

10 TOP TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING A DAILY MEDITATION PRACTICE

It sounds so obvious, I know. In fact, you'd think it would go without saying. But training the mind, meditating, being mindful, or whatever else we choose to call it, only works if we actively engage with it. More than that, it only works if we practice it regularly, preferably on a daily basis with a considered, gently discipline.

The obvious comparison is training the body, perhaps to get fit or to lose some weight. It's not enough to have the membership card of the gym in our bag or the shiny new trainers at home, hoping we might get fit by osmosis. We need to actually turn up for the event, to engage in physical exercise on a regular basis to experience the benefits. The same is true of the mind.

Here are my 10 top tips for making sure you develop a consistent practice and stay committed to maintaining a healthy mind:

1. **Meditate first thing in the morning if you can.** It will ensure it gets done, gets rid of any grogginess from your sleep and is a great way to start the day. It will also mean you are more likely to be mindful throughout the day.
2. **If you choose to do it at another time of day, prioritize it.** This means putting it in the diary and committing to it in the same way you would to any other kind of meeting. Whether it is 10 minutes or considerably longer, nothing is more important than the health of your mind.
3. **Think "same time, same place."** When you are looking to develop a new practice, activity or habit, this simple motto will dramatically increase the likelihood of you doing it. Try to create a conducive environment in which you can immediately relax and make it part of your daily routine.
4. **Some people find it useful to "attach" their meditation to another daily activity to strengthen the habit.** For example, think "tea and meditation." Or perhaps "shower and then meditation." By doing this, we integrate the practice into a well-established routine that already exists.
5. **Be flexible, no matter what.** If you intend to train the mind for the rest of your life, you can be sure that there will be days when your routine is thrown out of shape. Don't let that be an excuse to skip a day, just do it later instead. It is always better to sit for a short while than not at all, even if it is only for a minute.
6. **Avoid judging your meditation.** It is tempting to think you are "good" or "bad" at meditation. In truth, there is no such thing. There is only distraction or

non-distraction. If you tell yourself you are bad at something you will lose all motivation and are unlikely to do it. If you understand the purpose, this will never be a problem.

7. Always reflect on the benefits of meditation at the end of the session. Notice how you feel, physically, mentally and emotionally. The more you establish the connection between training the mind and feeling better, clearer, or calmer, the easier it becomes to sit down and practice each day.

8. Keep an “excuse book” close at hand. The idea of this is that when it’s time to do your meditation, if you choose not to do it for any reason, you write down why you are choosing not to do it. It may sound strange, but often when we see the excuse on paper, we realize that we really do have the time and that it really does matter.

9. Find a buddy to do it with. It doesn’t have to be physically together, or even at the same time, but find a friend who’s also looking to establish a regular practice and commit to helping each other out. Knowing that someone else is making an effort and may ask us if we have done it or not, can help to strengthen commitment.

10. Be realistic in your expectations. Training or taming the mind is a skill to develop over a lifetime. Sure, there are some immediate benefits to be found, but some take longer than others. If expectations are too high than you may well feel disappointed and de-motivated at some stage. So just take one day at a time.

Reference: Huffpost Healthy Living. Andy Puddicombe, Author, “Get Some Headspace: How Mindfulness Can Change Your Life In Ten Minutes A Day,” August 14, 2013.