

“Let Go of Stress and Return Home with Meditation”

by
James
Bone

Meditation is a process and practice, I feel is often quite difficult to describe or put into words – it is far better experienced. If you are not already meditating, then I encourage you to give it a go. If you are already meditating, then I encourage you to stay with it, and perhaps reflect back to basics, and check that you are doing it properly.

Meditation offers many benefits – you only need to search for Meditation on Google to see how many benefits meditation can give you.

Many people start meditating to relieve stress, but also for other reasons such as improving health, to improve their mental function, to enhance their wellbeing of mind, body or spirit, to find some inner peace or to discover more about who they truly are.

But why you meditate ultimately depends on what you want for yourself. To do anything outside of habit requires some effort. One needs the desire, will and passion to do something new or continue with something which may require some effort. This is what the yogis refer to as *Sankalpa*. You need to find your own reason for meditating, and you may find this changes over time as you practise.

The great yogic classic of the Patanjali's Sutra gives us much guidance on how to achieve meditation.

However from a personal perspective, to bring meditation into your life and discover what it has to offer you requires what I call the 3 P's – Practice, Patience, Passion....

You need to make time to *practise*.

You need to develop *patience* to sit quietly for some time.

You need to have *passion* to stay with it for the long term.

Sitting Upright and Still

The first process of meditation is to be able to sit comfortable and upright. This is not as easy as it sounds, and is another reason one practises physical yoga postures to prepare the body to sit properly and upright.

If you are unable to sit upright comfortably on the floor, sit on a cushion or even better, sit in a chair.

Sit balanced on your sit bones, gently arch and round your spine (pelvic tilt) to bring your spine to neutral, where it is neither overly arched nor rounded, lift upward through the crown with the top of your throat slightly drawn inward (Yes nod).

Why sitting and not lying?

Some people like to meditate lying down, however the yogis discourage this unless you have illness or are unwell. The process of meditation is about becoming more AWARE, AWAKE and CLEAR. It is not about sleep, dream, fantasy or trance.

Lying down encourages sleep, and sleep is actually the opposite to meditation – it makes you sluggish, while meditation gives only uplifting clarity.

Deep relaxation.....

The second process is deep relaxation. The yogis say that our innermost nature is relaxation – contentment, stability, ease Thus deep relaxation is the method of taking you home to your self. Normally our minds are focused outward, earning an income or protecting what we already have, living our lives, relating to friends and family, etc. Yoga describes the process of letting go of what is outward (even if only for few minutes!) and bringing your self inward - this is called *Pratyahara*.

You stop your activities, let go of your tensions and take your awareness inward. Follow your breath for few moments. Allow the breath to go out completely, to the point where the diaphragm (breathing muscle) lets go, and you feel the release of all tension, then allow the in breath to come of its own accord.

“One who completely withdraws the senses from the objects, as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into the shell, his WISDOM stands firm” *Bhagavad Gita*

Effortless Focus

The third process is to bring focus (without effort) to your mind. The mind will catch hold of anything of interest. It requires nurturing to first see and understand this, then training to allow the mind to stay focused, even if only briefly. In yoga this is called *Dharana*.

There are many things you can focus on, but for most, the easiest is the breath. (If you find breath focus uncomfortable then focus on something else, but make it powerful and meaningful – a prayer, a sacred sound, such as mantra, a powerful visualisation, etc.)

Allow the breath to be natural, just watch it, every wave as you inhale and exhale. Make no attempts to change it or judge its quality in any way. Just be with your breath. Thoughts, feelings, even boredom may intrude – that's OK, just let them pass and stay with your breath.

The KEY is to not try too hard – like with sleep, the harder you try the less success you may have had. I have seen students concentrating so hard their brows have become tense.

In Tantra, meaning to expand one's consciousness, there is a practice whereby as you stay focused on the breath *you listen to sound of the breath and bring to mind the sound of the breath – SOOO as you inhale, HUMMMM as you exhale. As you progress with this practice you can bring in the visualisation – as you inhale and*

focus on the sound SOOO you visualise energy rising up your spine, and as you exhale and focus on the sound HUMM you allow the energy to descend back down the spine. With practice and understanding of the yogic energy systems you can advance this practice in many ways.

Being....

With time and practice you may find that you get moments of sustained focus – where the mind becomes absorbed on your focus – this called *Dhyana* in yoga – or the Meditative state.

Aha.....

Sometimes you may just experience one of those AHA moments, when everything begins to come together and make more sense, and you may feel you have truly returned “home” to yourself. This higher experience in yoga is called *Samadhi*.

REMEMBER the measure of your practice in yoga/meditation is how it positively affects you, your life and your relationship with others. If your practice is not working for you, check that you are doing it properly, then if it is still not working, change it.

If you would like to know more about meditation (or yoga) and develop a personal practice of meditation (or Yoga), both James & Radhika are available for one on one sessions.