

SITTING MEDITATION

1. Find a quiet setting where you are not likely to be disturbed. Sit in a tall, dignified posture on a chair or cushion. Make sure your back, neck, and head are aligned vertically. Place your hands comfortably on your knees or lap.
2. Starting with your feet, relax each part of your body up to the top of your head. Imagine your whole body hanging loosely off your long spine. Once you have progressed through every part of your body, sense if there is any lingering tension and let it drop to the ground.
3. Once you are feeling relaxed, allow your attention to fall on your breath. Sense what it feels like to inhale. Sense what it feels like to exhale. Notice the breath's fullness and length. Notice if it is easy or labored. Feel your body participate in breathing. Sense the steadiness of the breath.
4. You will soon find that the mind starts to wander. This will happen many times because it is in the nature of the mind to produce thoughts. Once you notice you are thinking, simply, gently, and non-judgmentally let go of the thought, relax the mind, and bring your awareness back to the breath.
5. When uncomfortable, resist the urge to automatically shift your body position. First, direct your attention to the sensations of discomfort and greet them with curiosity and interest. They too can be used to develop your powers of concentration and awareness. If you are truly uncomfortable you may choose to move, but do that deliberately and mindfully.
6. If your attention is focused, you may expand your awareness to your body as a whole while the breath remains your anchor. In attending to the body, you may notice your posture, use of various muscles, your feet and hands, and so on. If there are any areas of discomfort, breathe in awareness of them and breathe out spaciousness and relaxation.
7. Add in awareness of sound, touch, and smell. Allow sensory information to fall on receptive ears. Sense elements of sounds—pitch, volume, rhythm. See if you can maintain an awareness of the body all the while.
8. Now notice the quality of your mind. Is it still or active? Is it jumping from thought to thought? See if you can label the thoughts (for example, plan, judgment, worry). Once you notice you are thinking, again practice non-judgmentally letting go of the thought, relaxing the mind, attending to the breath, and expanding your awareness to include everything arising moment to moment.
9. This is the practice: noticing what is occurring moment to moment, and bringing the mind back to this awareness each time it wanders. See how much you can notice and how quickly you can identify and let go of thinking.