

**'Ask anyone
who meditates
on a regular
basis—
meditation
works.'**

Chris Barrington

dru

DRU MEDITATION SELF STUDY COURSE

LESSONS 1-1 TO 1-4



DRU MEDITATION
SELF STUDY

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**"Your goal is not
to battle with
the mind, but
to witness the
mind."**

Swami Muktananda



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Thank you for your kindness and understanding.

YOUR PATH TO SUCCESS

Congratulations on making a magnificent investment in your life! Meditation can bring success to just about every part of your life, and over the next nine months you are likely to discover a new and remarkable version of yourself.

As you experience memorable moments of deep stillness and profoundly healing contentment—the hallmark of Dru Meditation—you will gain innumerable advantages.

For an investment in yourself of as little as ten or twenty minutes per day, you are likely to become:

- more able to handle stress
- more able to relax at will
- clearer and more creative in your decision making
- less reactive when you meet a challenge
- more satisfied by who you are and where you are going and most importantly...
- a lot more interesting and fun to be with!

Sounds good? Read on!



“If the mind falls asleep, awaken it. Then if it starts wandering, make it quiet. If you reach the state where there is neither sleep nor movement of mind, stay still in that, the natural (real) state.”

Ramana Maharshi



THE STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Over the course, you will learn how to use meditation to make your life more meaningful in almost every respect.

Months 1 to 9 topics

- How to relax quickly, anywhere.
- Breathing with energy—unlocking the secrets to abundant vitality.
- Boost Your Brainpower 1—effortless concentration.
- Self esteem.
- Achieving your goals.
- Overcoming stress.
- Building Emotional Intelligence.
- Right from the start you will also learn a complete movement programme, which has been carefully designed to realign your posture, build vitality and free you from chronic pain—in your neck, back or wherever.

How long should I spend each day in making my life better?

When you think there are 1,440 minutes in every day, a 10 or 20 minute appointment with yourself isn't much to put aside—especially when you consider the phenomenal benefits your meditation will bring.

This course aims to help you gain a solid foundation in meditation by encouraging you to adopt a regular 'almost-daily' rhythm of practice.

We have given suggestions for either a 10 or 20 minute programme:

- If you have limited time—choose 10 minutes.
- If you really want to make progress fast—choose 20 minutes (more is fine too!).

How to use your course material

Course contents

Your course is based upon monthly chapters emailed to you in e-book (ie, pdf) format. To help you receive these most easily, we have made these into smaller files that are at screen resolution. If you want to print them out you may want higher quality versions, which you can download from the Dru Meditation website. Your monthly course emails give you the links to these pages.

Using the audio material

The course provides you with its essential core techniques as mp3 downloads so you can experience them without having to make an effort.

However, this is only the beginning of the story! To be a successful meditator, we encourage you to learn these techniques so you can apply them yourself, without the aid of the downloads. (Don't worry, the course is designed to make this as easy as possible for you!)

The pattern of each week's material

Each month's written material is built up of four weekly sessions, following a rhythm designed to make your meditation easy:

1. Essential insights
2. Summary of this week's practice
3. Your daily practice exercises and techniques
4. During the day—ideas for how to carry your meditation into the day.
5. Insight questions.



"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

Ralph Waldo Emerson



INTRODUCTION

Essential Insights

At the beginning of each week, you will find essential concepts and ideas that will make your practice of meditation easier. You will also learn a variety of techniques for overcoming common obstacles to successful meditation.

Summary of this week’s practice

Here, you’ll find summaries of the key features of each week’s practice.

Your daily practice exercises and techniques

This section contains any information you need in order to perform the exercises or techniques suggested for your daily practice.

During the day

Meditation is both the maker of your day, as well as its mirror. Consequently, all good meditation teachers will supply you with practices that help you take your meditation into the fabric of your everyday life.

Insight questions

These questions are designed to help you interact with the material you are learning, so you gain a wide-ranging understanding of what helps you get into a meditative state, why it does so, and when to use it. Our aim is to ensure you know exactly how and when to use the many meditation tools this course will offer you, so you will know how you can most quickly enter a state of meditation, regardless of how you are feeling.

Additional meditation resources

In addition to the audio tracks supplied with your course, we encourage you to explore a variety of Dru Meditation resources available at the Dru Shop nearest you (see opposite):

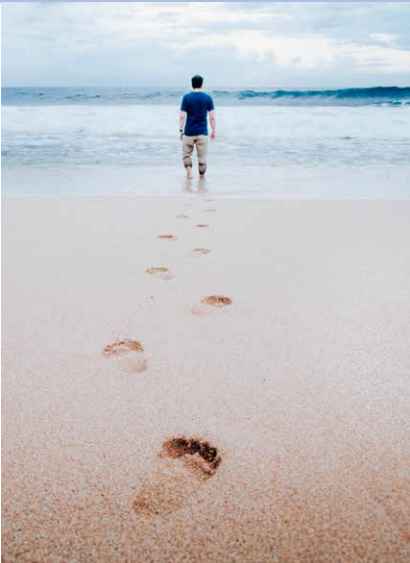
- [Quiet Times](#)—an excellent introduction to the art of meditation
- [Chakra Meditation 1 & 2](#), by Chris Barrington—highly effective meditations for helping you become the designer of the core forces in your unconscious mind.
- [The Flame that Transforms](#) book by Savitri MacCuish, Mansukh Patel and Andrew Wells.

Health considerations – movement programmes

Please take great care when engaging in any movement work. The golden rule of these practices is ‘no pain, no pain’, rather than ‘no pain, no gain’! They are designed to help you stretch your body and free it from tension, and it is more important that you do these exercises with awareness rather than accomplish any degree of stretch. You know your body best, so please do not move in a way that could put you in danger of injury.

If you have:

- **Heart problems** do not raise your arms above shoulder level or invert your body.
- **High Blood Pressure** do not in any way control your normal breathing rate or invert your body.
- **Glaucoma** do not hold your breath or invert your body.
- **Back problems** never move in a way that puts you in danger of further injury.
- **Respiratory problems** consult your medical team before controlling the breath.
- Please consult your physician before exercising if you have any concerns about any of the techniques in this course



Webshop links

[UK](#)

[Australia](#)

[The Netherlands](#)



Health considerations – Relaxations and Meditations

People with mental health conditions requiring medical attention have very different needs when it comes to relaxation and meditation.

Your golden rule is ‘little, more often’, rather than ‘attempting to attain a deep state’. Please only use the relaxation or meditation techniques for a very short time – a couple of minutes – or whatever is short enough to mean that you do not go near a deep state of relaxation or peace.

Please consult with your mental health care team before continuing the course.

FOR EVERYONE:

Making the most of your course material

Enjoying(!) resistances to meditation

The material in this course is designed to help you make a fascinating discovery of how to relax more, how to achieve a greater state of inner peace, and how to feel more connected and content with who you are. It helps you feel happier and more at ease with life.

The path of meditation naturally involves personal transformation, and you will find that your practice gradually heals the more unhelpful patterns of your personality and makes them fall away. You will find yourself becoming free to become the kind of person you’ve always wanted to be.

However, you may find that in times of personal growth, a part of your mind could resist your meditation practice. This is very natural and very normal. In fact, every successful meditator will tell you many wry stories of how they have overcome these inner challenges and discovered immense new sources of strength and contentment as a result.

To help you in these times, this course will include a wide variety of pointers to help you overcome obstacles to meditation. In general, you will find your practice easy if you keep in mind the following points:



If you find you can’t get to your daily practice

It is worth mentioning here, right at the beginning, that it isn’t helpful to beat yourself up if you find yourself lapsing in the regularity of your practice!

Obviously, the more often you manage to get to your meditation practice, the more you will feel its benefits. Nevertheless, we all have times when things get particularly busy, or we feel very emotional, or for some other reason it becomes hard to get down to meditation. If that happens for you, don’t worry. Just pick it up again as soon as you can afterwards.

The worst possible thing to do is to feel guilty about not meditation. This only has the effect of slowing you down even more! Instead, just relax about the whole process and come back to it whenever you can.

If you find yourself stressed, or if you notice you are a little resistant to meditation (yes, it happens!) we encourage you to make your life easy, and at those times choose the shorter, ten minute practices suggested for each week.

Please be gentle with yourself. It is true that meditation is one of those things that only works when you do it—just thinking about it won’t do the trick!—but getting uptight about how much meditation you are doing is rather missing the point. Relax, enjoy, and approach your meditation like a long-lost friend full of forgiveness.

Build a solid foundation – go at your own pace

Most of the exercises in this course follow on from each other, and you will gain most from the syllabus if you master each stage before going on to the next. This is particularly so for the first four months.

Consequently, give yourself time.

If you need to take longer than the course suggests to really anchor an exercise, then... well, give yourself that time! Spread the technique over several weeks, or months, if necessary.

You may be able to incorporate it into your daily programme in the ensuing weeks' syllabus, or you may even want to keep practicing the same material for several weeks before moving on to new material in the course.

Having said this, it is also OK to skip to chapters that really entice you, once you've mastered the first three or four months. Meditation is all about mastering your mind, so if you find you need the stimulation of leaping ahead every now and then, well... go on and have some fun!

In summary, feel free to do the course material in your time, rather than at the pace the course arrives in your mail box.

Not everything in the course is meant for you

You will find as the course progresses that some of the exercises will fit you perfectly. You'll understand them immediately, they'll be easy to do, and you'll feel great afterwards. However, there may also be other exercises that don't seem to fit so well. Either they'll seem hard to do, or perhaps won't feel as good to practice.

And this is just as it should be. We are all different, and we have different needs at different times. You may even find that some exercises that seem difficult at first suddenly become really exciting a few months later.

So, a good meditation teacher will always make sure they provide something for everyone.

Consequently, if you find that an exercise on the course doesn't really work for you, feel free to pass it by. Alternatively, if you find that something works fabulously, we encourage you to enjoy it and dwell on it more than suggested by our syllabus. Meditation is intended to be the ultimate self-empowerment tool, so please feel empowered to follow your own instincts in choosing your practice.

The only thing we'd suggest before you make a decision to move on or skip a technique is that you practice it for at least a week (unless you find it really difficult). This way you will have the chance to overcome the mind's temporary resistances and gain familiarity with the technique's qualities. Then, if you still want to move on, you will be making an informed decision.

Let's get started

We hope you've now got a good idea of how to approach all the exciting material you are about to discover. So, now it's time to get started!

We hope you enjoy the first chapter, Month One, which aims to get you going in meditation as quickly as possible.



**'Don't judge each
day by the harvest
you reap...
but by the seeds
you plant!'**

Robert Louis
Stevenson



"With patience and steady effort in your meditation practice, you will find inner peace. It is inevitable!"

Jane Saraswati
Clapham

MEDITATION'S KEYS TO SUCCESS

Article by Chris Barrington, Director of the International School of Dru Meditation

Summary

Meditating is not about controlling the mind. It is more about befriending yourself. It helps you see the world as it really is, rather than mis-perceiving it and reacting or feeling victimised. Learning to relax at will is the most important foundation skill of meditation.

Ask anyone you know whether they meditate or know someone who does, and you will find that many people have tried it at some time or other. Even the business world is being won over to meditation, with companies like Apple, NASA, Yahoo! and Google offering free meditation classes to their employees.

A myriad of health benefits

Findings at the American Institutes of Health, the University of Massachusetts, and the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard University and many others indicate that meditation enhances the qualities we all need most in the 'information age': increased brain-wave activity, enhanced intuition, better concentration and the alleviation of aches and pains that plague our busy lives. Meditation is being used in the health industry to decrease the effects of PMS (by up to 50 %!), increase health and vitality, and heal a wide range of 'dis-eases'.

Meditation, it could be said, is rapidly becoming part of the mainstream.

Make meditation easy

Consequently, there is a growing need for effective training in meditation, for it takes time and skill to discover how to achieve the stillness of mind that meditation can give to you. Like riding a bike, meditation is not actually difficult... yet if you haven't learnt the basics of how to ride, you can find yourself spending a lot of time and effort and getting nowhere.



"This very moment is a seed from which the flowers of tomorrow's happiness grow."

Margaret Lindsey



"We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are."

Talmud

The aim of this course is to give you a thorough introduction to a wide world of meditation techniques, designed to bring you success in almost all of your life. You'll learn how to choose the right meditation methods so you can most quickly reach a rejuvenating stillness and feeling of inner strength.

Most people know that meditation can help you relax, concentrate, become less reactive, control your blood pressure, and aid a whole catalogue of things that maintain our body-heart-mind internal balance. Yet for some reason people find it difficult to actually practice this ancient art. It seems that there is something inside most people that resists change and is quite happy to accept our normal state of mind with all its agitation, stress and emotional ups and downs.

The art of befriending yourself

Actually, meditation is not about trying hard to control the mind. It is the art of befriending yourself. Whenever you try to control or discipline an unruly mind you will face a huge barrage of resistance. The nature of the ego is not to let go, as it thinks that it is in charge. Instead it is important to make the whole process as easy and enjoyable as you can. Then your meditation practice will bring you success much more easily.

Why practice meditation?

Before you begin to meditate it is important to consider why you are practising. Is it because you wish to develop good mental or physical health? Maybe you are interested in uncovering greater depth of awareness or exploring your spirituality. Maybe you wish to develop your powers of concentration, creativity or insight.

Whatever your reason, probably the most important message that meditation has to teach you is the difference between the way you perceive the world from moment to moment and the way it really is.

As a result of developing this insight you will see that the world is much greater than you had imagined. You will be able to assess people's motives more accurately, you won't react as much, and you will make better decisions. You will be much less likely to feel a victim of circumstances, and much happier about who you are and where you are going.

What meditation exercises should I practice?

All forms of meditation practice lead to variations upon the same states of consciousness. Actually there is not just one state of meditation. Even the ancients classified various levels of consciousness, from a mild state of happiness to intense bliss and the onset of the cosmic state of Samadhi. The techniques that you employ do have some bearing upon the final destination in meditation.

One spiritual master said quite clearly that not all roads lead to Rome. If you want to get to Rome, don't choose a road going in the opposite direction! It is good to know exactly what you wish to get out of your meditation practice.

The course will help you develop goals with razor sharp clarity, and then give you a range of meditation techniques to help you achieve them.

Relaxation—your foundation to success

You may be surprised to learn that becoming skilled at the art of relaxing is central to the success that meditation will bring you.

It's great to discover that your success is built on something that's really enjoyable: the wonderful feeling of being warmly content, relaxed and at ease with our world.

Consequently, we're going to spend this first month coaching you to become fantastic at relaxation. If you are a beginner to meditation you will find it difficult to achieve even the most basic of results if you are unable to relax at will. And even advanced meditators can miss the importance of relaxation. This month is designed to ensure you can relax and let go, easily and quickly, whether you are new to meditation or an old hand.

Once you can relax, you'll need to learn to focus the mind and withdraw the senses from the things that distract you. Finally the focusing should increase until the object upon which you are concentrating becomes merged with your own consciousness... in some ways you become the object of your meditation. Actually, this is quite an advanced skill.



"To meditate does not mean to fight with a problem. To meditate means to observe. Your smile proves it. It proves that you are being gentle with yourself, that the sun of awareness is shining in you, that you have control of your situation. You are yourself, and you have acquired some peace."

Thich Nhat Hah

Most people find it difficult to get beyond basic relaxation because they are too busy trying to achieve something instead of just letting it be.

In fact, this is the most important skill involved in all meditation practice—letting go of trying to achieve and instead being satisfied with 'being'. Eventually, you will discover that resting in a state of simply 'being' actually makes you feel more content, more calm, and more intensely alive and effective than any other state of mind.

Then you will have achieved meditation.

INTRODUCING WEEK 1'S PRACTICE

Summary

- The optimum state for meditation occurs effortlessly when you achieve perfect balance between relaxation and alertness.
- The easiest way to learn these two skills is to start with relaxation.
- A short movement programme as a preparation improves your meditation.
- Learn the Foundation Relaxation to ease tension in body and mind.
- Enjoy a brief period of silence.
- What are your goals for meditation? Being clear about them at the beginning of the course will help bring them into your life more powerfully.

What is meditation?

First of all, let's be clear where we are going.

Have you ever been so absorbed in a task that hours pass by without you noticing? Or been captivated and lifted out of yourself by a great piece of music, an amazing view from a mountain top, or the look on a child's face?

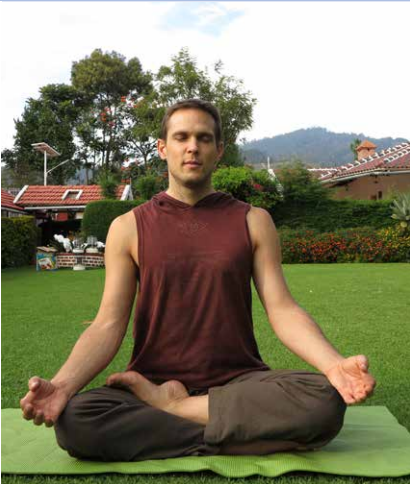
All these states, and many more, can be described as meditation. Our aim in this course is to give you tools to help you enter this state whenever you want to.

When you take all the complexity out of meditation, success begins with a single key principle:

The optimum mental environment for meditation occurs naturally and easily when you achieve a state of perfect balance between:

- **clear, poised attention**
- **complete, effortless relaxation**

The rest of this course will give you a myriad of methods to achieve these twin goals. And the good news for those of us enjoying busy, high-stress lifestyles is that the best way to begin mastering these skills is to focus first on relaxing.





"True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment."
William Penn

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK 1'S PRACTICE continued

This week we begin our meditation practice with the Foundation Relaxation. Later, as you get used to the techniques we will offer two sessions so you can choose from a short or a longer session.

	Your suggested practice	Each week's new practice
1	Movement: Heart Expansion Breath	5 -10 times
2	Foundation Relaxation	Listen to the Foundation Relaxation
3	Entering silence	After the audio track completes, sit silently for a minute or two
4	During the day	Practice the Foundation Relaxation technique several times during the week. Eg after work (try having a shower first—delicious!) or before going to sleep.

1. MOVEMENT—HEART EXPANSION BREATH

It is not until we try sitting still that we realise how much we accumulate tension, aches and pains in our body through the day.

In order to meditate, we will need to be able to sit profoundly still, and this can be an impossible dream if we are too stiff or tense to relax. Consequently, Dru Meditation encourages you to begin your sitting practice with a short movement programme designed to:

- Clear away muscle tension
- Energise and vitalise your body, helping to avoid drowsiness
- Tone and re-align your muscles, preventing muscle aches during meditation



The Heart Expansion Breath is a powerful preparation for any meditation practice. It not only stretches and realigns the body, it also improves your breathing, helps activate lymph drainage and boosts your overall feeling of well-being. As you'll see later in the course, you can also use it to balance painful emotions like anger or sadness. For now, practice it slowly, with awareness, and let it stretch and energise your body while bringing a little calm to your mind.

Stand with feet apart, knees soft. Cross the arms with palms facing outwards.

Breathe in and draw the arms up in front of the body and above the head.

Hold for a few seconds. Breathe out; bring your arms back down ready to repeat the movement.

Each time you breathe out, feel as though you are letting go of any tension or worries. As you breathe in, enjoy the idea that life-giving air is entering your body.



HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS
Please review the health considerations on page 9.
Consult your physician before performing this movement after chest surgery.

2. FOUNDATION RELAXATION

This classic relaxation technique has been used for thousands of years in the eastern traditions.

It combines body posture, muscle awareness, breath and visualisation to relax every level of the body: physical, energetic, emotional and mental. It is simple to perform, yet leaves you relaxed, healed and deeply refreshed.

The technique involves four phases of awareness through the body:

- **Tense and relax** A muscular tense-and-release process that realigns and relaxes the physical level.
- **Breathe and relax** A visualisation and breathing technique that removes the effects of stress and emotional pain from the energetic, emotional and mental levels.
- **Rest in complete stillness** for a brief moment.
- **Rejuvenating light** A visualisation and breathing technique that introduces new, vital and healing energy throughout the body at every level.

You can find this sequence on the CD Deep Relaxation, Track 1, included with the course.

On the CD, you are taken through the relaxation in a sitting position. However, for this week, we encourage you to do the relaxation lying down, using the position suggested below. We'd like you to have the fullest possible experience of relaxation as you start this month's topic.

The main points within the technique are:

- **Most effective lying position** Lie on your back, with feet about 40—60 cm apart, arms by your sides, palms up, about 20 degrees out from your body. Gently lengthen the back of your neck, tucking your chin in slightly, then release. Make sure you cover yourself with a blanket because you are likely to cool down. Your relaxation will be deepest when your spine is aligned. For most people, this is best accomplished by choosing to lie down on a hard surface, like a mat on the floor. Then, look along your body to check it is straight.
- If necessary, use cushions under your ankles, knees, lower back or head.
- **Tense and relax** As you breathe in, tense your feet. As you breathe out, let them relax. Continue in this manner through: Lower legs, thighs, pelvic area, abdomen, chest, lower back, all back, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, face, and head.
- **Breathe and relax** As you breathe in, become very aware of your feet. Recognise that energy follows thought. So, as you breathe out, breathe away any tension remaining in your feet.
- Continue this 'breathe and relax' process through your body in the same sequence as above.
- **Rest in stillness** For a few delicious moments, rest in deep stillness. Just allow your body and mind to rest, without need to focus or direct anything. Let thoughts rise and fall, resting in stillness as they come and go.
- **Rejuvenating light** Visualise or feel a glowing waterfall of light and radiance beyond the crown of your head. Breathe in and let it flow into your crown. On each in-breath, let it flow progressively more deeply through your body: head, neck, heart, right arm, left arm, chest, abdomen, pelvic area, right leg, right foot, left leg, left foot. In each part of your body, let it energise the cells, bringing healing, vitality and well-being.

HEALTH
CONSIDERATIONS
Please review
the health
considerations on
page 9.



FOUNDATION RELAXATION continued

Many benefits:

- By tensing muscles, you bring awareness to each part of the body in turn. This helps you gain control over the different parts of your body so you can relax them, energise them, heal them or whatever else may become necessary—during the rest of your life!
- By using the breath, you harness the force of the largest energy pump in the body—the respiratory system. The breath amplifies the effect of the relaxation signals being sent by your mind to your body.
- Once muscles relax after being tightened, they tend to assume their natural positions. This means that the Tense and Relax technique realigns the body, promoting good posture and removing causes of chronic aches and pains.
- In this lying position, not only is your spine in the best alignment, you also gain the best activation of the body's relaxation response (parasympathetic) nerves in your neck and sacrum.
- The Rejuvenating Light visualisation acts like a mental tonic throughout the body, healing emotions stored in body tissues via the amino acids or proteins known as peptides—the so-called 'molecules of emotion'. This technique also harnesses the power of your unconscious mind to create vitality and well-being.

3. ENTERING SILENCE

This month we invite you to sit quietly for a few moments after you finish your daily programme.

During this time, try simply to just be aware. Let thoughts or emotions pass you by. See if you can be aware of physical sensations as they arise from the body without getting involved in them. Likewise, try to be aware of outside sounds without letting them attract your attention.

There is no need at this stage to spend more than a couple of minutes in this silent sitting. It takes time and practice before the mind can become still, and you will need to learn a variety of other skills before this is likely to occur.

So for now, it is sufficient to simply sit, observe and enjoy this brief period of quiet.

During the day—practice the art of 'letting go'

Practice the Foundation Relaxation technique several times during the week but in different circumstances. For example after a hard day at work have a shower and de-stress using the Foundation Relaxation. Or at night, if you feel too wound up to sleep, practice this relaxation when you go to bed—or if you wake up in the middle of the night. See how much more peacefully you sleep—try it for yourself.





What is the value of an arrow without a target?

INSIGHT QUESTIONS

Try this exercise early on this week to help you establish clear goals.

As you progress you will find your meditation can actually help you draw your most important goals into your life. So, just as an archer carefully observes his or her target before sending their arrow into flight, it is a good idea as you begin this course to be clear about what you hope to achieve from meditation. The following exercise will help you clarify this.

- Make a list of as many benefits of meditation as you can think of. Try to keep going for at least three minutes.
- Then, pick the three that are most important to you. You might like to write them down here and come back to them during the course.
- The three most important benefits of meditation to me are:

Try repeating this exercise after six, twelve and eighteen months. You are quite likely to find this list changing. Also keep an eye out for changes while you are doing this course, because they are good indicators of the far-reaching, positive changes that meditation is bringing into your life.



"Through meditation and doing one thing at a time, we can learn to direct attention where we choose."

Eknath Easwaran



**"The time to relax
is when you don't
have time for it."**

Jim Goodwin

GUIDELINES TO EASIER RELAXATION AND MEDITATION

Summary

- You can make your meditation practice easier by adopting a variety of simple measures.
- Cultivate the attitude that you enjoy your meditation & relaxation, and you value its benefits.
- Prepare your environment so you have the most comfortable and uninterrupted space possible.

Your meditation and relaxation will be amongst your life's most enjoyable activities, if you get them right. And you may be interested to know that a large part of making them work well involves cultivating the right attitude, as well as creating conducive circumstances for your practice. So, here at the beginning of your course, let's help you start off on the best possible footing by giving you some tips that take the effort and stress out of meditation and relaxation.

Be patient with yourself

It's best not to get stressed about relaxing! It is very important to realise that letting go or relaxing is not difficult; it just takes time to learn to do it effectively.

Allow yourself time to develop these skills. The least helpful attitude is to say to yourself, 'I can't relax. It might suit other people but it's not for me.' In our experience everyone can learn to let go and relax, even those filled with tension or anxiety.

After a while, you may find you have made great progress in being able to relax your body, yet relaxing the mind—that's another thing altogether! Again, please give yourself time. Almost everyone can learn to relax the body and can go on to achieve similar relaxation of the mind. It only requires further patience and perseverance.

Cultivate an attitude of enjoyment

Your attitude towards your meditation exercises is important. Allow yourself to look forward to them, and

learn to tell yourself that they are something you like doing. Harness your natural sources of motivation by remembering that these exercises are relaxing, refreshing and that they are doing you good.

Be comfortable

Do your meditation practice in a quiet, comfortable environment in which you can feel at home.

Clothing

Wear loose clothing, e.g. a comfortable track-suit. Many people find their meditation improves if they wear natural fabrics and softer, warmer colours.

Posture

Sit upright in a firm chair with your back supported, or in any comfortable position on the floor. We will learn more about sitting postures next week.

Generally, it is preferable to sit rather than lie down for meditation. Our minds associate lying-down with sleeping... which is exactly what you might experience! However, if you are tired, it is usually more effective to lie down & relax for a few minutes before attempting meditation, rather than heroically trying to stay awake.

Support your body

If you sit on the floor, place a small cushion under the edge of your buttocks, so as to tilt the top of your pelvis forward. It is well worth placing cushions under your knees so they can relax. Remember, your comfort is the most important consideration at this stage of your course.

Timing

Do your meditation practice before your meals. You'll get best results if you wait at least two hours after eating.





'Don't take life too seriously. You'll never get out alive.'

Bugs Bunny

GUIDELINES continued

Meditation happens all day long

- There are two parts to developing your practice of meditation:
- The exercises and techniques given in your notes and CDs;
 - The process of developing awareness in everything you do.
- So throughout the day, check your posture, check how you feel i.e. body sensations, tensions etc. This is very important.

Regularity

It is easiest to cultivate a habit of meditation if you aim for regularity in your practice.

In the morning set your alarm so that you can get up early enough to do it comfortably, without rushing. In the evening choose a time when the people living with you will make the least number of demands upon you.

Make a contract

Make a firm, clear contract with yourself each night that you will practise your exercises and techniques—and stick to it. Do not be side-tracked. Inner discipline is part of the process.

Create peace

Take the phone off the hook! Choose a place and/or time in which you are least likely to be disturbed during your meditation practice.

Have a sense of fun!

Approach your practice with a sense of fun and adventure. Enjoy the experience.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Summary

Having explored some fundamentals of the Foundation Relaxation last week, we are now going to take a quantum leap in our exploration of relaxation skills and invite you to practice this relaxation sitting up, without using the CD.

When you can truly let go of tension in your body and mind, while also staying alert, then you are halfway towards successful meditation.

	Your suggested practice		
		10 minutes	20 minutes
1	Movement: Align your spine	About 5 times	About 12 times
2	Foundation Relaxation	Learn the first 2 stages of the Foundation Relaxation from last week. Then try doing them sitting up without the audio.	Learn all of the Foundation Relaxation from last week. Then try doing the whole technique sitting up and without the audio.
3	Entering silence	After you have relaxed, be silent for a minute or two.	

During the day	Just how stressed am I? A stress questionnaire
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THS WEEK'S PRACTICE continued

Summary

- Our ability to relax at will is improved dramatically when we can relax each part of our body individually.
- Relaxation is enhanced by combining breath, movement and awareness.
- Understanding the causes of stress is the first step in successful stress management.

MOVEMENT—ALIGN YOUR SPINE

Repeat the following sequence several times:

- **Heart Expansion Breath** (from last week) 3 times.
- **Side bends** As you breathe in, raise one arm out sideways, over your head, and then follow it into a side bend. Breathe out and lower your arm down to your side. Repeat on the other side. Feel as if you are rotating a huge ball between your arms. Repeat each side 3 times.
- **Standing stretch** Raise both hands up above your head and stretch upwards. Breathe out, release the stretch and then as you breathe in, reach up once more. Repeat this movement twice more. Relax your arms to your sides.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

As always, move only in a way that is comfortable for your body. Do not stretch in a way that causes pain.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES
LEARN THE FOUNDATION RELAXATION

You have experienced the Foundation Relaxation (Deep Relaxation CD, track 2) for the past seven days. This is such a powerful technique that this week we would encourage you to learn it without the CD so you can apply it in many other situations. Make an effort to try and remember all the stages of the Foundation Relaxation. Then try and do the whole technique without the CD.

Remember the main points within the technique are:

- Most effective lying position: Lie on your back, with feet about 40—60 cm apart (toes outwards), arms by your sides, palms up, about 20 degrees out from your body. If necessary, use cushions under your ankles, knees, lower back or head for support.
- Tense and relax from feet to crown: As you breathe in, tense your feet. As you breathe out, let them relax. Continue through: lower legs, thighs, pelvic area, abdomen, chest, lower back, all back, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, face, and head.
- Breathe and relax from feet to crown: As you breathe in, become very aware of your feet. As you breathe out, breathe away any tension remaining in your feet. Continue this 'breathe and relax' process through your body in the same sequence as above.
- Rest in stillness: For a few delicious moments, rest in deep stillness.
- Rejuvenating light from crown to feet: Visualise or feel a glowing waterfall of light and radiance beyond the crown of your head. Breathe in and let it flow into your crown. On each in-breath, let it flow progressively through your body in the reverse sequence to above: head, neck, heart, right arm, left arm, chest, abdomen, pelvic area, right leg, right foot, left leg, and left foot.

ENTERING SILENCE

Sit quietly for a few moments, like you did last week, letting yourself rest as if in a state of 'simply being'.



"JUST HOW STRESSED AM I?"

A STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE

We invite you to fill in this table at the beginning of your Dru Meditation course. Then come back in nine month’s time and again at the end of the course. Look out for the ways in which your score has changed!

Consider how you feel about each of the aspects of your life in the table below.

Give each a score on a scale of 1 to 5:

5 = very stressed

4 = slightly stressed

3 = feeling great or having no concerns

2 = not having much enthusiasm

1 = for boredom or dullness.

Please put a score by every item.

YOUR STRESS RATING (1 - 5)

	TODAY DATE:	AFTER 9 MONTHS DATE:	AFTER 18 MONTHS DATE:
Occupation			
With significant relationships			
Personal injury or illness			
End of a relationship/divorce			
Celebrations			
Death of a close family member			
Pregnancy			
Projects at work			
New job			
Mortgage or loan			
Change in work responsibilities			
Relationship with parents (or in-laws)			
Relationship with son or daughter			
Outstanding personal achievement			
Trouble with authority figures at work			
Change in working hours/conditions			
Change in residence			
Text BoxSocial life			
Change in eating habits			
Other			
Total			



STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE continued

Understanding your score

100—90

You consider yourself to be extremely stressed. Please take care of yourself, because this level of stress could be putting your health at risk.

Meditation can be a vital tool in helping you relax, as well as helping you make effective decisions so you can change parts of your life causing stress.

90—70

You have high levels of stress in a number of areas of your life and it is probably time to take significant steps to change these areas.

Meditation can help you relax in these areas, as well as helping you channel your energy into correcting these and enhancing areas of your life you enjoy.

70—50

You are very probably enjoying your life and have got most things in great balance. Well done!

You'll be able to use meditation to keep your life in this balance, and also to take it further: to be sure you are channelling your energy into the things you value most.

50—20

If you feel this way about everything, you may be missing the passion and enthusiasm that enables you to make changes or motivate people.

Meditation can be the key that helps you develop your sources of personal power

INSIGHT QUESTIONS

"Can I relax at will?"

- How can we tell we have learnt the art of being able to relax at will?
- You will find that you are:
- Much less reactive
 - Able to bring on a state of relaxation in any circumstance
 - Even in a busy place, with a lot going on around you, you can pull yourself into a state of relaxation without any effort
 - In essence, relaxation has become your choice. You can choose how to interact with the world

How do you rate on these four indicators at this moment? Come back to this question every four months or so and check your progress.

Please do not judge your ability to sit still or to relax, or engage in a competition with yourself or anyone else. Simply observe with interest what you can and can't do. As the course progresses, you will find that your natural capacity for these two crucial skills increases. At this stage though, you will make the fastest progress if you let go of all attempts at trying.

"Be soft in your practice. Think of the method as a fine silvery stream, not a raging waterfall. Follow the stream, have faith in its course.

It will go its own way, meandering here, trickling there.

It will find the grooves, the cracks, the crevices. Just follow it.

Never let it out of your sight. It will take you..."

Sheng-yen



"Meditation brings wisdom; lack of meditation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what holds you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom."
Buddha

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS

Summary

- Good posture optimises your meditation by freeing your breathing and allowing you to stay upright without fatigue or pain.
- If only 1% of your energy was being wasted by stiff muscles and poor posture opposing the free movement of your breath cycle, you could be losing as much as 10% of the energy available for your conscious activities.
- Check regularly that your posture is aligned—from side to side and front to back—while at the same time not being tight or over-alert.

The hidden powers in your spine

Our human spine is one of the most superbly engineered works of art on the planet. Meditators soon learn to be intently aware of the state of their spine, since sitting with your spine in good alignment can mean the difference between a richly fulfilling meditation or aches, drowsiness and a tedious procession of unwanted thoughts.

In the first half of this month we established the ground rules of a successful practice. Now we are ready to consider how posture can help you improve your concentration span and alertness.

When you can comfortably hold your back in an upright, aligned posture without undue strain, a number of physiological benefits help you in your meditation:

- You become free of distracting aches and pains
- Your breathing becomes freer—which has been shown medically to improve your concentration, energy levels and emotional balance
- The activation and relaxation responses in your central nervous system are both stimulated. This is so important that we will explore it in much greater detail later on in the course, in Month 4—Meditations for Overcoming Stress

Understanding posture

The bones, ligaments, muscles and discs that make up the structure of your back regularly bear a considerable amount of strain. In fact, the forces placed on the vertebrae of your lower spine by poor posture can be larger than the forces generated by lifting a heavy weight!

Aligning the three curves

When the spine’s three natural curves—lower back, mid-back and neck—are in perfect alignment, they achieve a multitude of functions simultaneously:

- They hold the body upright, while providing a suspension system to absorb jolts and shocks
- They move to accommodate the breath—giving the abdomen and lungs freedom to make room for a full, deep, refreshing breath
- This cycle of movement with each breath acts like a pump to draw blood upwards from the lower body and promotes lymph drainage throughout the torso
- When everything is aligned well, the head, shoulder girdle and chest will all be suspended with perfect balance upon the spine, so you will be able to hold them in place without effort, even within a state of deep relaxation

To achieve the best results in meditation, we need to have full control of our energy. We need to be able to breathe easily, fully and with control. And we need to be able to sit comfortably for a long period of time without pain or strain.

When the spine is misaligned, these functions become hindered. If the spine is bent to one side or the other, or hunched forward or back, you lose freedom to breathe deeply and fully. You will probably find that undue pressure is being placed on organs wherever the spine is contracted, and it is likely that this can lead to a loss of performance or even dysfunction over many years. And most noticeable of all, it will take effort and may even be painful to sit upright for any length of time.

Improving the posture of our spine is starting to sound like a good idea!





"Such awareness is like living with a snake in the room; you watch its every movement, you are very, very sensitive to the slightest sound it makes. Such a state is total energy. In such awareness the totality of yourself is revealed."

Krishnamurti

Check your posture in the mirror

Our head weighs between 4– 5 kilos and is normally free to move in any direction with the contraction and relaxation of the neck muscles. However, if we tend to hold our head to one side, the muscles on the opposite side will be constantly over-working. If this continues it can lead to headaches, neck pain and even migraine.

Check in the mirror and see whether you are holding your head centrally, balanced on top of the spine, or if it is leaning towards one side, or even jutting forward. Ask a partner or friend to move it gently into position. Close your eyes and accustom yourself to this new position. If you have habitually held your head out of alignment over a period of years, you may at first feel uncomfortable and lop-sided when your head is actually balanced. Don't be misled into repositioning your head back into its accustomed posture. It won't be long before you feel much lighter in this new position.

The movement programme included in the Course is also designed to realign your posture, from head to toes.

The 'over-alert' posture

As soon as you think about posture, you start to straighten your spine, don't you? Be careful not to go so far that you move into the 'over-alert' posture—hollow back, chest out and every back muscle tense.

Enjoy the benefits of correct sitting

As we progress through the course we will be asking you to spend longer and longer times sitting in meditation. If you are not able to hold your posture reasonably well, you will find that your attention span will suffer. Begin now to correct any faults and your perseverance will pay dividends later on in the course.

THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE

Summary

- This week's movements can help reduce drowsiness or headaches.
- Correct sitting posture helps you create the best balance between being able to relax and staying alert. In fact, correct posture actually gives you more energy.
- Being aware of your posture during the day is one of the easiest ways to strengthen your back.
- How long can you relax and sit still for?

	Your suggested practice	
1	Movement: Upper body stretches 1	Practice for about 3 minutes with special focus on breath and awareness
2	Sitting with energy Stage 1	Learn how to sit, alert and comfortable, on a chair or on the floor
3	Heart Relaxation	Listen to the Heart Relaxation technique while lying down
4	Entering silence	After the audio finishes, sit up and be silent for a minute or so

During the day	Be aware of your posture at various times during the day
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MOVEMENT—UPPER BODY STRETCHES

When you do these upper body stretches slow the movement down and try to be very conscious of the experience of the movements. Sense which muscles are stretching, and how the joints feel. Be very aware of coordinating your breath with your movements but don't ever put strain on your breathing. You might like to make these stretches into a flowing, moving meditation.

Use the following sequence:

Perform the **Heart Expansion Breath** (p21) 5 times.

Side Bends (p32) x 3 on each side.

Standing stretch (p32) x 3 stretches.

Arm rotations: From the Standing Stretch, bring your arms down to shoulder height, extending horizontally out to each side. Breathe in, and rotate your arms from deep within the shoulder joint, so the outside surface of your arms rolls backward. Then, with great awareness, breathe out and rotate your arms inwards from deep within the shoulder. Repeat this movement twice more.

Now, on each in or out-breath, move one arm in one direction, the other in the opposite direction, for several breaths. Then relax your arms to your sides.

Benefits: These exercises together can help whenever you feel sleepy or headachy.

While the first three movements above expand and free your spine and ribcage, arm rotations begin to release the muscles of the upper back and neck, free the breath cycle, open the heart and improve upper body lymph drainage.



SITTING WITH ENERGY—STAGE 1

Above all, please be comfortable.

There is no use having a perfect posture while being so rigid and tense that you can't even begin to relax. In this course, we really encourage you not to be a 'posture hero'! The following guidelines will help you find a sitting position that gives you the best balance between upright alignment and comfort.

Sitting in a chair

Until you become a seasoned meditator, you will almost certainly find that you gain the same benefits from meditation whether you sit on a chair or on the floor. So, if it helps you to be comfortable, please sit on a chair.

- Sit with legs uncrossed, feet flat on the floor—on a cushion if necessary.
- Keep your back upright, preferably away from the back of the chair.
- Try to sit so the lower spine tilts forward a little. You may need to experiment to find the most comfortable way of doing this. Try pushing the base of the pelvis firmly towards the back of the chair, or use a cushion to support the small of your back.
- Lift up through your spine. Then lift your shoulders and relax them back and down slightly. Let the whole spine relax. Do this 2 or 3 times and then let the spine rest in its most comfortable position.
- Lift up your head and then let the neck relax.





Sitting on the floor

- Whether sitting with legs crossed or kneeling, ensure that the top of your pelvis tilts forward enough to create a comfortable hollow in your lower back. This helps support your whole spine upright.
- Sitting cross-legged: For optimum pelvic tilt, try sitting on the edge of a cushion, rather than on the whole cushion. Also, choose to support your knees with cushions if they don't naturally rest on the floor.
- Kneeling: Try using a meditation stool, or alternatively fold a blanket and place it beneath your shins, or between your calves and your buttocks.
- Lift up through your spine. Then lift your shoulders and relax them back and down slightly. Let the whole spine relax. Do this 2 or 3 times and then let the spine rest in its most comfortable position.
- Lift up your head and then let the neck relax.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES:
HEART RELAXATION, LYING DOWN

Please listen to the Deep Relaxation, Track 2 and enjoy this extremely deep relaxation. To gain the maximum depth of relaxation, we encourage you to do this technique lying down.

This relaxation will help you continue your discovery of how to trigger your body's relaxation response, often called 'autogenic relaxation'. The technique further applies the power of visualisation and body contemplation, and then goes on to access the power of your heart. These techniques help you relax not only your body, but also your emotions and unconscious mind.

The main stages of the relaxation are:

- Most effective lying position: (as in the Foundation Relaxation p12) Lie on your back, with feet about 40—60 cm apart, toes out, arms by your sides, palms up, about 20 degrees out from your body. Gently lengthen the back of your neck, then release.
 1. **Breathe and relax:** Recognise that as you think, so you become. Your mind can choose to relax your body. So, as you breathe in, become very aware of your feet. So, as you breathe out, breathe away any tension remaining in your feet. Continue this 'breathe and relax' process in the same sequence as in the Foundation Relaxation (p12) through your lower legs, thighs, pelvis, abdomen, chest, lower back, all back, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, face, and head.
 2. **Relaxing peace/light:** Visualise or feel your feet being filled with a wave of peace or light, which completely absorbs your attention and totally relaxes your feet. Let this relaxing wave of peace and light extend into your lower legs. Continue in this manner in the same sequence as above. Rest in this state. Scan your body for any places still containing tension. Repeat stages 1 and 2 in these places.
 3. **Awakening heart power:** Next, take your awareness to the heart region in the centre of your chest (behind your breast-bone). Allow it to energise the cells, bringing healing, vitality and well-being. Let this restorative sensation now expand to fill all of your chest—rejuvenating, energising. And then let it continue to expand into your neck, face, and head. Let it move to fill your entire body...

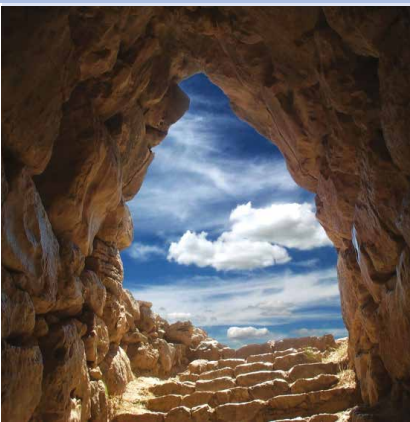




4. **Be aware of your body:** Finally, become aware of your body lying on the floor, energised and alive. Be aware of the breath rising and falling, move your fingers and toes, and roll over onto your side before sitting up.

Benefits: This relaxation brings you all the benefits of the Foundation Relaxation, with some additional advantages

- The **second stage’s wave of peace or relaxing light** is the first of a family of body contemplation techniques used for healing the body. We explore this in much greater detail in the Meditation Mastery courses. This method has the potential to heal not just your physical body, but also your emotions and mind.
- The **third stage, awakening heart power**, accesses the immeasurable capacity of the human heart to bring healing and peace to the body. This phase gives you a very potent tool for calming your emotions and mind at a very deep level. For now though, we invite you to simply experience this. Later in the course, in Month 5, we’ll give you a greater understanding of the power you have available within your heart centre.



ENTERING SILENCE

Continue as in the previous two weeks. Once you have finished your relaxation, come to rest for a few moments into a state of simply ‘being’. There is no need to try to force or mould this state. Simply pause for a couple of minutes and enjoy this time of quiet.

During the day—check your posture

It is very useful to check your posture throughout the day. As often as you can, pause and take notice of your posture. At least once a day check your posture in a mirror. What are you aware of about your posture before and after you look in the mirror?

As you become used to doing this regularly you will become increasingly sensitive to the tell-tale signs of bodily discomfort and stress that come from poor posture, and will be able to quickly correct them.

Checking your posture through the day is one of the easiest and the most thorough ways of building strong, supple back muscles. When these are well toned, you will be able to maintain a correct posture throughout your meditation.



"Don't underestimate the value of Doing Nothing, of just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear."

Pooh's Little Instruction Book, inspired by A.A. Milne

INSIGHT QUESTIONS

What relaxation methods do you choose during the day?

Make a list of any methods you use, and then give them a score out of 5 for their effectiveness. You might like to score them for how much they help you relax your body, your emotions, and your mind, like in the example below.

	YOUR STRESS RATING (1 - 5)		
	How much this relaxes my BODY	How much this relaxes my EMOTIONS	How much this relaxes my MIND
	(ENTER A SCORE OUT OF 5 FOR EACH)		
Deep relaxation or meditation practice			
Walking in nature			
Having a good laugh			
Slumping in front of the TV at the end of the day			
Watching a movie I love			
Eating well			
Not eating well			
Going to the gym			
Quality time with someone I love			
Quality time doing a favourite activity/hobby/sport			
Partying out			
Drinking			
Smoking			
Other activities			
Total			

What is best for you? This revealing exercise may help you reorient some of your priorities in life!



"Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself."
Hermann Hesse

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS

Summary

- Relaxation skills help you become less reactive, more able to choose how you relate to people and the world around you.
- Many unwanted thoughts in meditation are simply the result of not being able to relax.
- It is very hard to focus the mind unless you can relax deeply and let go of tension in body, emotions and mind.

Can you relax at will?

We have now been practicing the art of relaxation for three weeks. Cast your mind back, as you read this, and assess your progress. Do you find it easier to let go of tension in your body? Can you now manage without falling asleep or wanting to get up and rush away?

For most people, it takes many months to develop the ability to relax at will. We can prove this to you now. Take your awareness to a part of your body—say the top of your right shoulder. Focus on it, then relax it and observe. Now, remove your awareness from it and think of something else. Does your shoulder stay relaxed?

If it does, then your ability to let go is already quite well developed. If not, please don't worry. You'll gain a wealth of techniques over the next few months so you can become adept at relaxation.

How does learning to relax help me?

As your ability to relax increases, a few essential qualities begin to surface in your personality. Not only will these make you a more capable, fun and successful person, they are also necessary accomplishments before you can easily focus your mind in meditation.

You will find that:

- you become much less reactive or emotional when faced with sudden challenges
- you are able to relax in any circumstance
- even in a busy place, with a lot going on around you, you can

pull yourself into a state of relaxation without any effort

- In essence, relaxation will have become your choice. You will have gained the ability to choose how you interact with the world, rather than being at the mercy of its ever-unpredictable changes

What's the easiest way to focus the mind?

- Being able to focus the mind can seem completely out of reach when we sit quietly and watch a cacophony of thoughts parading by
- In fact, a large proportion of these thoughts arise because parts of our unconscious mind are holding on tightly to one experience or another. If someone has shouted at us, we can't get it out of our mind. If we're just about to land a big business deal, we can't stop thinking about it. And even tension in our body will create distracting thoughts
- In essence, thoughts in meditation are often the result of tensions we are carrying—physically, emotionally or mentally. When we learn to relax at will—at all of these levels—we find that a huge proportion of these thoughts simply disappear
- In fact, the main reason that prevents most people from focusing their minds is just that they aren't able to relax. And those few 'stress-athletes' who actually focus better when faced with stress usually have difficulty meditating because they aren't able to attain a deep state of relaxation behind their sharp focus

Consequently, learning to relax is an essential basis for meditation. Once this skill is accomplished, you will find that mastering the mind begins to turn into a fascinating voyage of discovery.



A successful meditation practice first requires a deep understanding and mastery of your physical body.

This week we begin a new discovery of relaxation by taking our awareness into all the different parts of our body. When we can do this effectively, we not only gain a very powerful tool for relaxation, we also gain the ability to use meditation for healing our body’s illnesses or transforming painful emotions into positive ones.

	Your suggested practice	10 minutes	20 minutes
1	Movement: Upper body stretches 2	Practice for about 3 minutes with breath and awareness	Practice slowly and create a moving meditation—5 minutes or more
2	Sitting with energy Stage 2	Learn more tips for optimum sitting posture using these principles, whether you’re on the floor or a chair	
3	Sitting Relaxation	Listen to the Heart Relaxation and then mentally repeat the process to yourself	
4	Entering silence	After the audio track completes, sit up and be silent for a minute or two	

During the day	Practice either your posture awareness or one of the relaxation techniques (Foundation or Heart) at other times throughout your day without the CD
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Summary

- Spinal movements help you release deep muscle tension in the back.
- Sitting posture is enhanced by lifting the sternum, and then lengthening the back of the neck, on each in-breath.
- Body contemplation practices train your mind to be able to relax the individual parts of your body.

MOVEMENT—UPPER BODY STRETCHES 2

If you have time, slow the movements down, move with your breath and be so aware of the muscles and joints that you create a moving meditation.

- Perform the **Heart Expansion Breath** 3 times.
- **Side bends**, 2 on each side.
- **Standing stretch**, 2 stretches.
- **Arm rotations** from p42.
- **Spinal twist** Leading with your hips, twist comfortably in one direction then the other, creating a swinging movement with your arms as you twist back and forth. Lift the trailing heel as you twist, for a while. Then as you twist, sink down slightly onto the trailing foot. Keep your spine straight and upright throughout. Try to be aware of the movements occurring within your spine while doing the spinal twists.

Benefits: The spinal twist enables you to start clearing muscle tension and improving lymph circulation (removal of toxins) all along the length of the spine. It also helps you become more aware of the structure of the spine, which in turn will help you harness the power of the breath more completely, which we are going to explore next month.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

As before, people with back problems should exercise great care with spinal twists.





"Breathing in, I
calm body and
mind, Breathing
out, I smile.
Dwelling in the
present moment,
I know this is the
only moment."

Thich Nhat Hanh

SITTING WITH ENERGY STAGE 2

These extra pointers will help you sit in the best way, building on the principles of correct sitting that you established in the last two weeks:

- Lift your sternum: As you lengthen the spinal column upwards, focus on the middle of your sternum (breast-bone) and lift it upwards. Relax and rest upon the upright spine as you breathe out. Stay upright and be careful not to lean back. Practice this for a few breaths and notice how it helps to keep your shoulders from hunching forward.
- Then, make sure your chin forms a right-angle with your neck. It will help if you lengthen the muscles in the back of your neck as you complete each in-breath. Notice how this helps to support the head. See if you can find a point of balance where it rests at the top of your spine, just like a ball upon a pole. Practise this for a few breaths.
- During your meditation time, periodically make a mental check on your posture. If you notice you are slumping forward or rounding the back, rise up again until your spine feels long and tall.

As you practice these pointers to correct sitting posture, you are quite likely to ‘discover’ parts of your spine you may never have paid much attention to before. This may even feel uncomfortable, as your back adjusts into unfamiliar postures. Please give yourself time to get used to these new positions. If you go gently, adding a little at a time over a period of weeks, you will relieve misalignments and build up new muscles at an easy and natural pace.

You’ll also be glad to know that **your movement programme is carefully designed to replace these misalignments with better postural stability.**

You may even want to repeat these exercises a couple of times a day while your body is adjusting to these new positions.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES—HEART RELAXATION

This week we invite you to learn the Heart Relaxation from last week. You’ll gain another very powerful relaxation skill you will be able to use in a wide variety of situations. To recap, the main stages of the relaxation are:

- Most effective lying position: Lie on your back, with feet about 40—60 cm apart, arms by your sides, palms up, about 20 degrees out from your body. If necessary, use cushions under your ankles, knees, lower back or head for support. Gently lengthen the back of your neck, then release.
 1. **Breathe and relax:** As you breathe in, become very aware of your feet. As you breathe out, breathe away any tension remaining in your feet. Continue through your lower legs, thighs, pelvic area, abdomen, chest, lower back, all back, arms, shoulders, neck, face, and head.
 2. **Relaxing peace/light:** Visualise or feel your feet being filled with a wave of peace or light, which completely absorbs your attention and totally relaxes your feet. Let this relaxing wave of peace and light extend into your lower legs. Continue in this manner through the same sequence as above. Rest in this state. Scan your body for any places still containing tension. Repeat stages 1 and 2 in these places.
 3. **Awakening heart power:** Next, take your awareness to the heart region. Allow it to energise the cells, bringing healing, vitality and well-being.





ENTERING SILENCE

Continue as in the last weeks, enjoying a few moments of quiet at the end of your relaxation. At this stage, simply let yourself be, without being concerned about what your mind is doing. Giving yourself permission to stop for these brief minutes is building an important foundation for later.

Coming out of silence and relaxation

Coming out of your silent relaxation can be as important as entering it. There’s nothing like the soothing calm of a really good deep relaxation or meditation, yet how can we best transfer all the benefits of this back into our day?

For now, we encourage you to simply become aware of your body when you are ready to emerge from your relaxation:

- Become aware of your body. Feel it lying—or sitting—here in the room. Feel the pressure of your clothes against your skin, perhaps the touch of your hair or a blanket upon you.
- Be aware of the place where you are lying or sitting. Be aware of your body here in this place.
- Gently move your fingertips and toes, take a few deeper breaths and give yourself a really good stretch. If you are lying down, roll over onto one side before sitting up. It places less stress on your neck and back.
- Congratulate yourself for spending this time in meditation. (It’s worth really valuing this moment of congratulation. It will build a massively positive association between your meditation and all the great improvements it brings to your life – thereby helping you to gain even more!)

DURING THE DAY

We want to give you lots of choice this week for applying your new skills. Practice either your posture awareness or one of the relaxation techniques (Foundation or Heart) at other times throughout your day but without the audio. Discover just how powerful relaxation and the art of ‘letting go’ can be when you integrate it into your day.

INSIGHT QUESTIONS FOR MONTH 1
HOW DOES RELAXATION AFFECT MY DAY?

Keep a diary

Starting from this week, in order to gauge the effectiveness of your gathering skills in relaxation, we encourage you to keep a diary. You might like to use some of these questions as a starting point:

- How easily can I relax muscles if I find they are tense?
- Do I have fewer aches and pains?
- How much am I affected by other people’s strong emotions now?
- How am I doing in being able to handle my own emotions?
- What is my response to stress at work like now?
- How is my ability to be relaxed at home?

When you were performing your relaxation techniques:

- What were three things that helped you?
- What were three things that hindered your experience?

You might like to keep a diary of answers to these questions over the next couple of months. We hope you’ll watch with fascination as your responses improve!



"Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgment will be surer.

Go some distance away because then the work appears smaller and more of it can be taken in at a glance and a lack of harmony and proportion is more readily seen."

Leonardo Da Vinci