

Meditation for Beginners

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 1776

Before we begin, let's try to keep in mind some main points of encouragement that meditation ignites:

Meditation encourages:

our ability to focus
calmness and equanimity
awareness
insight into what is going on inside us

Compared to how we normally conduct our lives, meditation can be a complete contrast for beginners. Similar approaches are taken by many meditation techniques— they encourage you to focus on something specific such as the breath, a candle, or a mantra (called objects of meditation). Of all that happens, our main intention during meditation is to remain focused on the object of meditation. Thoughts will arise in the mind and sensations in the body, but rather than getting caught up with these distractions, the idea is merely to observe them, not commenting, and return to the object of meditation. In time, it is possible to become a passive observer of all the feelings and sensations that come and go — not attaching to them — which creates a calm acceptance of the way things are.

Meditation Benefits:

"In recent medical and psychological studies, meditational techniques have proved effective in skilled practitioners in controlling pulse and respiratory rates and effective to varying

degrees in the symptomatic control of migraine headache, hypertension, and hemophilia, among other conditions."

Source:

<http://www.britannica.com>

Learning to Meditate

When first beginning to meditate, we recommend you choose a time that doesn't create a rush to finish.

1. Use a posture that will allow your back to be straight without strain. This can be in a straight-backed chair or in a cross-legged position on the floor. Make sure that you are comfortable.
2. Allow your eyes to close.
3. Gather your attention and move it slowly down through your body, starting at your head, making sure that there is a sense of calm and relaxation as you go. If you notice areas of physical tension, try to let them go as you exhale.
4. Allow your thoughts, ideas, and memories to drift in and out of the mind without following them.

"If you let restlessness move you, you lose touch with who you are." Lao Tzu

5. Focus your attention on the breath, and allow it to come from your lower abdomen. Notice the rise and fall of the abdomen as the breath comes in and goes out. Focus your mind on the sensation of the breath, on the movement of the abdomen, and see how difficult it is to keep your attention on this simple process. As soon as you notice that your mind

has wandered, return your attention to the breath and the movement of the abdomen, using the words “in and out” or “rising and falling” as the breath comes in and goes out — this can help focus the attention more sharply. Meditation
written by: Catherine Sutton

It has been commented that this specific meditation increases mindfulness, patience, and insightful understanding.

"The mind is like a pond full of water: if you stir up the water it looks muddy, cloudy, and opaque; likewise, because we are constantly agitating it, the mind becomes cloudy and busy. If you take a glass of muddy water from the pond and let it rest on a window ledge for twenty minutes, the silt will sink to the bottom, leaving clear water. In the same way, if you sit for twenty minutes without agitating the mind, your thoughts will slow down, and some clarity will emerge."
Catherine Sutton

Concepts of Meditation

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 1827

Evolution:

We, as a human race, limit our expansive mind and body. We think too small. We erroneously, exclusively identify ourselves, and who we are, with our body. When, in reality, we are a conscious mind infinitely connected to the universe and its contents. We are made up of billions of tiny cells working together to form a physical unit. Each cell grows, divides, withers, and sheds; they're always in constant kinetic motion. Each cell is made up of trillions of atomic molecules, which constantly are moving, changing shape, and nourishing our chemical needs. Our whole physical being is made up of pre-atomic energy that has existed since the theorized "Big Bang".

This is the same energy that creates all life, flowing constantly and interacting invariably along a system of constant nourishment. Continually recycling itself, it grows each day. "All life on this planet is in movement. The continents that comprise and contain all the landmasses are in constant motion as are the oceans. The earth itself is spinning around itself as well as in an orbit that pulls on and is pulled by its sister planets and their moons as it and they revolve around the sun. The whole solar system is revolving as it spins around our galaxy. The Milky Way and its one hundred billion stars are moving in concert with billions of other galaxies that are traveling around our local galactic cluster and the billions of galactic clusters are combining and

intersecting to form uncountable super galactic clusters that make up our ever expanding Universe.”

We are part of this chain of energy and matter, connected to all life in the universe. We share a central core of kinetic energy that flows in our every movement. Know that your body extends much further than the skin and bones that create your physical shape. You are one with the energy of the universe. Your life flows from the core of the universal energy. You are one with the Universe.

Accompanying Meditation Technique: Evolution-

Sit comfortably in a position that keeps you most at peace (be it lying in bed, sitting cross-legged, standing up, etc.). Visualize your body at an atomic level and recognize the connection you share with the entire Universe. Don't analyze or critique; just visualize your connection. Repeat one saying over and over in your mind... “I am infinite. I am infinite. I am infinite.” Then, quiet your mind for a moment. What do you see? What do you feel? Continue this as long as you deem necessary.

Contemplation:

Learning focus is analogous to a baby learning to crawl; it's the first step in attaining freedom of movement. We find walking and running simple, yet superior ways to reach a location, just as we will find meditation and contemplation superior ways to reach infinite locations.

We limit our actions through meditation and concentration, thus we are commanding our mind, body, and emotions to stay focused on the task at hand. This is the very thing that disables our ability to reach a level of Contemplation.

Contemplation requires us to let go of our concentration and institute the infinite Cosmic Consciousness. Only a release of all limiting qualities will liberate our subconscious and allow a state of Contemplation to take over. "To fly high, we cannot tie ourselves to the ground in any way. The more we let go, the more we soar and the moment we let go completely is the moment we attain the infinite."

Jnana Yoga: Extracted from: <http://www.meditationsociety.com/jnana.html>

"Jnana Yoga is the yoga of wisdom. Basically it directs us to come to know the reality of who and what our Real Self is. Who and what we are is consciousness and we are at one with the source of all things and all consciousness. One of the methods Jnana Yogis use for coming to the realization of our oneness is stimulated by meditating on certain phrases such as "That thou art", "Consciousness is Brahman (The supreme Reality)", "I am Brahman", and "This Self is Brahman". Of these, it is said that the first, "That thou art", is the greatest and gives birth to the other three. For centuries seekers of Enlightenment have meditated on these statements and enjoyed the divine reward they sought. In these turbulent times it is still appropriate to spend time and energy in contemplation on these liberating concepts. It is also worthwhile to meditate on other concepts. The criteria we must use to determine if a concept or technique is "good for us" is very simple - if it brings you peace, it is. And if it causes you to lose your peace, it is "bad". In Jnana, virtually everything that deals with becoming less ego-centered and more universal in perspective is considered beneficial and worth meditating on. Here are a few thoughts that may bring you peace...

1. Only the selfish suffer.
2. In this Now, everything's sweet.
3. You are not apart from the universe; you are not "here" and the rest of the universe "there". You are a part of the universe, at one with it.
4. The only thing telling you something's wrong is your mind. Nevermind!
5. Time is subjective. Be objective - don't let time subject you. Whenever anything happens, it is the right time for it to occur.
6. Your body is a collection of atoms that has changed its' construction and composition 100% since you first started reading this. You are not your body. You are that which can witness its' changes.
7. The tongue is the hardest sense instrument to tame. Our need to comment is obsessive and compulsive. Chasing after taste bud pleasure is slavery. Witness your inner silence and be free.
8. It is good not to suffer. But suffering helps you grow because it makes you strong, compassionate, and humble. These are very good qualities. So suffering is also good. When you realize this, you can give thanks and praise when you don't suffer and when you do. Stop suffering from thinking suffering is only something that makes you suffer.
9. Your inner Real Self is beautiful, pure, luminous, and glorious. This essence is yours eternally. Don't worry for a second about your external beauty. If you're in touch with your inner beauty, your outer beauty will be beautiful.

10. If you help less, you will be helpless.

11. Every breath is a gift of love from above. Fill with this love with every inhale and send it out with every exhale.

12. The most serene person is the most selfless person. The saddest person is the most selfish person.”

Meditation Introduction

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 2277

Meditation is the ancient art of consciously directing your attention to alter your state of consciousness. We are never limited to the direction of our attention, and are free to roam about our inner-subconscious. Some examples of possible areas of concentration could be symbols, sounds, colors, breath, uplifting thoughts, spiritual realms, etc. The backbone of meditation is your attention. Some common misconceptions of meditation are as follows:

1. Meditation is turning off all of your thoughts or completely clearing your mind.

That's absolutely false. It is possible to come to a complete state of quietness, but mostly during meditations our minds wander. It's perfectly normal to allow your focus to flow with your attention area.

2. Meditation is quite difficult to master, and can only be done with strict discipline.

This is another fallacy. Meditation is actually very simple when just starting out. A disciplined mind is a strong ally, but the essentials lie in merely quieting your mind and allowing your attention to come to one specific thing. Allow your mind to flow from that point.

What is our purpose for meditating?

Meditation is the traditional method for spiritual growth and development. It allows us to become more conscious of ourselves, our environment, and the universal energy

surrounding us. Through meditation we access many objective areas, such as: healing, emotional cleansing and balancing, deepening concentration and insight, manifesting change, developing intuition, unlocking creativity, finding inner guidance, and exploring higher realities.

What is meditation?

In the West, the word meditation means a concentrated state of mind in serious reflection. The Latin root of the word meditation, *mederi*, means "to heal." It is an effort to heal afflictions of the mind, the hurt ego, by trying to understand the cause of the problem and finding a way to solve it, that is, by knowing what counter-measures to take. To meditate thus, is to deepen a state of understanding.

In the East, however, meditation does not mean thinking at all but fixing the mind in a spiritual ideal, to be one with it, or the thought-process dissolving in the consciousness of it.

According to Zen, meditation does not involve any concept but is an awareness of inner silence. As per the Yoga of Patanjali, meditation is a combination of three steps: *pratyahara* or abstraction, or withdrawal of the mind from the sense-objects or attention to their memory; *dharana* or concentration; and *dhyana* or contemplation which, however, is not a thought-process but an absorption of the feeling of oneness with the ideal.

Awareness of an inner silence is not something easy to achieve. It can be confused with a state of dullness or being soporific, which is not the purpose of meditation. To meditate mean does not mean to have a good rest while sitting pretty, and silence is not productive without spiritual aspiration. On

the other hand, few have the capacity to think clearly, and too much of mental exercise could lead to tension and confusion.

In Bhakti Yoga, meditation is visualization of the image of a chosen deity, together with mental repetition of a relevant mantra. For the Vedantins it is to contemplate on the meaning of selected verses from the Upanishads or similar scriptures. For the Catholics, it is saying the rosary, based on mantras like "Our Father which art in Heaven," or "Hail Mary, full of grace." For them meditation also consists in feeling close to Jesus after receiving communion and retiring into a quiet place.

St. Albert the Great, the teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas, observed that meditation for philosophers is a process of perfecting a thought, and for the devotees of their love of God. Prayers said in silence as a dedication of oneself to God can also be called meditation, because it means turning the mind inward to one's spiritual source, leading to peace.

For the Hindus, repetition of a mantra, with or without a rosary, but with a feeling of spiritual oneness, is meditation. A common Buddhist meditation consists in repeating the mantras: *Buddham sharanam gachchhami, sangham sharanam gachchhami* (I proceed remembering the Buddha, the righteous path and the welfare of my community). The Tibetans base their meditation on the mantra *Om mani padme hum* (I am Om, the jewel in the lotus of my heart).

For Muslims, meditation is called *dhikr* or repetition of selected names of God from the Quran, generally with a rosary. Feeling the breath, which is a technique in *pratyahara*, is an exercise in Zen meditation (the word Zen is derived from

dhyana or meditation), as also counting from 1 to 20 or more, over and over again.

Feeling the Force

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 1105

As aspiring Jedi, it is essential to cultivate an understanding of the energy field that is the source of the Jedi's power. This energy field exists all around us and it's source is what we would call "reality."

The Force is perceptible to us on a variety of levels. One of the most approachable ways to experience it is through the realms of our five terrestrial senses. Everything that we perceive is composed of electromagnetic energy.

Sight-light photons to our eyes.

Sound vibrations through the air into our ears.

Touch-tactile contact occurs when our nerves system is activated by external pressure causing a cascade of neuro-electrical effects throughout our peripheral nervous system.

Smell and Taste occur when external matter come into contact with the numerous receptor cells in our nose and mouth.

The Force is present within this modulated electromagnetic and material stimuli- our awareness of it is awakened when something we perceive effects us emotionally. For the terrestrial senses it is our heart that resonates when we experience the Force.

The role our higher reasoning centers is to use wisdom, humility and forbearance in the interpretation of what our 5 senses tell us.

Ideally it increases our bond with and enjoyment of things that we would interpret as life affirming and transforms that which is death affirming back to it's original base form-energy.

While intonations that are interpreted by a LSJ as being positive are allowed full permeation into ones being- intonations that are interpreted as negative are accepted first, contemplated with humility and love and reverence for all, then rechanneled as energy throughout the Jedi's heart and mind. A LSJ is able to accomplish this through the realization of ones infinitesimal and simultaneously infinite place in the universe. By accepting that the universe is infinite we accord with our own true natures. This realization is what allows to cultivate internal placidity for it frames sensory stimulation within the boundaries of that which is totally acceptable- just as it is the stone that accepts the stream that shapes it.

Introduction to Self-Awareness

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 1055

"Trust thyself. Every heart vibrates to that iron string," says Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay, "Self-Reliance." To be able to trust yourself in whatever decisions or actions you must take, you have to really KNOW who you are. Knowing yourself is perhaps the greatest factor in success as a Light Jedi. You have to know what you stand for, what you believe in, who you ARE before you can hope to be able to aptly serve others.

In his series of essays called "A Manual for Living," Epictetus points out the strength of knowing who you are as a key to life with the essay, "Clearly define the Person You Want to Be." To quote directly from the essay, "Who exactly do you want to be? What kind of person do you want to be? What are your personal ideals? Whom do you admire? What are their special traits that you would make your own? It's time to stop being vague. If you wish to be an extraordinary person, if you wish to be wise, then you should explicitly identify the kind of person you aspire to become."

The series of books by James Redfield (most popularly known for "The Celestine Prophecy") also deal with the importance of being aware of who we are. In "The Celestine

Vision," Redfield asks, "Where did our behavior originate? And what can we do about it?" His philosophy looks at the concept of control dramas, behaviors that we regularly fall into given a certain situation. Its important to remember our "character and calling" the purpose we come in to life to achieve. According to Redfield, in order to get back to our purpose, we have to look at what has shaped us to make us who we are... family, friends, mentors. To understand how those people have influenced us (for better or for worse) leads us on the journey of truly knowing who we are.

Following this introduction, there are a series of lectures, activities and a reading list to assist you on your journey of self-awareness. May the Force be with YOU!

Know Thyself I

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 935

Ralph Waldo Emerson practically beats readers over the head in his essay "Self-Reliance" with the concept of KNOW THYSELF, every heart beats to that iron string" he says.

Know who you are.

I think that knowing thyself is the first key to living the life of a Jedi. Meditate on these topics and others that you think of that are relevant to understanding YOU.

1. Who are you? Look at your life up until the point where you decided that the Jedi path was the right avenue for you to take. Study who you have been and who you are.

2. What do you believe in? What are the core truths for you? What are negotiable beliefs? Study what your values are and why you hold them.

3. Who have been your guides? As you have journeyed through life, look back at the people who have influenced you most and think about why they have. Parents, teachers, friends, mentors, employers (heh).

4. How does who you are affect those around you? This is also a part of being empathic and mindful, but it is important to consider how you fit into the big picture. We are not islands after all.

Just some things to think about as you start out on the Jedi path or remind yourself of who you are :-D

Know Thyself II

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 911

Learning your place in no way implies that you are forced into being someone or doing something. Quite the contrary.

What I mean here is learn your place where you fit in to the Force.

As you work on what it means to be you,

1. Assess your strengths. What are you good at? What are you great at?
2. Assess your weakness and not only admit you need work in some areas of life, but make changes.
3. Study your interests in people, hobbies and general tastes.

As you look at these few things (and I could probably come up with other categories), see what trends you find about yourself. Learn where your skills and gifts lie as you grow as a Jedi in the Force.

Taking an Inward Look at Life

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WRITTEN BY LIGHT COUNCIL ON 16 FEBRUARY 2020. POSTED IN [LIGHT CONTENT](#). HITS: 910

As we go through our lives, we find ourselves confronted with many challenges. How we have grown as human beings will determine how we handle these situations.

One thing that has been proven time and again is those people who know themselves tend to respond more positively to given situations. The first task you are being given will sound simple at first but is in truth one of the hardest things we as human beings can do. And that is to take stock of yourself, literally set down and take a deep look at yourself. Keep in mind any of these steps can be performed with the assistance of your master or another person you trust.

Keep in mind that you need to be open minded with all aspects, there will be traits you like that you will find not beneficial and traits you hate which can be extremely beneficial to you.

First off, take the easiest step and identify those things about you that you like. This is easy because it is positive, it is what you are proud of yourself about. These are the traits you rely on every day of your life and are the traits that you will build on and use to improve yourself.

The next step is to take a hard look at those traits you dislike. These are the traits you try to avoid but never seem to be

able to. These can be difficult to find, as many times we tend to deny those traits exist. But the truer we are to ourselves about these, the easier time we have to put them to good use.

Next, we come to the time when we decide what changes we need to make if any. Not always are their changes we want to make, but in the same breath, it is the mark of a smart person who not only knows change is good, but is ready to make changes as needed for their own personal benefit as well as to the benefit of others. Next comes the how of changing these. As is known, you can never remove a habit, you can replace it with another habit and the process takes 21 days of constant work.