflammation (Thibodeaux and Rossano, 2018).

## **Reduced and stabilized blood pressure**

A meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials shows that meditation significantly lowers systolic and diastolic blood pressure, especially in people with hypertension (Shi et al., 2017). These results have been echoed in clinical reviews that see meditation as a viable complementary therapy for cardiovascular health (Goldstein et al., 2012).

## **Weight control and healthier eating behaviors**

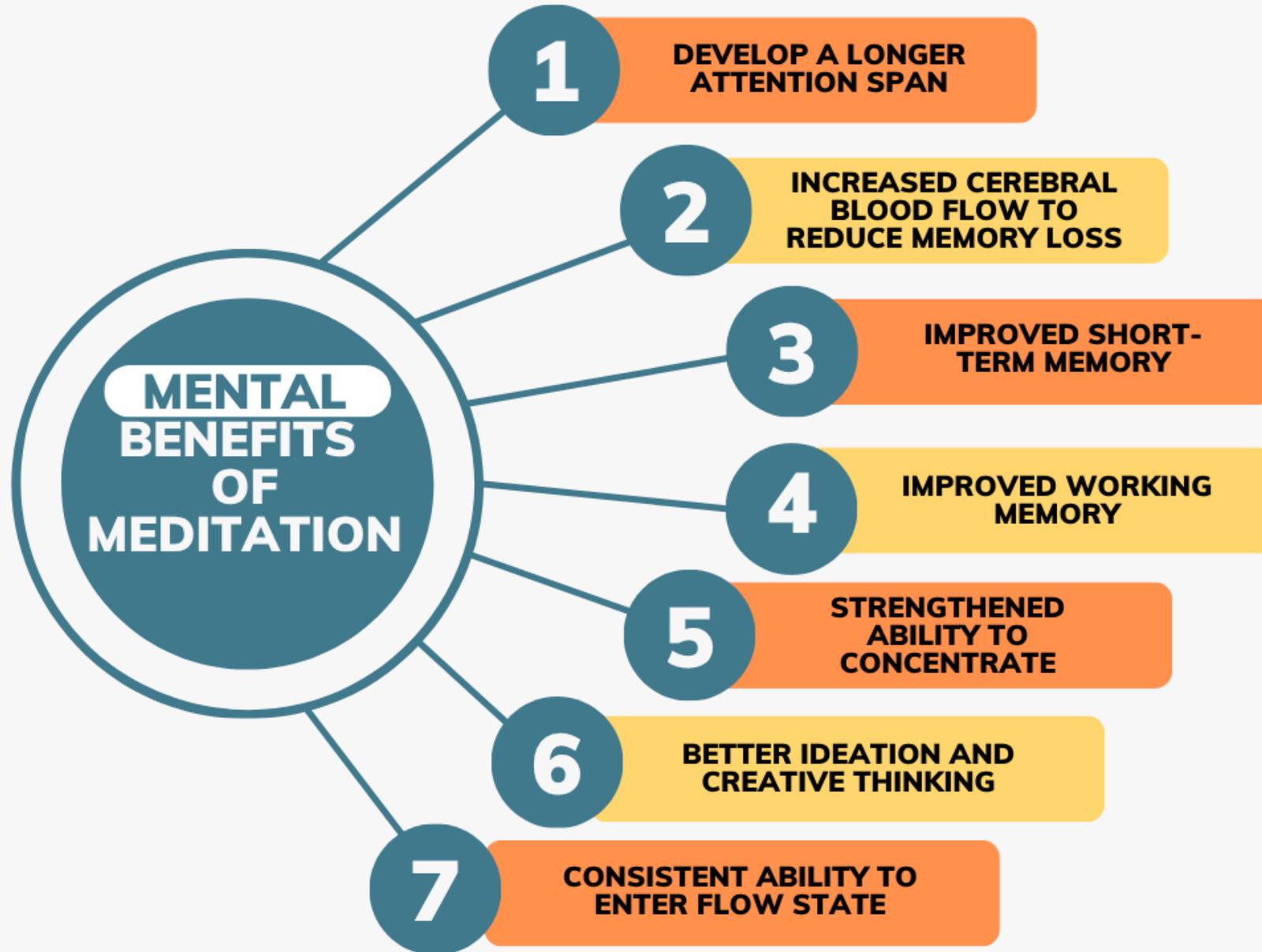
Survey data and intervention studies show that people who practice meditation are more likely to engage in mindful eating, reduce binge and emotional eating, and manage weight more effectively (Lauche et al., 2017; Katterman et al., 2014).

## **Pain regulation and relief**

Neuroimaging studies reveal that mindfulness meditation activates unique brain mechanisms for pain regulation, providing measurable relief without medication (Zeidan et al., 2012).

## **Migraine improvement**

A pilot randomized controlled trial found that participants practicing meditation experienced fewer migraine attacks and reduced intensity of symptoms, pointing to its value as a complementary therapy (Wells et al., 2014).



## Mental Benefits of Meditation

Meditation sharpens the mind by calming overstimulation and retraining attention. Neuroscience confirms what practitioners have reported for centuries: regular practice changes how we think, feel, and process stress.

### **Develop a longer attention span**

Even four days of focused meditation training can significantly enhance attention span, increasing both duration and stability of focus. In children with ADHD, mindfulness interventions also show promise in helping reduce distraction and impulsivity (Sidhu, 2013).

### **Increased cerebral blood flow—especially in memory-related brain areas**

In one pilot study, an eight-week meditation program increased baseline blood flow in critical brain regions, such as the prefrontal and superior parietal cortices, alongside better performance on memory and verbal fluency tests (Newberg et al., 2010).

### **Improved short-term memory**

Studies show that practicing mindfulness can enhance visual short-term memory, helping you hold and retrieve visual details more accurately (Youngs et al., 2021).

### **Strengthened working memory**

Meditation helps you juggle multiple pieces of information while making decisions and planning. Neuroimaging supports this, showing improved engagement of memory networks and even structural changes like a thicker prefrontal cortex and hippocampus (Van Vugt and Jha, 2011).

### **Enhanced ability to concentrate (both in time and intensity)**

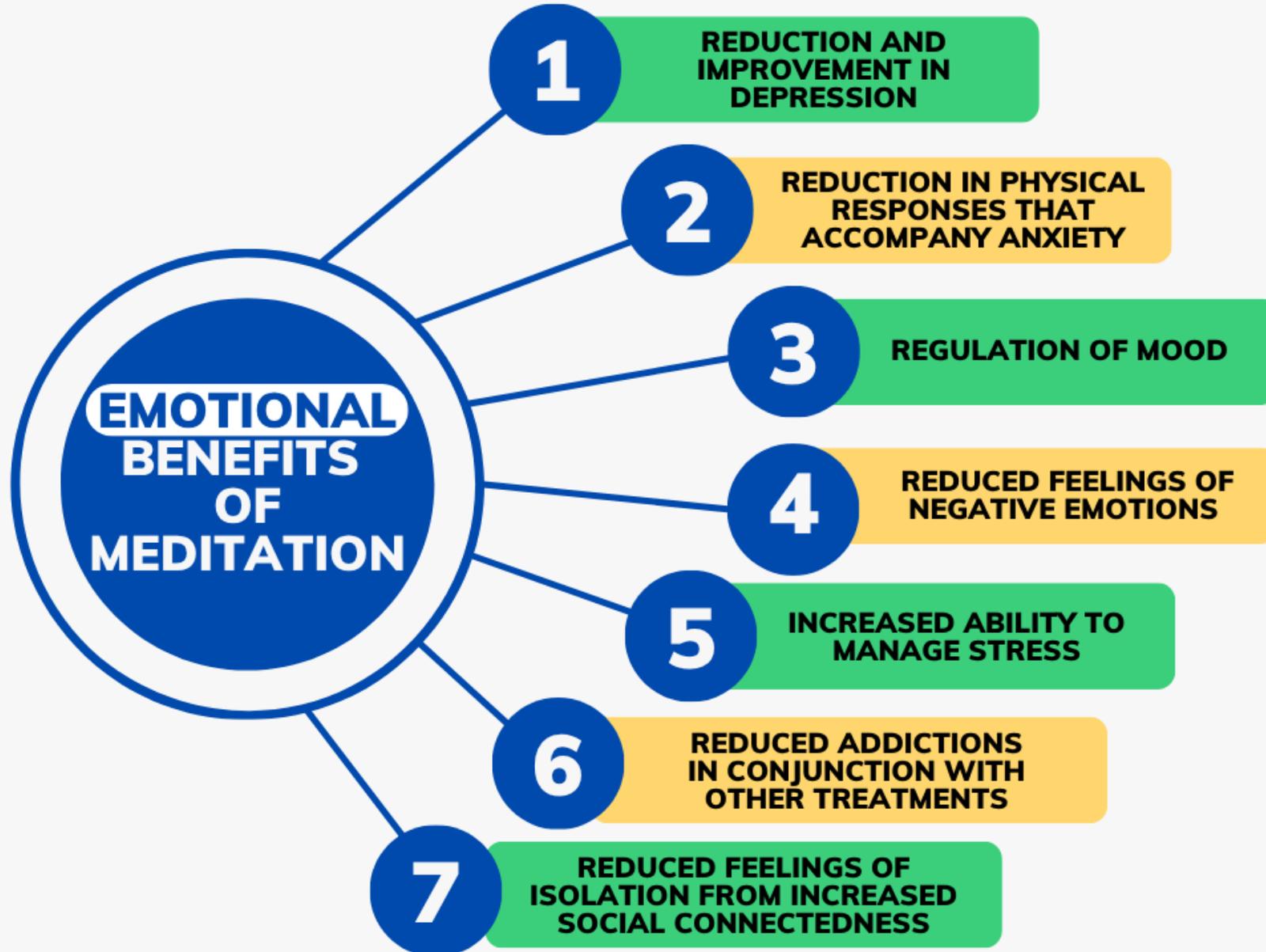
Studies across diverse groups from students to professionals demonstrate that meditation hones both how long and how sharply we can sustain attention (Grewal, 2014).

### **Facilitated ideation and creative thinking**

Whether building on an idea (convergent thinking) or thinking outside the box (divergent thinking), meditation enhances both types of creativity by shifting mental patterns (Colzato et al., 2012).

### **More consistent access to flow states**

Advanced meditators often report greater ease and frequency in entering deep states of flow and effortless focus where creativity and productivity are at their height (Sciolla, 2022).



## Emotional Benefits of Meditation

Beyond the physical and mental, meditation speaks to something deeper. It brings awareness to our sense of meaning, connection, and inner peace. These benefits often keep people practicing long after the initial curiosity fades.

### **Reduction and improvement in depression**

Studies consistently show that meditation reduces depressive symptoms, both as a stand-alone practice and when used alongside therapy. By calming repetitive negative thought patterns and improving awareness, meditation supports a more stable, positive outlook (Edenfield and Saeed, 2012; Saeed, Cunningham, and Bloch, 2019).

### **Reduction in physical responses that accompany anxiety**

Anxiety shows up in the body through elevated heart rate, shallow breathing, and muscle tension. Meditation lowers these stress responses, allowing the body to settle even when anxious thoughts are present (Bahrke and Morgan, 1978).

### **Regulation of mood**

Daily meditation helps stabilize mood by improving attention and emotional regulation. Even in beginners, brief daily practice has been shown to improve overall mood balance and reduce sudden shifts in mood (Basso et al., 2019).

### **Reduced feelings of negative emotions**

Short-term meditation interventions have been found to reduce the frequency and intensity of emotions like anger, frustration, and sadness. With practice, this creates more emotional resilience in everyday situations (Lane, Seskevich, and Pieper, 2007).

### **Increased ability to manage stress**

Meditation is a proven stress-reduction strategy, lowering both perceived stress and physiological stress markers in workplace and clinical settings. Even simple relaxation-based meditation techniques can make daily challenges feel less overwhelming (Carrington et al., 1980).

### **Reduced addictions in conjunction with other treatments**

Meditation does not replace medical treatment for addiction, but it enhances recovery. By improving self-awareness and reducing impulsive behaviors, meditation supports long-term recovery when paired with counseling or other interventions (Young, DeLorenzi, and Cunningham, 2011).

### **Reduced feelings of isolation and increased social connectedness**

Loving-kindness and compassion-based meditations foster stronger feelings of connection to others, which counteracts loneliness and isolation. This emotional openness strengthens relationships and improves overall well-being (Hutcherson, Seppala, and Gross, 2008).

## Successfully Learn to Meditate Even if You Are New

If you've ever thought, *"I can't meditate"* or *"My mind is too busy"* you're not alone. Nearly everyone begins with some degree of doubt. Meditation is about noticing what's happening inside you and gently steering your attention towards those feels and observing them. That means you already have everything you need to start.

When I talk to class attendees about their experience trying to meditate, their biggest obstacle isn't ability, it's expectations. Many people try once or twice, get frustrated, and conclude they can't do it. What they miss is that the wandering thoughts, restlessness, or even boredom are part of the process. Each time you return to your breath, mantra, or posture, you're building the very skill meditation is meant to strengthen.

Here are three key ideas that can make all the difference at the start:

**Small Steps Count.** You don't need a 30-minute session in silence. Even two or three minutes of focused practice helps.

**Comfort Over Perfection.** Sit, stand, or walk. Choose a style or posture that feels natural. Meditation should meet you where you are at, not highlight limitations.

**Pick a Style that Fits You.** Some people love sound, others prefer stillness, others need movement. There is no "one way."





## The science is clear.

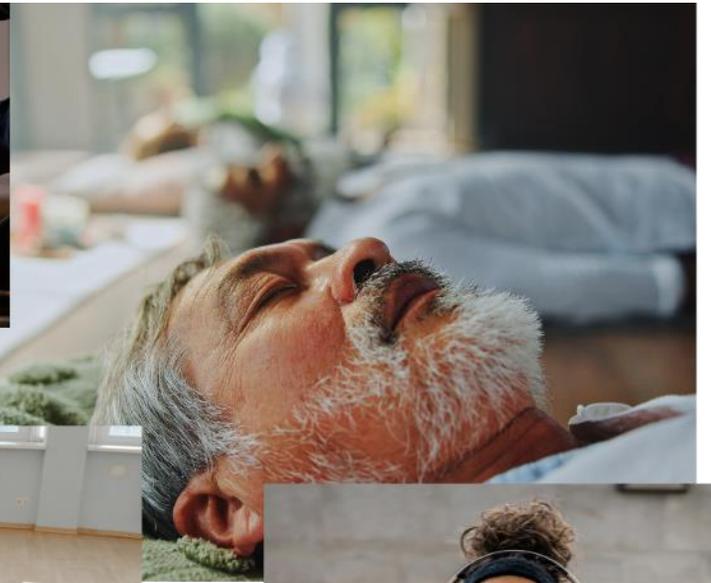
Benefits appear with consistency, not intensity. Lower blood pressure, clearer thinking, reduced stress, and better sleep are available to anyone who makes meditation a regular part of life.

Think of it like learning to play an instrument or practicing tai chi. The first few attempts may feel clumsy, but every session builds skill. Soon you have a complete series of tai chi movements or can play a recognizable song. After a while, the enjoyment you feel during the practice session is carried into other parts of your day. Meditation is practicing to remain calm, focus, and resilience which eventually permeates your non-meditation time.

What follows are fifteen distinct meditation styles, each with its own flavor and benefits. As you read, keep this in mind: you are fully capable of practicing meditation and experiencing its rewards. Choose something that meets your goals, schedule, and interest. The only requirement is curiosity and the willingness to begin. Some are easy enough to put into practice with minimal instruction. A couple require finding a teacher or retreat but most can be learned proficiently through inexpensive online courses. For some styles I have included links to great resources that I am aware of.

# 15 STYLES OF MEDITATION

Finding the right style to match your goals and steps to get started.



# 1. Guided Meditation - Getting Started and Perfecting the Practice



We begin our walk through the different styles of meditation with guided meditation because it is the easiest way to start and can be applied to many of the other styles you will learn about later in this handbook. Guided meditation gives you step by step instructions and removes the guesswork about what to do, how long to do it, and what to expect.

Guided meditation is equally valuable for both beginners who need clear direction and for experienced meditators who want to explore new techniques, deepen their practice, or move past a plateau. Because it is so flexible, guided meditation can be used to relax before bed, regain focus during a hectic workday, or explore deeper states of awareness.

This style of meditation is simply the practice of listening to a teacher. Whether it is live, recorded, or even reading a well-written script, the participant is led through a meditation and instructed on what to think about, how to breathe, and what to do.

Despite how useful it is, guided meditation is often misunderstood and not utilized as often as it should be. Newcomers sometimes worry that it is too mystical or too advanced. Long time practitioners often dismiss it as a bridge to so called real meditation.

The truth sits somewhere in the middle. If you are new, guided sessions provide the structure that helps you experience benefits sooner so you keep practicing. If you are already practicing, guided work can create consistency or break up the monotony if you practice has grown drab and you are looking for something fresh.

## Why It Works

Guidance provides structure and removes uncertainty. Research shows that guided sessions help reduce stress and improve mood by giving beginners a framework for attention (Goyal et al., 2014). Even seasoned meditators return to guided practices for extra support or variety.

## History and Evolution

Though often associated with modern apps like Headspace or Calm, guided meditation has roots in Buddhist and yogic traditions, where



teachers orally instructed disciples. The modern delivery system has simply scaled this oral tradition globally.

### **How to Begin**

- Choose a quiet, comfortable space
- Select a guided meditation such as relaxation, healing, gratitude, sleep
- Set an intention
- Follow the guide or guided meditation script
- Engage the senses
- Practice consistently and regularly
- Choose a reliable teacher or online program

Over time, you may not need the recording, but it's a great way to establish consistency.

### **[Guided Meditation w Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming](#)**

Here is a great example of a step-by-step guided qigong meditation course explained in detail by Master Yang Jwing-Ming.

No prior experience is needed and it is excellent for people looking to improve health, reduce stress, and increase their energy.



## 2. Body Scan Meditation – The Gateway to Stress Relief



Body scanning is a style of meditation that requires no prior knowledge, no complex learning, can be done quickly, and delivers immediate results. Not only that, it is being utilized by the medical community to help people reduce stress which is hugely important considering that research indicates that stress contributes to **75-90% of known disease processes** (Autoimmune Institute, 2023).

Body scan meditation is the meditation I suggest to newcomers, people who haven't yet bought in to the esoteric aspects of meditation, and meditators who are having trouble connecting what they feel during meditation to how they feel throughout the day. It's the style I do when I am frazzled, my sleep is affected by stress, or I am prolonging breathwork.

Body Scan Meditation is a technique where a practitioner concentrates on body parts in a specific order, while breathing deeply and releasing tension.

If you are new to meditating and eager for the benefits, body scan meditation is the easiest way to get started because it requires no knowledge, buy-in, equipment, or much time. If you have “failed” at meditating or been away from it for a while, body scanning is your gateway back in.

### Why It Works

By noticing sensations without judgment, you release tension and retrain your nervous system to relax. Body scan practices reduce stress, anxiety, and even pain perception (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

### Historical Roots

While popularized through Jon Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, the idea originates in Buddhist mindfulness of the body.

### How to Begin

Focus on the feet breathing in and out twice. Allow the feet to feel heavy. Continue with the calves and move up each body part breathing two long breaths and imagining the body being heavy. If you notice tension, breathe into that spot and release.

## 3. Mindfulness Meditation – Training Awareness in Everyday Life



Mindfulness has gained popularity in recent years as being a way to calm the mind and increase mental awareness. It is often presented through examples like staying present while washing the dishes or eating lunch. Aside from riding the wave of recent wellness trends and becoming a pop-culture buzzword, when performed correctly it is a practical skill for training the mind to be more present, resilient, and balanced. Its purpose is to give a person a way to respond to life's challenges with clarity rather than reactivity.

The modern mindfulness movement owes much of its credibility to Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who in the 1970s developed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and demonstrated its ability to improve health outcomes for

patients with chronic pain, anxiety, and other difficult conditions. What made MBSR work was not just a call to “be present,” but a structured program of meditation, gentle movement, and group support that was practiced consistently over several weeks.

**Mindfulness meditation is the deliberate practice of paying attention to the present moment without judgment.**

### Why It Works

Decades of research confirm mindfulness reduces stress, improves focus, and strengthens emotional regulation (Chiesa & Serretti, 2009). It is now integrated into therapy, education, and corporate wellness worldwide.

### History

Mindfulness stems from the Buddhist practice of *sati*, meaning awareness or remembrance. In the 20th century, teachers like Thích Nhất Hạnh and Jon Kabat-Zinn adapted it for secular audiences.

With Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program he was successful at helping people alleviate chronic pain and previously debilitating medical conditions, both physical and mental. Kabat-Zinn's work is nothing short of brilliant considering that it took place almost half a century ago at a time when western medicine was not receptive to alternative approaches. He brought eastern thinking into the western medical community and demonstrated results that could be replicated.



## How to Begin

- Find a quiet space or choose a simple activity such as eating.
- Set your intention: Decide how long you'll meditate. Start with 5-10 minutes.
- Focus on your breath: Notice the natural rhythm of your breathing as air is moving in and out.
- Notice your thoughts: When your mind wanders (and it will), gently bring your attention back to the breath without judgment.
- Use your senses: Observe sounds, sensations, and the feeling of the body in the present moment.
- Stay curious and kind: Allow each moment to unfold without trying to change it. Acknowledge distractions and return to focus.
- End with awareness: When your timer sounds, take a deep breath, notice how you feel, and carry that awareness with you.

## [Complete Mindfulness Training Course](#)

There is a very comprehensive mindfulness course online that includes several powerful mindfulness breathing techniques.

It's beneficial to a wide audience because it's great for people wanting to prevent burn-out and stress as well as people who want to use meditation to enhance creativity and focus.



## 4. Inner Smile Meditation – Cultivating Joy from Within



My aim in teaching and writing about meditation and the internal arts is to increase the number of people who practice and reap the health and wellness rewards. But let's face it, learning tai chi or any "foreign" art can be incredibly complex and takes time! Not so with the easy and incredibly beneficial practice of the inner smile meditation. In the internal arts world, it has to be the best combination of easy-to-do and bang-for-your-buck.

The inner smile is a meditation process where a practitioner is trained to hold a smile, slow and deepen the breath, and move mental attention down into the body focusing on the major organs. Modern research now substantiates the

findings that altering a person's face to be rested or smiling improves their disposition.

### Why It Works

Positive imagery activates the parasympathetic nervous system, lowering stress and boosting mood. Research on loving-kindness and gratitude practices shows similar effects: greater emotional resilience and life satisfaction (Fredrickson et al., 2008).

### History

Rooted in Taoist internal alchemy, the practice was designed to harmonize body, mind, and spirit by sending "smiling energy" into vital organs.

### How to Begin

- Sit comfortably, breathe deeply.
- Relax the face and smile in a way similar to what you see on Buddhist statues.
- Place your attention right behind your head as though you are listening to someone speak behind you.
- Imagine smiling into your heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, and spleen.
- Let the warmth radiate outward through the whole body.

## 5. Walking Meditation – Mindfulness in Motion



With the surge of interest in meditation and people from all walks of life hoping to add meditation to their busy schedules, the question often arises as to which is the most accessible and adaptable to modern life?

Walking meditation is unique among the other styles for three main reasons: It can double or triple the time a person meditates each week thereby delivering more profound results. It overlaps with health goals to take a break, get outside, move your body, or walk off a meal. And it positively impacts work goals because walking after lunch can keep your afternoon less sluggish.

Walking Meditation is a dynamic mindfulness practice that

bridges the gap between physical movement and mental awareness. Practitioners use each step and breath to cultivate a deep connection to the present moment. It is unique in how it teaches people how to meditate *during* the events of our life rather than feeling good during a quiet meditation session and trying to retain it throughout the day.

For those of you that already have a meditation practice, you know that it is really difficult to conjure up that oh-so-good-feeling you had during a meditation session in the middle of feeling frustrated, angry, attending a difficult meeting, or even parenting a stubborn child. Meditation while walking gives us the chance to practice during a continually changing activity so we can learn how to maintain presence of mind as things change around us.

Walking meditation transforms a simple act into a mindful practice. Instead of rushing, you synchronize each step with breath and awareness. Instead of treating the transition between two events as a burden, a time to seek distraction, or a time to worry or think about what is coming next, you honor it as a break and as a way to reconnect to yourself and what is going on around you.

### **Why It Works**

Walking meditation doubles meditation time by layering mindfulness onto daily movement. Studies show walking meditation reduces anxiety, improves mood, and enhances attention (Gotink et al., 2016).

Without noticing it, most people typically divide their day into activities that they find important and the times between these activities. These are used for transitions, commutes, or times to take a mental break. By adding mindfulness to these transitions, we engage with all portions of our day and see each of them as equally valuable.

### History

Walking meditation has roots in early Buddhism, where it was used to balance long hours of sitting practice. Zen traditions formalized it as *kinhin*, a slow, deliberate walking between seated meditations. More recently it was popularized by Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hạnh and covered extensively in his books [Peace is Every Step](#) and [you are here](#).

### How to Begin

- Walk slowly in a quiet space, indoors or outdoors.
- Pay attention to the pace of your breath and listen intensely to your breath and any noising you hear around you.
- Synchronize breath with steps.
- Notice movements or changes taking place around you with great detail.
- Overall, the goal is to acknowledge and give full attention to what is going on around you and your actions while keeping a portion of your attention focused on yourself and sensations in your body.



## 6. Loving Kindness Meditation – Compassion That Challenges



A student came to me struggling with really difficult events in her life including some health surprises, care for aging family members, and things not going well at home and at work. She was intelligent enough to realize that the worry, self-loathing, criticism of others, and poor interactions were making everything more difficult. Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM) seemed like the perfect solution with its promises to increase compassion for herself and others, let alone the good vibes touted by its practitioners. That was until she abandoned it because it made her feel worse. Soon thankfully, she learned more about the process of loving kindness meditation and carried on practicing.

Loving Kindness Meditation is a mindfulness practice for

nurturing positive emotions and attitudes towards oneself and others. It is rooted in a traditional Buddhist idea known as "Metta" developed to foster a more permanent sense of happiness, empathy, and connectedness. The practice involves silently repeating phrases of goodwill toward yourself and others.

There is an assumption in most of the literature and testimonials on LKM that by simply following a loving kindness meditation script you feel better immediately. This isn't true for everyone which is sad because they may stop something they could really benefit from. If you don't feel better, should you quit or how long should you work at it? Are you meditating incorrectly or is it just not a good fit for you?

More problematically, what if it makes you feel worse? For some, practicing self-compassion meditation is initially more painful because thinking about what you are up against in life doesn't improve how you feel. This was certainly true for the woman in my class. It wasn't until she understood that loving kindness meditation was helping her work through the problems rather suppress them that she truly began to make progress.

If you have ever felt a negative reaction to something that is supposed to make you feel better, it can be extremely unsettling. I don't think a lot of people are talking about how difficult self-compassion is at the beginning and no one is admitting to how many people abandon it. But this doesn't have to be the case.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's quote about the "dark night of the soul" is a perfect metaphor:

*"In the real dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning, day after day."*

In order to pass through difficult times and benefit from something like Loving Kindness Meditation, we need some motivation and knowledge to stay the course. This way, we can trust the process and spend enough time evolving for the meditation to work its magic.

I want to be clear that I am an advocate for compassion meditations but I fear that the path from pain to promise is a bit blurry when the distance between the two is quite large.

Yes, one can contemplate themselves into a better and more accepting state. And yes, this change can be made permanent as a person lays the groundwork to actually become someone who is less reactive, more tolerant, and more accepting of their present state. However, some of the things that life throws at us are really daunting and lofty ideals or aphorisms aren't enough to make change in our lives. Luckily, there are online courses and skilled teachers to lead us along the way.

### **Why It Works**

LKM increases compassion and positive emotion while reducing self-criticism and hostility. Neuroscience shows it

activates brain regions linked to empathy (Hofmann et al., 2011). However, for some, confronting self-directed compassion can initially stir resistance or discomfort.

### **History**

This practice originates in Buddhist traditions and was preserved in the *Metta Sutta*. It was designed to dissolve barriers of anger and resentment.

### **How to Begin**

- Repeat phrases like, "May I be happy. May you be safe. May we be at peace."
- Start with yourself, then extend to loved ones, acquaintances, and eventually all beings.
- Be patient if difficult emotions arise, they often signal the practice is working.

### **[7-Day Metta Meditation Course: Journey to Loving-Kindness](#)**

This is a great online course that explains the practice the principles of LKM. It can help a person enhance relationships through compassion and empathy, develop skills to disengage from negative thoughts and self-talk, and cultivate peace, joy, and self-confidence in daily life.



## 7. Mantra Meditation - Harnessing the Power of Sound



You know that oh-so-good feeling you get during concerts? Maybe a connectedness you feel singing or reciting prayer in unison with others? Chills or pride during your national anthem or pledge of allegiance? Or the relief experienced from episodes of sobbing or crying from a loss? Our innate physiology responds magnificently to repetitive, deep, familiar, or droning sound. Traditions around the world have known this for centuries and developed mantra meditation to achieve greater levels of health, sleep, emotional states, or concentration.

Mantra meditation is the repeated use of a sound, word, or phrase to enhance concentration and produce a coherent frequency resonating in the body. Mantras can be sung,

chanted, spoken, whispered, or said mentally and have their roots in all religious traditions.

There is a unique intelligence in mantra meditations that benefits both beginner and advanced meditators in profound ways. For newcomers, it has the effect of filling in or smoothing over the rough edges to give you better, tangible outcomes without having to wait to gain some level of experience. That fact alone I think turns more people into lifelong meditators because they experience success from the get-go.

For people who have been meditating for a while, mantras plunge you deeper into the experience and can take what you are experiencing in your head or torso and radiate it out to include the entire body. I can also personally say that mantra meditation has saved me from boredom or a wandering mind and often gives me the sense of being thoroughly rested and reinvigorated.

### **Why It Works**

Sound repetition has profound neurological effects, engaging auditory pathways and producing coherent brainwave patterns. Studies link mantra practice to reduced stress, enhanced mood, and improved attention (Bernardi et al., 2001).

While there are many different styles of meditation, not all use chanting, words, or tones to enhance the experience or increase focus. Regular meditation often focuses on observing the breath, bodily sensations,



or simply being present in the moment without any specific external aids. Mantra meditation, on the other hand, involves active repetition of a chosen word or phrase. This repetition serves as a mental anchor, diverting your mind from distracting thoughts and helping you dive deeper into your inner world. It's like giving your brain a catchy tune to attach to while you explore the depths of your consciousness.

### **History**

Mantras appear in nearly every spiritual tradition: “Om” in Hinduism, “Om Mani Padme Hum” in Buddhism, the Jesus Prayer in Christianity, and Zikr in Islam. Each employs vibration to center awareness and align with deeper meaning.

### **How to Begin**

- Choose a mantra (traditional or personal).
- Repeat it aloud, in a whisper, or silently.
- Let the vibration settle mind and body.

### **Mantras for Meditation & Transformation**

This is an effective course which teaches about mantras as well as how to pronounce or sing them.

It includes journaling prompts to chart growth and transformation as well as introducing ideas on how to use mantras throughout your day or week.



## 8. Transcendental Meditation – Structured Personal Mantras



Half a century ago, a physics student in Central India who became a spiritual teacher developed a meditation practice to help us rise above the daily stress and negative emotions that we all experience. Fast forward to today, and Transcendental Meditation has become possibly the most popular form of meditation in the world with its own international organization and testimonials by celebrities.

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a seated meditation technique employing a word or phrase repeated silently to promote mental clarity, a state of deep relaxation, and improved health. Developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the mid-twentieth century, it is now practiced the world over and owes some of its popularity to celebrities who credit it with their success.

With its international popularity and success stories from people like Oprah Winfrey and Jerry Seinfeld, it's obvious why so many people are interested in it.

Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a seated practice using a silently repeated mantra assigned by a trained teacher. Unlike a general mantra meditation, the mantras in TM are individualized, creating a personal anchor for the mind.

### Why It Works

TM produces a measurable state of “restful alertness” which is deep relaxation combined with mental clarity. Research shows it reduces anxiety, lowers blood pressure, and improves overall well-being (Travis & Shear, 2010).

### History

Developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in the 1950s, TM gained global attention through the Beatles and later through widespread wellness programs. Its structured, teacher-based model makes it both respected and controversial.

### How to Begin

TM requires finding a certified instructor to receive a personalized, authentic mantra. Sessions are typically 20 minutes, twice a day.

## 9. Chakra Meditation - Energy Awareness and Balance



My respect for chakra meditation has grown immensely over the years that I have been meditating but I have to tell you that this wasn't always the case. I met very few people (me included) who could tangibly explain or demonstrate how meditating on the chakras could balance, align, or cleanse someone's energy centers and improve their well-being. Then it became clear that chakra meditation is powerful, but requires a level of knowledge and commitment that I would say most of the available resources on chakra mediation don't provide. And yet, here's the truth:

Chakra meditation is the process of concentrating on seven energy centers in the body to improve mental and physical health. Originating in Hindu tradition, poor health is believed

to result from a chakra or "wheel" being out of balance or blocked which the meditation works to correct.

Chakra meditation is powerful but takes dedicated time and learning. I believe that a lot of the resources out there are well-intentioned but are doing the reputation a disservice by promising balance, alignment, or clearing of bad energy without including the steps, guided meditation or a script to back it up. If you are diligent, read on. I will explain what chakra meditation is, identify the seven chakra points, talk about the chakra meditation hand positions, colors, and guide you through chakra meditation.

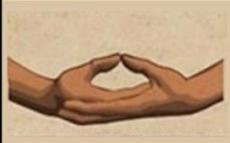
### Why It Works

Visualization, sound, and attention to body regions enhance awareness and relaxation. Research on chakra-based practices shows improvements in stress reduction and emotional stability (Harrington et al., 2016).

### History

Chakras originated in early Indian traditions, particularly yoga and tantra, as maps of physical, emotional, and spiritual energy.

Chakra meditation involves focusing on seven energy centers running from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. Each chakra is linked to colors, sounds, and psychological states.

Chakra	Location	Color	Mantra	Mudra
<b>Muladhara (Root)</b>	Base of the spine	Red	Laam	
<b>Svadhishthana (Sacrum)</b>	Lower abdomen	Orange	Raam	
<b>Manipura (Solar Plexus)</b>	Upper abdomen	Yellow	Vaam	
<b>Anahata (Heart)</b>	Center of the chest	Green (Pink)	Yaam	
<b>Vishuddha (Throat)</b>	Throat	Blue (Light Blue)	Haam	
<b>Ajna (Third Eye)</b>	Between the eyebrows.	Indigo	Shaam	
<b>Sahasrara (Crown)</b>	Top of the head	Violet (White)	Ohm	

## How to Begin

Focus on the seven chakra locations along your spine starting at the tailbone and working up to the top of the head.

- Working your way up, think about the location, visualize the specific color, vocalize the specific mantra, and hold the specific mudra or hand position.
- Notice areas of harmony or imbalance in your body and mind.

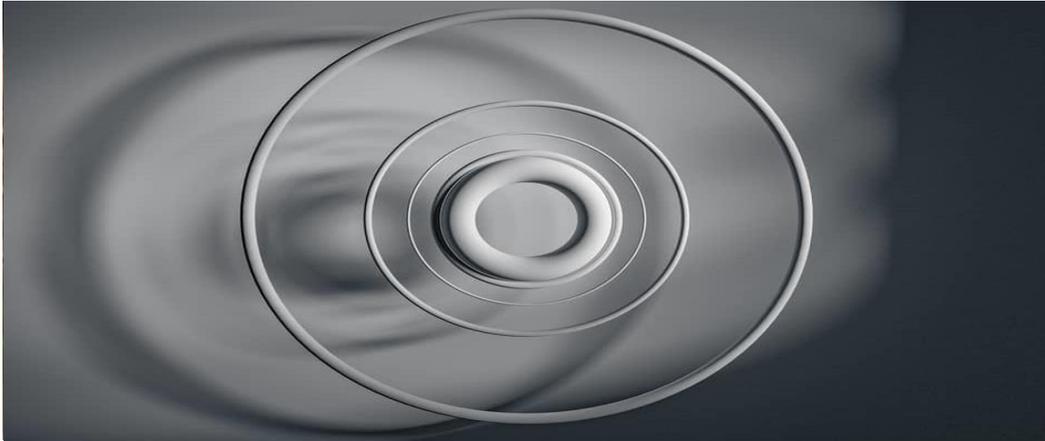
If you have no experience yet with the energies of the body or this sounds extremely esoteric, don't overthink it. For example, think of how powerful energy is related to reproduction and how strong physical impulses from your lower center feel. Conversely, think about what digestive energy feels like when meditating on the lower abdomen, or how the heart feels when you love someone. Accept that these are characteristically very different and increasingly "thinner" or less strong as you move up your body. This transition and differences are what Chakra meditation are trying to capture in a meditation system.

## [Certificate in Meditation for Chakra Healing](#)

There is definitely more complex learning needed if you are interested in the Chakras but there is also an excellent course for it.



## 10. Microcosmic Orbit – Building and Circulating Energy



If you told me several years ago that energy could be built in the body to a level that it could be felt I may have believed you. If you told me that it moved I still would have been listening but with a greater degree of doubt. If you then told me that I could build this energy to the point of feeling it and move it throughout my body, to positively impact my health you would have lost me there. And yet, that's exactly what is possible.

Using a meditation technique popularized by Mantak Chia we can build energy and circle it through the body's torso, or microcosmic orbit.

The Microcosmic Orbit is a Taoist seated meditation dating back to prehistoric China that moves the body's energy

around meridian channels for the purpose of building and improving health, healing, and mental balance. It links the governing meridian channel that rises up the spine to the conception meridian channel that travels down the front of the body.

If you are a seasoned meditator and want to take your meditation to a deeper level, then this is for you. The Microcosmic Orbit or "Small Circulation" Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years by so many traditions there are tons of resources like audio tracks, book and videos which makes it ideal for dedicated new meditators who are most interested in building energy and people who want to dive deep.

### Why It Works

This practice regulates nervous system balance and creates a "closed loop" of circulating energy. Taoist and qigong traditions describe it as building vitality and longevity, while modern interpretations link it to nervous system regulation.

### History

Originating in Taoist internal alchemy, the orbit was seen as a foundation for spiritual transformation and martial power.

It has been a way for practitioners to move from beginner to advanced with definable goals. You start by energizing specific points, connecting the points, moving energy through the points, and then connecting the torso (microcosmic orbit) with the arms and legs (macrocosmic orbit).



## How to Begin

I will describe in general terms what microcosmic orbit meditation is but in truth, it can't be learned without reading Mantak Chia's book: [Awaken Healing Energy Through The Tao](#) or by learning through an online course.

- Beginning in your lower center, concentrate on the point with the intent of building and feeling energy.
- You move down to the sacrum and then follow specific points up the back over the head and down the front to return to the center.
- This is completed three times. Advanced practitioners complete the macrocosmic orbit which includes points in the arms and legs.
- Return to the microcosmic orbit for three circles.
- End by circling energy in the center clockwise for 36 repetitions, and the counter-clockwise for 24 repetitions.

## [Microcosmic Orbit Meditation For Healing](#)

MCO meditation does indeed have a learning curve but I have included it in this guide because so many people who are interested in meditation say it is exactly what they aspire to do.

It is completely possible to experience with the right amount of time commitment and the right instruction. Check out this online course.



# 11. Sound Bath Meditation – Immersed in Vibration



I have experimented with many styles of meditation over the years, but sound bath meditation was one that escaped me until recently and I regret I didn't start sooner.

In a sound bath meditation, attendees lie comfortably on mats as instructors use Tibetan metal bowls, crystal bowls, and gongs to create a resonating frequency that causes deep relaxation. Typically, sound bath meditations are 60 minutes and are conducted in groups.

The experience was shockingly enjoyable and provided a great sense of relaxation and profound sleep on the nights of the sessions. It requires the least amount of experience and effort of all styles of meditation and can be performed by anyone, regardless of health status or physical limitations.

## Why It Works

Vibrations entrain brainwaves, slow breathing, and induce relaxation. Research shows sound-based meditation reduces tension, anxiety, and fatigue (Garcia-Gil et al., 2020).

## History

Though modern sound baths are popular in wellness spaces, their roots lie in ancient rituals using chanting, drumming, and resonant instruments for healing and altered states of consciousness.

## How to Begin

- Attend a session with trained facilitators or use recordings.
- Letting go of effort, simply listen and allow the sound to wash through you.
- Sessions typically last 45–60 minutes.

## [50 Days of Meditation with Sound Bath Concerts](#)

Sound bath meditations can be done on your own but there is quite a bit of skill undertaken by the musicians that understand bowl frequencies well enough to produce a “concert” of associated sounds. This series gives an overview of best-practices and 50 days of immersive concerts.



## 12. Tapping Meditation – Releasing Through Acupressure



There is a frustrating aspect to trying to make any change in life: We are not always sure why we're not getting the results we want or making progress. In the best of circumstances, we hire or know a knowledgeable person who can point out something we could be doing differently. In the worst of circumstances, we beat ourselves up for not improving and are left feeling deflated and judgmental rather than inspired. Tapping meditation is a modern tool built on ancient processes that enables us to get past what we may not realize is actually getting in our way.

Tapping Meditation is the process of focusing on negative thoughts, emotions, physical pain, or something we want to change while tapping acupressure points to trigger

neurological responses leading to relaxation. This combination disassociates the problem from negative emotion or beliefs so that the problem dissolves and we experience change.

I find that with a slight understanding of the science and origin of the process, a person gains the buy-in needed to give tapping meditation a shot. There is no downside such as cost or the time it takes to find a teacher or attend a class. You just need about 20 minutes and proper instruction.

Also known as Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), tapping meditation combines focused awareness of a problem with tapping on acupressure points.

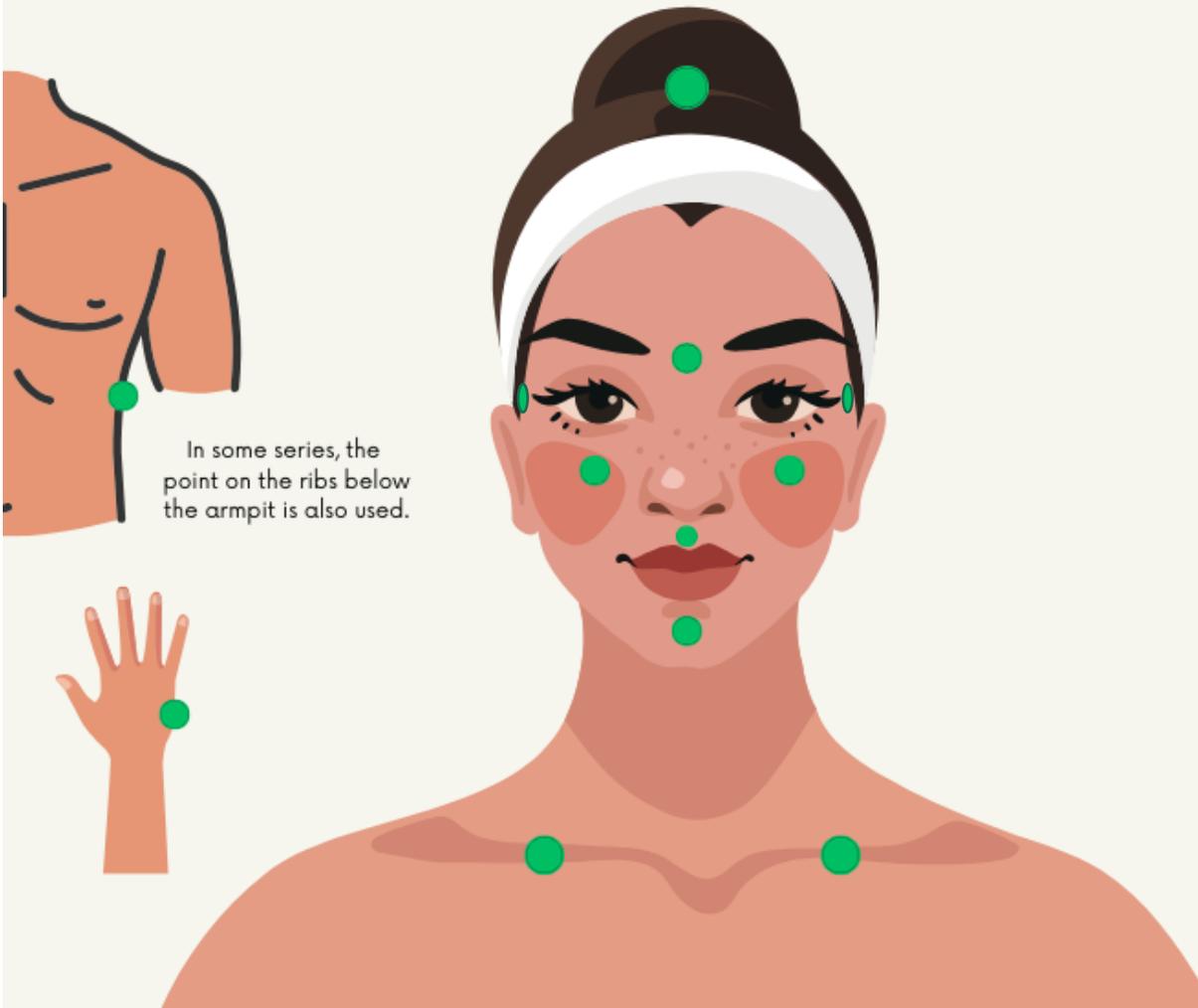
### **Why It Works**

By linking thought, emotion, and physical stimulation, tapping calms the amygdala, reducing stress responses. Studies show EFT helps with anxiety, PTSD, and pain (Clond, 2016).

### **History**

The origins of tapping meditation can be traced back to traditional Chinese medicine and the meridian system of subtle energy pathways that are thought to be interconnected with our physical and emotional well-being.

# Tapping Meditation Points



By tapping on specific points associated with these meridians, practitioners can release blocked energy and promote emotional release and healing.

## How to Begin

- Identify an issue (stress, pain, fear).
- Rate its intensity (1-10).
- Tap each point three times with your index fingers while repeating affirmations:
  - Sides of the Hands (tap both sides together)
  - Crown of the Head
  - Between the Eyebrows
  - Temples
  - Cheekbone Under the Eyes
  - Upper Lip Under the Nose
  - Chin Below the Lower Lip
  - Collarbones
- Rate yourself again and reassess after a few rounds.

## [EFT Tapping - Meridian Meditation Program](#)

For effective direct instruction, check out this course which includes audio instructions for you to download and easily use anywhere.



## 13. Insight Meditation – Observing Impermanence



Insight meditation is by far the youngest form of meditation when viewed through a Western lens and conversely one of the first styles of meditating to get a foothold in the United States. Due to its history and some advanced thinking from a Burmese monk in the late 1800s, Westerners were given a way to understand and adopt many of the primary ideas of Buddhism. Not only can you create consciousness for yourself, but you have a legion of societies and retreat centers to help you along the way.

Insight meditation is a Buddhist practice of meditating in a calm state of present awareness and focusing on the impermanence of thoughts, actions, and feelings in our life. The goal is to see ourselves as separate from these beliefs

because clinging to them causes suffering. It was made popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century by Burmese monk Ledi Sayadaw.

Insight meditation (*vipassana* in Burmese traditions) emphasizes seeing reality clearly: all things are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

### Why It Works

By watching thoughts and sensations arise and pass, practitioners reduce attachment and suffering. Research confirms insight meditation improves mindfulness, reduces stress, and supports emotional well-being (Sedlmeier et al., 2012).

### History

Revived in 19th-century Burma by Ledi Sayadaw, insight meditation democratized Buddhist practice for laypeople and helped inspire the Western mindfulness movement.

### How to Begin

- Sit quietly and notice sensations of breath and body.
- Observe without clinging to the thought or rejecting it.
- Gradually extend awareness to thoughts, emotions, and life experiences.

## 14. Vipassana Meditation – Discipline for Deep Insight



One huge benefit of being both a meditation, qigong, and tai chi practitioner and teacher, is that I get to frequently interact with other practitioners who are further down the path than I am. It's always an opportunity to pick their brains, see what they are working on, and what has had the greatest impact on the progress they are making. Regardless of personality type or having completely different interests, so many have shared that Vipassana meditation has played a big role in their progress.

This was problematic for me though. Each time I set out to try to understand what it was or even look for a Vipassana meditation retreat, I was confronted with really complex vocabulary, competing definitions about what Vipassana

meditation is, and not a clear sense of whether I could do Vipassana meditation at home or absolutely had to find a Vipassana meditation center.

The truth is that Vipassana meditation *is* complex but an explanation of it doesn't have to be. It's relatively easy to get started and interesting in how it influenced the modern mindfulness movement. And lastly, the strong and polarizing opinions about how mandatory a Vipassana retreat is versus doing it at home are unnecessary. The truth is that most practitioners tried it out at first and experienced profound results which led to the motivation needed to attend a 10-day Vipassana meditation retreat.

Vipassana meditation is a rigorous practice, often taught in 10-day silent retreats involving many hours of daily sitting and walking meditation sessions.

### Why It Works

Extended practice rewires attention and perception, enabling practitioners to see impermanence and reactivity at a deep level. Retreat studies show lasting reductions in stress and anxiety, and improvements in self-reported well-being (Krygier et al., 2013).

It is a rare form of meditation that advocates pausing life and working to become extremely adept at meditation rather than attending classes or trying to learn sporadically across time.



## History

Vipassana is considered the direct teaching of the Buddha, revived and systematized in modern times by Burmese teachers like Mahasi Sayadaw and S.N. Goenka.

The Buddha, after years of searching for a solution to human suffering, formulated the principles of Vipassana as a way to investigate the true nature of existence and to transcend the cycle of suffering and rebirth.

Over time, the practice of Vipassana spread throughout India and beyond, becoming an integral part of various Buddhist traditions. It was preserved and transmitted through oral tradition and written scriptures, eventually reaching other parts of Asia and, in more recent times, the Western world.

## How to Begin

Vipassana instructions are too complex to sum up succinctly but it shares the process of insight meditation where a practitioner sits quietly and observes the body as well as emotions and thoughts that arise without clinging to, judging, or rejecting them.

- Beginners can try short guided sessions at home with instruction like what can be found in this course: [Breaking Grounds in Vipassana Meditation](#)
- For fuller experience, attend a retreat through a Vipassana center.



## 15. Zen Meditation – Simplicity and Presence



Despite years of practicing meditation and a deep interest in experimenting with its many different forms, I completely avoided Zen Meditation or Zazen. I had dabbled I should say, but the truth is that I was turned off by presumed strictness and adherence to specific postures. On one hand, I wasn't sure it matched my goals and on the other, a hip issue doesn't enable me to sit cross-legged. So, I prematurely ruled it out. My mistake! Had I not gotten the right information, I would have missed out on the world of meditation's best option to correct a rampant and uncontrollable mind.

Zen meditation, or "Zazen," is a Zen Buddhism practice typically involving sitting in an erect posture and focusing on breath or an idea to cultivate deep mindfulness, self-awareness, and enlightenment.

For anyone new to Zen meditation, I want to paint a picture of its uniqueness. Rather than creating ritual or complexity, it actually strips everything away. Your job is to focus on your breath, awareness, and any thinking that arises you observe as it passes and return to the void.

### Why It Works

In Zen meditation there is no chasing insights or outcomes, you sit with reality as it is. Research shows zazen reduces stress, improves focus, and fosters compassion (Murakami et al., 2012).

### History

Zen originated as *Chan* in China before flourishing in Japan. Masters stripped away ritual complexity, teaching that enlightenment is found in ordinary experience.

### How to Begin

- Sit upright, on a cushion or chair.
- Focus on posture, breath, or simply awareness.
- When thoughts arise, let them pass like clouds.

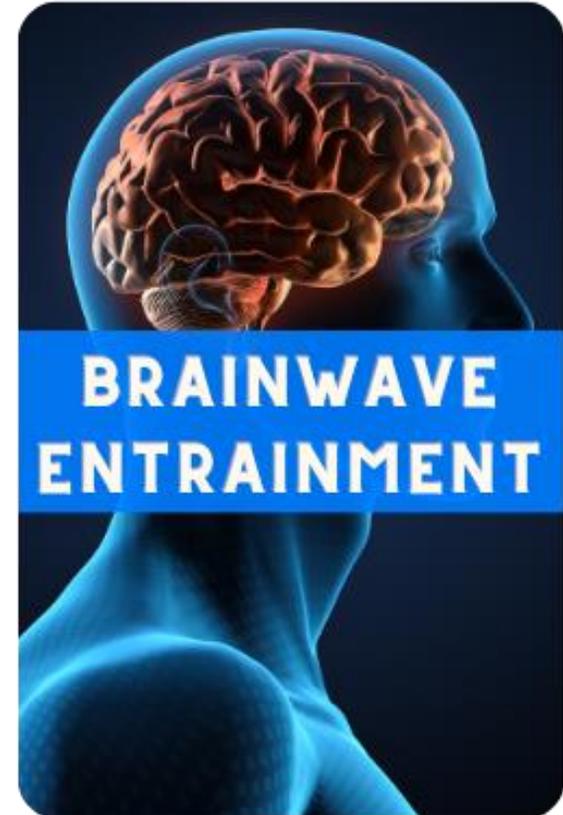
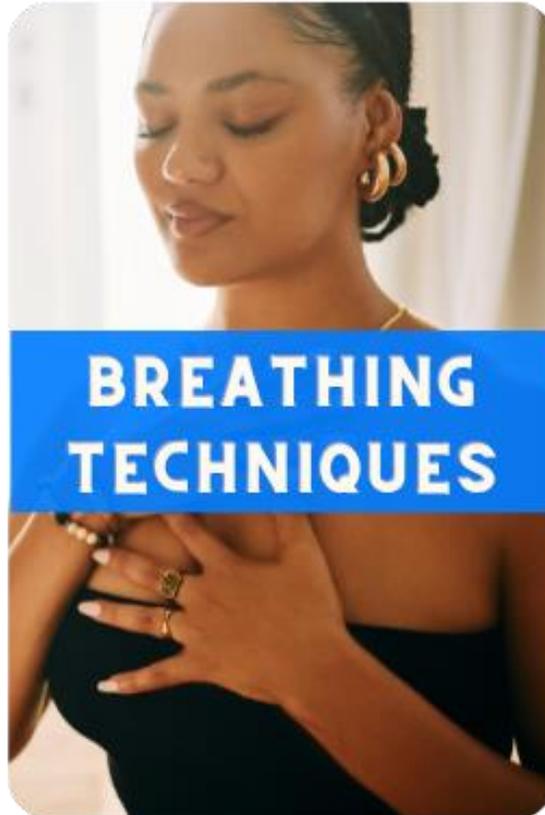
### [Zen Meditation & Practice](#)

This course explains how to perform Zazen and apply it to day life.



# 3 Ways to Enhance Your Meditation

You've now seen 15 different styles of meditation, each with its own doorway into presence, clarity, or healing. The next three practices are not styles in themselves but enhancements. They can be layered onto any form of meditation to amplify results by helping you go deeper, focus longer, or sustain calm more consistently.



# MEDITATIVE TONES

## Sound as a Feedback System



Meditative tones have been used for centuries to enhance a person's internal development or experience a deeper religious state. With enhanced technology over the last few decades, interest and use of meditation tones has hit an all new high.

Meditation tones are specific series of notes at specific frequencies that are intended to influence brainwave frequencies to bring a person into a meditative state, a deeper meditative state, or are designed with a specific purpose such as healing, concentration, or better sleep.

Tones are produced as single long sounds, chants, and sometimes as song. The idea is that different resonance frequencies can make different parts of the body vibrate, stimulating organs and tissue to be more health and parts of the nervous system to wake up.

Cognitively, meditation tones are specific series of notes at specific frequencies that are intended to influence brainwave frequencies to enhance healing, concentration, or better sleep.

### Why It Works

Chanting, tones, and vibrational sounds engage the auditory and kinesthetic senses, making it easier to stay focused. Studies of sound-based meditation show improvements in mood and reduced tension (Thoma et al., 2013).

### History

Nearly every tradition, from Buddhist chanting to Gregorian hymns, has used sound for altered states and spiritual development. There is also a uniting or communal aspect when groups generate the same tones and that's why they continue to be used in song, prayer, chants and national anthems.

Hopefully, this gives you ideas about how tones are already a part of your own traditions. Here I want to introduce a Taoist qigong (energy set) practice that is used to restore or maintain health in the body by focusing on our organs which tirelessly work as filters and pumps to keep us healthy. I like it for the great feeling it creates but also because I get to pause and acknowledge that hard work my organs are doing for me daily.

### How to Begin

- Pair tones with breath (inhale quietly, exhale with sound).
- Focus attention on a body region linked to the tone (e.g., “Shhhhuuu” for the liver).
- Explore crystal bowls, Tibetan bowls, or recorded tones if chanting feels unfamiliar.

### The Six Word Secret (lie zi jue)

The Six Word Secret is a Qigong set that is designed to expel negative or stagnant chi for the purpose of health or to make room for healthy chi to enter the body. It is attributed to a Buddhist scholar from the 6<sup>th</sup> Century and was documented in Kenneth Cohen's extremely comprehensive [The Way of Qigong](#). Six main organ systems related to health each have a corresponding tone. Imagine you are inhaling into the organ and emptying it out when you exhale and say the tone. Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, twice for each tone.

Organ	Tone
<b>Triple Burner (whole torso)</b>	Seeeeeee
<b>Lungs</b>	See-ahh
<b>Kidneys</b>	Chrrooooo
<b>Liver</b>	Shhhhuuu
<b>Heart</b>	Hoo (like in hook)
<b>Spleen</b>	Who

# BREATHING TECHNIQUES

## Science Meets Simplicity



The world of psychology, sports, and even the medical culture are waking up to the science and benefits of deep breathing techniques. Before scientific studies on breathing were readily available to back up the benefits that have been reported by Eastern traditions, it seemed too easy or too-good-to-be-true that altering our breathing patterns could:

- Improve medical conditions like asthma (Thomas et al., 2009)
- Help with runaway thinking or anxiety (Parnabas et al., 2009)
- Improve autonomic function (Pal & Velkumary, 2004)

Not only is science weighing in from all directions to support common knowledge from spiritual traditions, using breathing techniques remains relatively easy to do and free.

Deep breathing techniques are patterns of inhaling, exhaling, or holding the breath for a predetermined length of time and specific number of repetitions. Deep breathing patterns are organized based on the desired goal such as calming the nervous system, reducing anxiety, or improving athletic performance.

I have seen students and practitioners from many different styles of tai chi, meditation, and yoga all benefit from learning breathing techniques. Not only did they gain a valuable tool to use throughout the day, they were able to take what they learned and get better results from their primary hobby or interest.

### **Why It Works**

Breath directly regulates the autonomic nervous system. Slow, deliberate breathing activates the parasympathetic “rest and digest” state, lowering blood pressure and stress (Mori, 2009).

### **History**

Pranayama in yoga, Taoist breathing, and even the rhythm of Christian prayers have long emphasized patterned breath as a path to health and focus.

I will introduce some of the most common and proven deep breathing techniques. It’s the perfect adjunct, add-on, improvement, or enhancement for nearly any situation you want to see improved. They all are amazing at helping to maintain focus and calming racing thoughts.

## **4 Breathing Techniques**

### **1. Counting Breaths**

Count each exhale to five, then begin again. Work to naturally elongate your breath each set. Calms the mind.

### **2. 4-7-8 Breath**

Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7, exhale for 8. Continue for 3-4 rounds. Creates relaxation and reduces anxiety (Weil, 2011).

### **3. Bellows Breath**

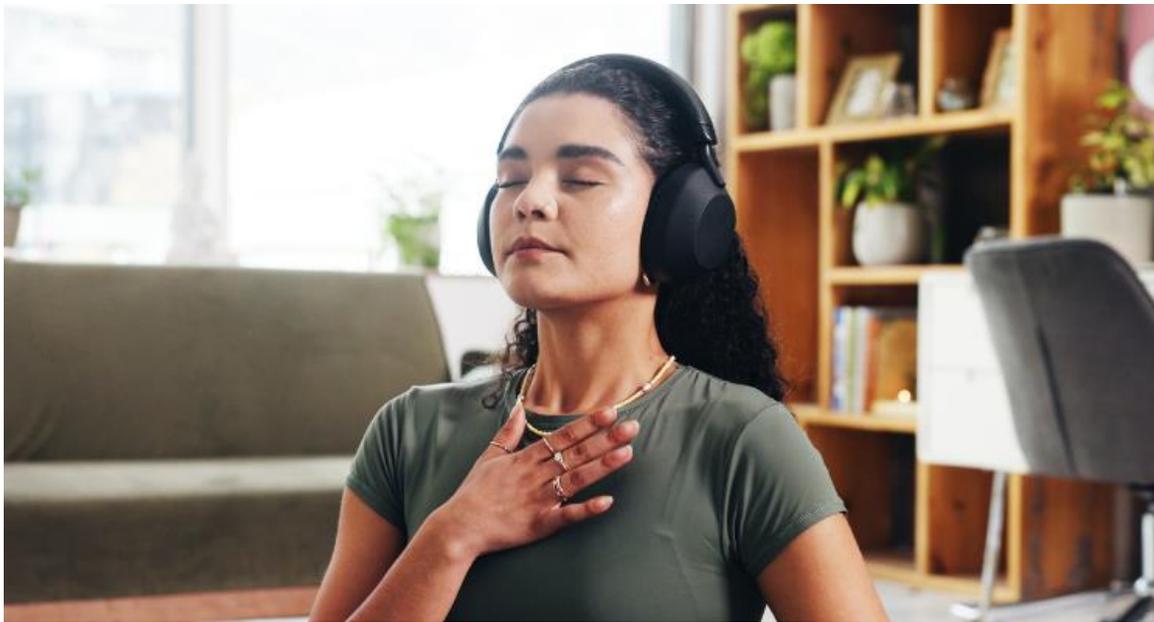
Quick nasal inhales/exhales (~3breaths/sec) for 20-60 seconds. Boosts alertness when energy is low.

### **4. Nasal Breath Awareness**

Inhale and exhale slowly. Notice the sound, feel, and temperature of air passing through the nose. Anchors wandering attention.

# BRAINWAVE ENTRAINMENT

## Technology for Focusing



The internet is awash in suggestions for how to improve focus and concentration and for good reason. Focus and concentration difficulties are on the rise related to increases in stress (APA, 2020). Despite the many suggestions, tips, tricks, and hacks, it is very difficult to find anyone who feels that have made tangible progress reducing stress and increasing their focus on enjoyable tasks or the ones that pay the bills.

While technology might be in-part responsible for problems focusing, it also offers a solution in the form of brainwave entrainment.

Brainwave entrainment is the process of listening to competing frequencies that causes the brain to create a new frequency by combining the two. It improves the ability to focus and concentrate by removing the stimulus, pattern, or habit that limits attention, or

adding activities or habits to extend the period of focus and concentration. On average, participants in studies were successful by combining independent activities designed to improve focus with improved habits, such as using brainwave entrainment, during the activity that wanted to concentrate on.

The benefits of brainwave entrainment are amazing. Yet, the number of people who try it is low because they have never heard of it or are skeptical about what it can do. This is really unfortunate because brainwave entrainment can get us meditating more deeply by reducing the learning curve, and get us focusing more intensely during work or studying.

### Why It Works

When the brain hears two tones at slightly different frequencies (one in each ear), it produces a third “phantom” beat. This is called a binaural beat, and it nudges brainwaves into states associated with relaxation, focus, or sleep. Research supports its use for anxiety reduction and improved concentration (Garcia-Argibay et al., 2019).

### History

While the brain’s natural rhythms were identified in the early 20th century via EEG, the use of entrainment as a wellness tool accelerated with modern audio technology in the 1970s and beyond. Now, entrainment audio tracks can be downloaded or listened to from any device making it easily accessible anywhere.

### How to Begin

Use quality headphones so that the binaural beats or isochronic tones can be heard clearly in both ears.

Choose a track or song made by someone who has the experience and knowledge to create binaural beats. There are many songs and videos on the internet that claim to be binaural in nature to help you study or concentrate. However, the creators typically don’t have the experience, equipment, or knowledge to actually create binaural beats. On our end, it is hard to tell the difference.

My favorite group is [HemiSync](#) because they have a huge library, research to back up what they are doing, and work with scientists and musicians that are trained in brainwave entrainment.

Choose tracks targeting desired outcomes. There are tracks that enhance or reduce specific emotional states, improve concentration, focus on relaxation, or improve sleep.

Try short sessions (10–20 minutes) before layering onto longer meditation practices.

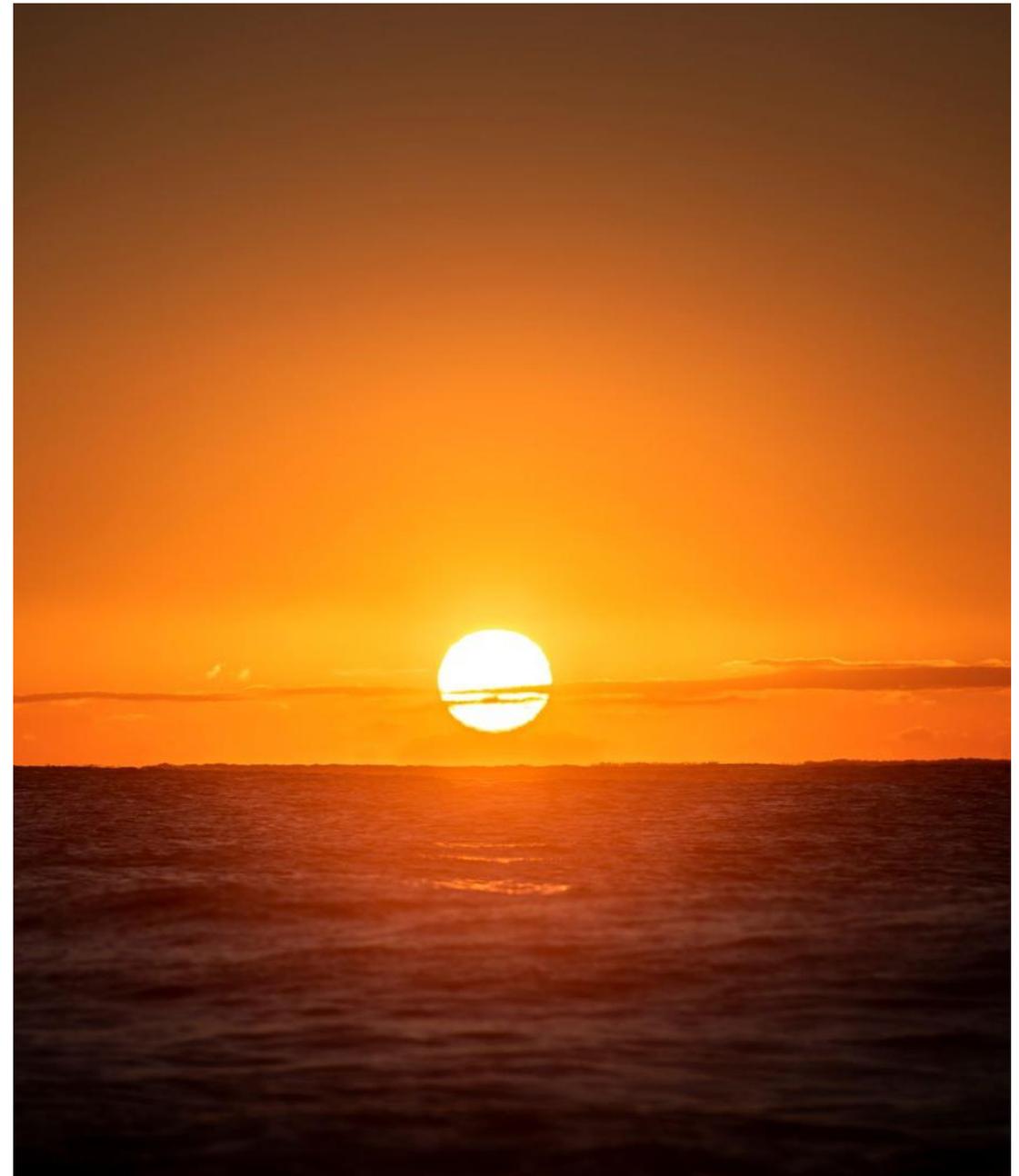


# ANYTHING *IS* POSSIBLE

Meditation is a tool for each of us to use to positively change the aspects of our lives that are the most important to us. For you, this might be physical health. For others it might be mental wellness, enjoyment, creativity, or contributions to their job. And as life goes on, our priorities continually change as we age. There is a style of meditation to meet us where we are at and match our availability, interests, and physical and mental abilities.

Meditation is not one thing but many. What unites them is their capacity to bring awareness to the breath, body, thought, or emotion. That awareness builds space, and in that space lies possibility: better health, clearer focus, greater calm, and deeper meaning.

Decide how you would like your life to improve. Choose a style that matches where you are. And have some fun with it!



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