

Creating a Meditation Practice that Works for You

Meditation Tips, Book Recommendations & Other Resources

Meditation and mindfulness have grown in popularity over the past 20 years. It's now taught in schools. Businesses have classes as well as dedicated meditation rooms. The health care field also recommends it and some hospitals and medical centers offer classes, too. It's top of mind to train your mind.

You can read all about the benefits online and maybe you have. Your mental, emotional and physical health will improve and therefore your life. For me it's been a necessary practice in order to live life from the heart. Living this way takes awareness and perspective as well as a mind able to sit quietly enough for you to be aware of what it is you truly want.

I've been practicing a type of meditation called Shamatha, in English that means peacefully abiding. It's a gentle practice that trains the mind to come back to the present. It's a practice that works in concert with a contemplation practice. This has been my main practice for nearly 20 years. The first 10 years were me getting my feet wet now and then. The next 10 were about learning discipline. In the past five years my practice has become much deeper. It can take time for meditation to become a part of your life, but it is worth it.

Here are some tips based on my personal practice and experience.

1. If you're just beginning, start off with 3 to 5 minutes once a day. Some will tell you to begin with 10 or more minutes twice a day. For me it's been best to start slow and build. Increase the minutes every week until you get to at least 12 once a day. 12 minutes is optimum to gain some of those researched benefits.
2. You may have been practicing for a while and are frustrated. If that's the case, pretend you're a beginner and go back to just a few minutes once a day. Pay close attention to what's going on in your body and mind during a session to see where you're getting caught. Don't spend too many sessions analyzing though. Just bring a gentle awareness and keep practicing.
3. During trying times in my life my practice has suffered and because of that, so did I. If you can, make it a point to meditate daily during those challenging times in your life and they will seem less troubling.
4. In the past I've gone months without practicing. Beginning from the beginning works.
5. Meditation is not about clearing the mind of all thought. Most meditation is about training/taming the mind or getting closer to the divine. Even the divine connecting

meditations have a mind training aspect. Thought is a natural product of the brain. You can't stop it, but you can refocus it and there will be times when it quiets down. Just don't force yourself not to think.

6. Speaking of force, meditation is not the place for it. Meditation is about compassion first for yourself and then it broadens to others as you come to know your mind and being better. So be gentle with yourself as you practice. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the focal point you are using.

I hope these tips are helpful to you. If you have any questions about meditation or spirituality in general, please don't hesitate to ask. You can email me at soulsprite@joanneyoungelliott.com

Here are some resources to help you on your journey.

Books

[Start Here Now – An Open-Hearted Guide to the Path and Practice of Meditation](#) by Susan Piver

This short, basic guide is in the lineage I follow. Susan is a caring teacher who simplifies the practice.

[An Easy Guide to Meditation](#) by Roy Eugene Davis (FREE on Amazon)

This teaching comes out of the Self Realization tradition. I like this extremely short guide as a starting point for beginners and a gentle reminder for seasoned practitioners.

[Journey of Awakening – A Meditator's Guidebook](#) by Ram Dass

A classic in the spiritual world, this guide takes you through a variety of practices. If you're still looking for what works for you, try this book. It's truly more than the basics of meditation. It's about the spiritual life. There is also an extensive directory of centers and retreats you can check out to learn more.

[Meditation: How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind](#) by Pema Chödrön

I would recommend any book by Pema Chödrön. She has been helpful to me on my spiritual journey, especially in dealing with emotions. This book includes the basics of meditation as well as how to work with your mind and your emotions.

[Wherever You Go There You Are – Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn
Jon Kabat-Zinn has done much to bring mindfulness into our collective awareness. He created a stress reduction program based on mindfulness that is used in the medical field. This guide is simple and holds your hand through each step and stage.

Videos

[Meditation Instruction from Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche](#)
[Why We Meditate by Pema Chödrön](#)

Online Articles

[Shamatha Meditation: Training the Mind](#) by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche in Lion's Roar
[List of Articles on Meditation](#) in Lion's Roar

Other Online Resources

[Open Heart Project](#)

This is Susan Piver's online community where you can learn how to meditate. With the free sign up you get a weekly meditation instruction video that includes a dharma talk. If subscribe to the community you get so much more.