

Relaxation Techniques

Be patient with yourself; these can be difficult exercises.

Basic Meditations

Mantra meditation

- A. Find your posture and center yourself. Take several deep breaths.
- B. Chant your mantra silently to yourself. Say the word or syllables over and over within your mind. When your thought strays, note that, then bring your attention back to your mantra. If you notice any sensations in your body, note the feeling, then return to the repetition of your own special word. Don't force it; let yourself find your own rhythm as you repeat mantra over and over again.
- C. If you have the opportunity, you may try chanting your mantra aloud. Notice sensations in your body.
- D. Remember that meditation is to be practiced with awareness. You may find that the repetition of a mantra, especially when repeated silently, can easily become mechanical. When this happens, you may have the sense that an inner voice is repeating the mantra while you are actually lost in thought or approaching sleep. Try to stay aware of each repetition and syllable.

Sitting meditation

- A. Choose a comfortable sitting posture.
- B. Bring your attention to the gentle rise and fall of your breath. Like ocean waves coming in and out, your breath is always there. You can focus on your inhale and exhale, the sensations of your breath entering your nose or mouth, or the sensations of your breath filling your lungs and diaphragm.
- C. Whenever your mind wanders, gently bring your attention back to rest upon your breath. Let your breath be your anchor to the present moment.
- D. When you find yourself becoming distracted by thoughts, simply notice them and acknowledge them.
- E. One way to work with thoughts is to "name" them as you notice them. If you notice that you are worrying, silently say to yourself, "worry, worry, there is worry." You can name planning, reminiscing, longing, thinking, or whatever it is in just the same way: label it and move on. This will help you to create distance between yourself and your thinking to create more mental space and peace.

This can take between twenty and thirty minutes. With practice, you will be able to rest your attention on your breath more effortlessly and let go of thoughts more easily.

Basic Meditations, continued

Breath-counting meditation

An alternative form of sitting meditation is the use of counting with the rhythm of the breath. Following gentle ins and outs of the breath creates a sense of peace and restfulness.

- A. From a comfortable sitting posture, take deep but not forced belly breaths. As you do, focus your attention on each part of the breath: the inhale, the turn (the point at which you stop inhaling and begin exhaling), the exhale, the pause, the point at which you begin to inhale and so on. Pay careful attention to the pause. What sensations exist in your body as you pause between breaths?
- B. As you exhale, say "one." Continue counting each exhale: "two...three..." Then begin again with "one."
- C. When you discover you've slipped into thought, note this, then return to counting.
- D. If a particular sensation in your body catches your attention, focus on the sensation (and label the sensation) until it recedes. Then return attention to your counting of breaths.

Body Scan

- A. Begin by becoming aware of the rising and falling of your breath in your chest and belly.
- B. Bring your attention to the soles of your feet. Notice any sensation that is present there. Without judging or trying to make it different, simply be present with the sensation. After a few moments imagine your breath is flowing into the soles of your feet. As you breathe in and out you might experience an opening or softening and a release of tension. Just simply observe without expectation.
- C. Bring your attention to the rest of your feet, up to your ankles. Slowly proceed up your body in this manner with all body parts—lower legs, knees, upper legs, pelvis, hips and buttocks, lower back, upper back, chest and belly, upper shoulders, neck, head and face. Breathe into all body parts.
- D. Go back to any place that has pain, tension or discomfort. Simply be with the sensations in a no judging way. As you breathe, imagine the breath opening up any tight muscles or painful areas.
- E. When you reach the top of your body, imagine you have a breath hole at the top of your head, much like that of a whale or dolphin. Breathe in from the top of your head, bringing the breath all the way down to the soles of your feet and up again.

Basic Meditations, continued

Mindfulness

- A. Note the color, shape and texture of anything around you. Does it seem appealing to you?
- B. Notice what you are feeling.
- C. Be aware of intention as you do things such as eating, walking, moving your hand to pick something up. You may label your actions to yourself. By labeling your actions and feelings, you are more likely to keep in mind your purpose and to stay aware of the present moment and experience rather than intruding thoughts.
- D. As you continue moving or acting, notice sensations of taste, smell, sight, bodily sensations.
- E. Notice as many sensations within yourself as possible.

Refuting Irrational Ideas

Irrational Ideas

1. It is an absolute necessity for an adult to have love and approval from peers, family and friends. (Pleasing everyone is impossible. Even those who like and love you will be turned off by some behaviors and qualities.)
2. You must be unfailingly competent and almost perfect in all you undertake. (The results of believing this are self-blame and inevitable failure, lowered self-esteem and perfectionist standards applied to yourself and others resulting, often, in paralysis and fear.)
3. Certain people are evil, wicked and villainous and should be punished.
4. It is horrible when people and things are not the way you would like them to be.
5. External events cause most human misery—people simply react as events trigger their emotions.
6. You should feel fear or anxiety about anything unknown or uncertain.
7. It is easier to avoid than to face life's difficulties.
8. You need something other or stronger or greater than yourself to rely on.
9. The past has a lot to do with determining the present.
10. Happiness can be achieved by inaction, passivity and endless leisure.

Rules to promote rational thinking

1. It doesn't do anything to me. The situation doesn't do anything to make me anxious or afraid. I say things to myself to produce anxiety and fear.
2. Everything is exactly the way it should be.
3. All humans are fallible creatures.
4. It takes two to have a conflict.
5. We feel the way we think

Interrupting negative self-talk

1. List your stressful thoughts. Ask yourself questions about what you have written down. Is the thought self-defeating, unrealistic or hard to control? Does it interfere with concentration and cause discomfort?
2. Imagine the thought. Close your eyes and bring into imagination a situation in which the stressful thought is likely to occur. Try to include normal as well as obsessive thinking. In this way, you can interrupt the stressful thoughts while allowing a continuing flow of healthy thinking.
3. Thought interruption. Set a stopwatch, egg timer, or alarm clock for three minutes. Look away, close your eyes, and ruminate on the stressful thought as described above. When you hear the sound, shout "stop!" Let your mind empty of all but the neutral or restful thoughts. Set a goal of about thirty seconds after the stop, during which your mind remains blank. If an upsetting thought returns during that time, shout "stop!" again.
4. Take control of the thought stopping cue without the aid of the timer. While ruminating on the unwanted thought, shout "stop!". When you succeed in extinguishing the thought on several occasions with the shouted command, begin interrupting the thought with a "stop" in a normal voice. Follow by extinguishing thought with a whisper. Follow with silent messages.
5. Thought substitution. In place of negative or obsessive thought, make up some positive, assertive statements that are appropriate to the situation.