

HOW TO CREATE & LEAD MEDITATIONS

Yoga prepares us for meditation...
But WHY do we meditate?

BENEFITS – clear the mind, clear our emotions, increase our energy, receive creative ideas, find clarity, make space for happiness!

CHALLENGES –
Sitting with difficult past experiences, a monkey mind and a sore body!

However, the benefits often outweigh the challenges, and yoga can also help to support us as we move through the initial difficulties of learning how to meditate. Because the challenges can feel immense to some students, being guided by a teacher is the best choice! This is where you come in...



SETTING THE SPACE –

When sitting with a meditation, and when facilitating meditations to students, be sure to set the space and the energy of the room to hold the space for the deep work that can come from guided meditations. Here are some ideas for setting the space:

- Create a **sacred space** (we cannot assume that a space is a “**safe space**” for anyone, even if you intend it to be. All that we can do is create a *sacred space* and allow each person to come into a place of feeling security on their own, as trust builds over time, and as blockages clear for students and teacher alike). A Sacred Space will help prepare students to feel comfortable closing their eyes and becoming vulnerable. A Sacred Space is created by your energy and so you must prepare yourself **FIRST**:
 - **Take time to meditate before you guide a meditation for others**
 - Do your best to cultivate a feeling of love inside and radiate that outward
 - **Breathe deeply and ground yourself as students settle in to their seats.** Visualize light around you, roots connecting you to the earth and the crown of your head opening to the wisdom of the cosmos. You are now ready.
- Create a soft and beautiful environment around you - light candles if you can, lower the lights, and keep a comfortable temperature in the room as well as provide blankets and meditation cushions.

ENERGETIC TIPS FOR TEACHING MEDITATION:

- Guide your students to root themselves into the earth and to open their crown; this can be a foundation for starting your meditations and to help center students as well as yourself.
- Lead them to feel deep breaths in the body, breathing into the belly, expanding the ribs; tall spine, extending through the crown of the head. Let the body and the energy body expand with the in-breath, and ground down with the out-breath. Let the consciousness sink down from the center of the brain into the body and the heart. From this soft place, begin with your meditation...
- Don't let your mind wander while you are leading the meditation – be focused. You are the anchor.



Meditation Methods & Ideas

- Body Scan
- Incorporating breath and specific pranayama
- Guiding through the chakras
- Singing bowls / bells / chimes / gentle drumming
- Chanting Mantra
- Emotional Release and Letting Go
- Spirit Animal drum journey

NOTES

Keep a gentle voice
Hold the energy as the teacher by maintaining your own focus
Breathe deeply and slowly as you guide the meditation

Meditation Styles

This list provides some examples and is in no way exhaustive – there are many more types of formal meditation styles, and as well, your own intuition and creativity will provide you with an infinite supply of ideas that can be used for your own meditation practice and for your students! Trust your inner guidance and explore what it has to offer!

- a. Guided – Guided meditation can be anything you offer with your voice and cueing. Throughout a guided meditation, the teacher is instructing when to breathe, what kind of positions the body is to take, whether to sit or lie down, and how long the meditation will last. Throughout a guided meditation, you would be offering your voice as the map or navigation through the meditation. It may also involve inviting the release of emotions or waste in the body or mind, the quieting or allowing of the thoughts to pass, there are so many possibilities. One simple example of a guided meditation could be to simply cue the breath in counts: Inhale and count to 25, pause and hold the breath for 5 counts. Exhale for 25 counts, hold for 5 counts, begin again, you can easily change this example to any other number of counts for the breath and can involve so many other ideas such as positions of the hands, Bandhas in the body, posture and even meditation while within and Asana even such as Warrior 1 or 2.

- b. Vipassana – observing reality as it is, and not as it appears to be. This **Dhamma** (“the path” or the Law of Nature) from the Buddha is taught under the specific instruction of S. N. Goenka in a 10-day meditation course, and in 3-day or even 20-day courses for returning students. It teaches about equanimity (complete neutrality) under all circumstances, especially through the waves of energy and emotion that run through the body. It begins with *Anapana*, a focus on the breath in and out. Once concentration (*Samādhi* – note that the **Pali** use of this word is different from the **Sanskrit**) is deepened, one focuses on the *sensation* of breath through the nostrils and above the upper lip. This process takes several days. Finally, the student explicitly asks to receive Vipassana instruction, where they are taught to scan the body starting from the top of the head and working the way down to the toes, bit by bit, **observing** and **not reacting** to the sensations along the way. This **awareness** and **equanimity** must be in perfect balance, like two wings of a bird, “or else the bird cannot fly.” With practice, the student gains more and more fluidity and depth in the technique until, perhaps, the body becomes one formlessly impermanent flow of vibration. Through the release of attachment and aversion and with the wisdom that everything changes, one becomes released from suffering. Goenkaji says, “Explore all that is impermanent at the experiential level so that you can transcend the field of mind and matter and experience the Nirvanic state where nothing arises, nothing passes away.” This ever-changing impermanence is known in the Pali language as **Anicca**, and it helps us to remember that the moments of fear and pain pass, and as well the beautiful moments pass; when we don’t attach to the good or react with aversion to the bad, *that* is when we no longer suffer. Wisdom (**Paññā**) is our guide along the way

- c. Visual – This form of meditation is Guided, with soft voice guiding the meditators on their breath and awareness, and works specifically with guiding visuals. This is excellent for opening the 3rd eye. It can be as simple as guiding the students to see a tree, for example, and to really examine in their mind what the tree looks and feels like. When they come back into the room, there could be a sharing circle about these trees and what they represent for the person in their day-to-day lives. There is unlimited potential for creativity here! Guided Visual meditations can also become Journey meditations, where the teacher guides the students along on a journey within the mind... “from the tree, you look and see that there is a path into the forest. Follow that path...” A common Guided Visual Journey Meditation is the Spirit Animal Drum Journey, where the meditators are guided down into the heart center of the Earth and ask the Spirits and their subconscious to show them their Animal Spirit Guides. These Guides can carry them onto further, personal journeys while the sound of the drums holds them in the meditative space.
- d. Silent – Sitting in silence, release all thoughts like clouds passing. As if you are standing on the street, the thoughts coming into the mind are like a bus stopping in front of you – following those thoughts is like getting on the bus without knowing where it is going. The practice is to allow the bus to pass – to allow the thoughts to slide back out of conscious awareness as easily as they slid in, and to be unaffected by them, releasing also the emotions and triggers that they may bring with them.
- e. Concentration: One of the 8 Limbs of Yoga, Concentration takes us into deeper forms of Meditation, where we become fully absorbed into the meditation. Concentrating the mind is part of the practice towards inner bliss and freedom. The 5 senses (and even our 6th sense or more!) are like beautiful white horses. ... Allow them to run where they like and the carriage of your consciousness will scatter all over the place. However, if you focus the senses and concentrate in one location, with practice we can reign in the power of these horses and use them to take us into higher consciousness at full speed. Examples of this type of meditation can include concentrating on one of the chakras, or slowly working your awareness up and down through the chakras, practicing to keep your focus and to remain unchanging within the sensations that arise. One can also focus with their eyes on a flame, on a crystal, on a flower, etc. In traditional Hatha yoga, focusing on the flame of a candle as a concentration meditation is called Trataka meditation and is one of the Shatkarmas, or 6 traditional cleansing techniques, as it is thought to cleanse the mind.



MEDITATION OF BEAUTY AND LIGHT (AUDIO)

This is a meditation that works best first thing in the morning or any time of day, generally

lasts 5 minutes and has 3 main sections that flow into one another.



Alternate Nostril Breath

(2mins)

Inhale one colour of light from the Prana of Universe, perhaps from the awakening Sun and the stirring Earth.

Exhale another colour, the colour of your offering to the Universe.

Root through spine, tail bone and legs, open the crown

-Body Scan (2 mins)

Breathing light in and out, through both nostrils, bring light to all parts of you that you can sense are longing for awakening. Start at your crown and slowly, breath by breath, move down towards your roots, legs and feet. Move slowly, sensing each part of your body as you scan your way down. Bring light in through your breath and through your crown. Are there other parts of your bodies (the physical, emotional, energetic and mental) that want to bring light in? What is the colour of the light that you bring into each place?

Are there parts of your body that want to release light as an offering on your exhales? Allow all to happen as it wishes. Keep your breath and keep the light as you move up and down the body with your awareness.

-Heart Connection (1 minutes)

With your hands now on your heart, breathe light in and out through the heart. Allow your heart to expand into golden light all around you. Are there other colours as well?

Perhaps with your inner awareness found from the Body Scan, seek out all parts within you that are not in resonance with your heart (fear, doubt, frustration...), and speak aloud or strongly within your mind, "I bring Heart Light to this place." You may say this infinite times, until you feel and perceive light coming in as that part fades into the golden, expanded vibration of your heart. You are all Heart. You are all Light. Welcome to the day.

Here is your space to create your own MEDITATION using the following structure:

Pranayama (2 mins):

Body-Mind Connecting Visualization (2 mins):

Heart Connection (1 min):

You have now written a 5 minute meditation! Often, it is easier to go longer on meditations than it is to keep it short and sweet. This is good practice for you as a teacher as you will need to consistently manage good time. Staying focused will help you to keep good time. Remember that the guidelines above are just a structure designed to help get you started! The best part about writing meditations is that you get to be CREATIVE! Just remember to have a purpose for your meditation. Is it to ground them? Is it to attune their chakras? Determine beforehand WHAT you are doing, and make it clear all through out. Then your creativity can flow around that clarity of purpose.