



SACRED BREATH STRESS REDUCTION AND RELAXATION: Tools for Finding Inner Peace



By Darryl Olive, MBA, MHA, CSCS, E-RYT 500 and Certified Sacred Breath Instructor

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KCFitnessLink

Web: www.kcfitnesslink.com

E-mail: info@kcfitnesslink.com

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“Knowing all objects to be impermanent let to their contact bind you resolve again and again to be aware of the Self that is permanent.”

–Sri T. Krishnamacharya

What is Sacred Breath Stress Reduction and Relaxation?

Sacred Breath Stress Reduction and Relaxation is a meditative technique based on the ancient practice of yoga. It uses breathing, relaxation, concentration and positive thinking to arrive at happiness and peace in our everyday lives. While it can touch us spiritually, it has no connection to religion but can enhance anyone’s spiritual practices regardless of their belief system. Simply put, it a practice of focusing your attention to help you feel calm and give you a clear awareness about your life.

According to the philosophy of yoga:

- **Happiness lies within us all.**
- **Anyone can reach this state with practice and effort,** when you release subtle thoughts or waves of perception that keep you tied to negative thoughts, worries, doubts, fears and skepticism.
- **Bliss occurs in everyday living:** Once you transcend these negative thoughts, you can arrive at a state of pure awareness—a state of peace and serenity or a higher level of consciousness.

Through progressive relaxation of the muscles, the nervous system and the mind, Sacred Breath allows you to discriminate between useful and non-useful thoughts. As you focus using breathing and concentration, you are able to calm the mind and emotions, allowing you to realize your true Self. It is when we know our true Self that we end suffering, attachment to negative thoughts and find ease in everyday living. The root cause of all suffering is ignorance of your true Self. Over time, continuous pain and suffering has negative effects on the mental, spiritual and physical body.

Successful Sacred Breath technique does not require an empty mind. One simply has awareness of his/her thoughts without judgment and attachment. There are no road signs to know if you are in this meditative zone.

Yogic and Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a style of meditation that is modified from Buddhist Vipasana Meditation. Mindfulness meditation uses the key spiritual tools of transformation from the system without any religious connotations. The system has been popularized by John Kabat-Zinn who describes the system as developing **wakefulness** in the present moment—finding harmony with oneself and the world. The system emphasizes staying in touch with thoughts, emotions, sensations and behaviors through **non-judgmental observation**. Through discipline one can cultivate mindfulness through consistent meditation practice and learn to take each moment as it comes, good, bad or neutral. Yogic meditation and mindfulness are great compliments since many people often worry about eliminating their mind's thoughts or have concerns about performing meditation “right.”

Mantra Meditation

Mantra comes from two Sanskrit words *manas* or mind and the second *trai* which means to protest or free from. Mantra meditation is called Japa in Sanskrit. Like other meditation, mantra frees us from unsteadiness in the mind. As we repeat the mantras, the vibrations change us on a spiritual level and the energy changes to the energy of the mantra. At some point, the power of the mantra becomes “seated within you.” This state is known as Mantra Siddhi.

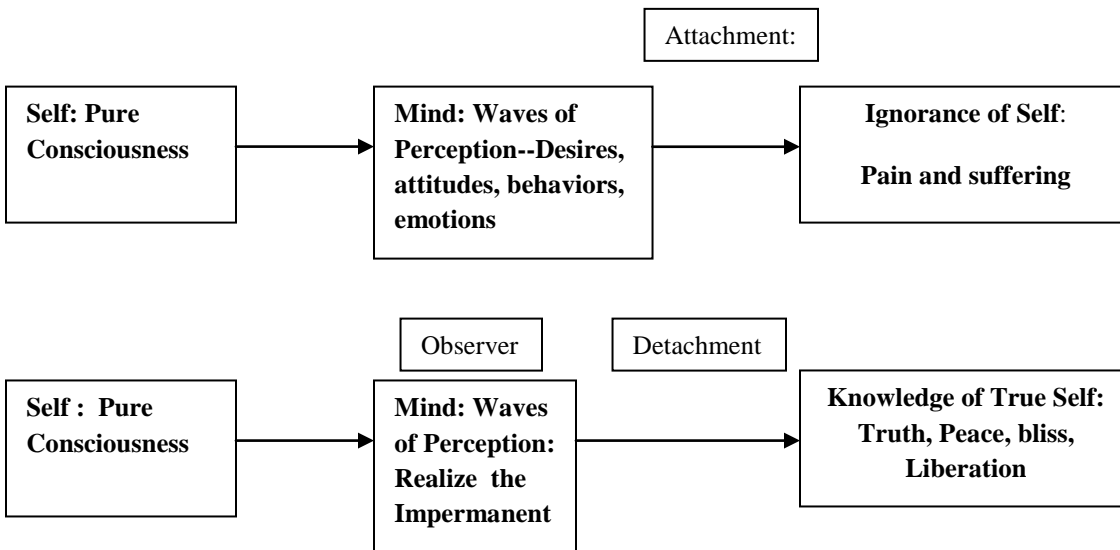
Types of Pain and Suffering According to Yoga Philosophy

There are four types of pain and suffering:

1. **False Enjoyment:** is when something is enjoyable but later on results in pain: for example, you overeat an assortment of wonderful foods and then right after eating you experience indigestion or stomach relief, or even worse, guilt.
2. **Loss:** is caused by the memory of something that you had but no longer have, such as when you break off from a relationship or lose a loved one. All human beings experience this pain.
3. **Fear:** comes when your sense of happiness is based on having something that you enjoy, but fear to lose (for example you own a beautiful home but you may lose your job and not be able to afford it). Also, when you are dependent on a relationship as the source of your happiness, you may fear being left alone.
4. **Imbalance:** is due to an imbalance in your energy which can be due to overwork, poor diet, sickness or poor coping. This type of pain is apparent when you feel tired or are in physical pain and you must get up and go to work.

Model of Pain and Suffering

According to yoga philosophy, we all are born with an internal “Self” or sense of eternal peace. However, due to fluctuation or waves of the mind called vrittis (desires, attitudes, opinions, behaviors) we attach to and experience a false reality. This false reality is further fueled by sensations and emotions that trigger poor coping mechanisms an adaptation in life. A part of attachment to these fluctuations of the mind one may also falsely develop the idea that life’s conditions are permanent. Ultimately, this ends in cycles of pain and suffering as one is not able to see life realistically. The process of meditation brings one closer to the true nature of existence, allowing one to impartially observe the fluctuations of the mind without attachment.



Benefits of Sacred Breath Stress Reduction and Relaxation

Meditative practices like Sacred Breath Stress Reduction and Relaxation are known to have profound physiological and neuropsychological effects on the body, in particular countering the effects of stress. Meditation practices have been evaluated in over 311 studies. A meta-analysis revealed that the most consistent and strongest physiological effects of meditation practices in healthy populations occur in the reduction of heart rate, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

Psychological/Emotional/Physical Benefits

- Reduce anxiety, depression and worries
- Create a sense of inner peace and calm
- Accelerates psychological healing
- Reduces additions to alcohol, drugs and other addictions

- Creates the right mindset for transformative change experiences like smoking and weight reduction
- Increase mental clarity and focus, leading to better performance (school, athletics, work etc)
- Calms the nervous system and reduces the stress response
- Reduces chronic pain
- Improves blood flow
- Strengthens the immune system
- Helps manage hot flashes

The Power of Breathing

The Sacred Breath technique uses the breath as a foundation to calm the nervous system and increases lung capacity. The breath calms the nervous system in three ways: the ratio of the inhalation to the exhalation, natural smoothness and diaphragmatic breathing (full torso breathing).

Today many people perform only shallow chest breathing and never completely fill or empty their lungs. This may be due to poor posture, weak breathing muscles or just overall stress. Over time this creates stale air and toxic build up, causing people to feel tired, unmotivated and tense. The ancient yogis discovered that full breathing delivered life force to the body that can be awakened in breathing and postures.

The breath marks many important aspects of life: life and death, emotional state, arousal, and physical stress levels. Whether passively or actively breathing, the breath symbolically illustrates the interconnectedness of life. The goal of breathing according to yoga philosophy is to slow down.

When one slows down the breath rate, it gives the body a profound rest and prolongs life. It also naturally calms the nervous system. Count how many times you naturally breathe in one minute. You might find anywhere from fifteen to sixty breaths. Now see if you can slow it down to half that number or less without straining. Notice the immediate result that when the breath is slower the mind becomes still and naturally peaceful.

Foundation Breathing Types for Meditation:

1. **Three part, diaphragmatic breathing:** This is the foundation of all the yogic breathing techniques that counters shallow chest breathing. This practice teaches the body how to breathe again. To achieve a complete breath, breathe slow and deep through the nose with the tip of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. Breathe first into the diaphragm; filling the stomach with air. Continue to fill the chest cavity with air; expanding the chest. Finally, lift the shoulders (and externally rotate) slightly to complete the breath, and pull the last bit of oxygen into your lungs. To exhale, relax the shoulders (internally rotate and

lower), chest, and diaphragm expelling all air through the nose. Pull your stomach in as far as you can.

2. **Alternate nostril breathing:** Initially the right hand is placed over the nose with the thumb upon the right nostril and the ring finger upon the left nostril. Blocking the right nostril, inhale through the left nostril. Next block the next nostril, open and exhale through the right. Continue blocking the left and inhale through the right. This breathing pattern balances the right and left hemispheres of the brain and balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, reducing heart rate and blood pressure.
3. **Victorious breathing:** It symbolically means upward and triumphant and is known as the victorious breath for the way the chest rises. It is characterized by the audible sound made in the back of the throat that is made by closing the glottis (opening of the throat) to create some resistance to the passage of air. This same technique is used when one whispers and sounds like ocean waves or a snoring-like sound. The inhalation and exhalation are matched in length through both nostrils. The breathing technique can immediately help establish concentration and focus.

How Stress Can Affect You

When you are in a stressful situation the body responds with the

Fight-or-flight response:

- The sympathetic nervous system activates receptors that constrict coronary arteries and increase the heart rate.
- The brain causes other organs such as the adrenal glands to secrete stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which circulate in the blood until they reach the heart.

A series of physiological reactions occurs:

1. The muscles contract, helping to fortify the body's armor to help protect it from injury.
2. The metabolism speeds up the heart rate and the amount of blood pumped with each beat increases.
3. Breathing increases, providing more oxygen, to do battle or run from the danger.
4. The digestive system shuts down, diverting energy to the muscles that are needed in order to run.
5. Arteries in our arms and legs constrict so that less blood will be lost if you become wounded.
6. Blood clots more quickly so as not to lose blood due to injury.

Chronic stress can cause:

1. Tension, anxiety and/or depression
2. Blood clots in the arteries which reduces blood flow to the heart.
3. Arteries in the heart to constrict which can cause spasms. When a coronary artery goes into spasm it can injure the lining of the artery leading to cholesterol deposits and plaque build-up.
4. High blood pressure
5. Weakened nervous and immune system

Sacred Breath Relaxation Tools

To achieve spiritual awareness or higher consciousness (true Self), one goes through several layers of relaxation, including muscular, autonomic (nervous system) and emotional before arriving at spiritual relaxation. At a spiritual or meditative state, the body releases mental clutter.

- **Muscular:** These techniques release muscular tension and relax the body.
- **Autonomic:** These techniques calm the nervous system and reduce the fight or flight response (stress response).
- **Emotional:** The techniques encourage positive thoughts and detachment from negative emotions.
- **Mental:** At this state meditation removes mental barriers, which prevent us from knowing our true Self. This state leads to spiritual relaxation or higher consciousness.

Components of the Sacred Breath Technique

The main components of any meditation practice may include:

- **Posture.** Specific postures (including the position of the eyes and tongue). Posture refers to the position of the body assumed for the purpose of meditation. Though traditional meditation practices prescribe particular postures (e.g., the lotus position), postures vary between practices with the only limitation being that the posture does not encourage sleep.
- **Breathing.** Breathing in meditation can be incorporated passively or actively. In passive breathing, no conscious control is exerted over inhalation and exhalation and breathing is “natural.” In contrast, active breathing involves the conscious control over inhalation and exhalation. This may involve controlling the way in which air is drawn in (e.g., through the mouth or nostrils), the rate (e.g., drawn in quickly or over a specified length of time), the depth (e.g., shallow or deep), and the control of other body parts (e.g., relaxation of the abdomen).
- **Mantra.** A distinctive feature of some meditation practices is the use of a mantra. A mantra is a sound, word, or phrase that is recited repetitively, usually in an unvarying tone, and used as an object of concentration. The mantra may be chanted aloud, or recited silently. Mantras can be associated with particular historical or archetypal figures from spiritual or religious systems, or they may have no such associations.
- **Relaxation.** Relaxation is often considered to be one of the defining characteristics of meditation practices and meditation itself is often considered to be a relaxation technique. Indeed, it has been suggested that the popularity of meditation practices in the West is due, at least in part, to the widely accepted plausibility of their alleged effects with

respect to arousal reduction. Some researchers have attempted to draw a distinction between relaxation and meditation practices on the basis of intention.

- **Attention and its object.** The intentional self-regulation of attention is considered crucial to the practice of meditation, as is the development of an awareness in which thoughts do not necessarily disappear, but are simply not encouraged by dwelling on them, a state of so-called “thoughtless awareness. Some meditation practices focus attention on a singular external object (e.g., mandala, candle, flame), sound (e.g., breath), word or phrase (i.e., mantra), or body part (e.g., the tip of the nose, the space between the eyebrows). In contrast, “mindfulness” meditation techniques aim to cultivate an objective openness to whatever comes into awareness (e.g., by paying attention to simple and repetitive activities or to the sensations of the body.
- **Spirituality and belief.** This component refers to the extent to which spirituality and belief systems are a part of meditation practices. Spirituality and belief systems are composed of metaphysical concepts and the rules or guidelines for behavior (e.g., devotional practices or interpersonal relations) that are based on these concepts.

Questions and Answers

As a teacher of meditation, be prepared to address the following objections to meditation.

Q: I can't stop my thoughts from coming. Is meditation isn't for me.

A: The goal of meditation is not to empty the mind. This is the purpose of our mind—to think. We should simply have awareness of our thoughts without attachment.

Q: How do I know if I'm meditating correctly?

A: Meditation is deeply an internal practice. There are no road signs to know if you are in the meditative state.

Q: Breathe counting and object meditation seems too controlled. I lose interest and it takes away from my connection. Is this ok?

A: It is ok if you do not identify and relate to every style of meditation. Find a technique that works for you.

Q: I can't do lotus pose for meditation or I can't seem to get comfortable sitting; what can I do?

A: Use can use a variety of sitting postures. Be creative and make up your own. The most important thing is to be in a comfortable position. Elevating the hips when sitting can help relieve pressure on the back.

Meditation Posture

Meditation is classically done in lotus, half lotus, easy pose, hero or bound angle. Meditation cushions are often used to support the hips and postural back muscles. Sitting in a chair as well as supine positions are good modifications. The most important factor is comfort. Some individuals may need to lie on their backs to be comfortable. As an instructor, encourage modification for comfort

Poses Pictured (left to right):

- Ardha Padmasana (Half Lotus Pose)
- Padmasana (Lotus Pose)
- Sukh asana (Easy Pose)
- Virasana (Hero's Pose)
- Baddha Konasana (Bound Angle)
- Siddhasana (Perfect Pose)



Tips

- Encourage elevating the hips and supporting blocks under the legs to relax the hips and spinal erector muscles
- Encourage a tall posture as this increases breathing efficiency and maintains the most important, central energy channel (the sushumna nadi) open
- Encourage the neck lock (jalandara bandha) to preserve upward energy in the body



Figure 1: Modified Posture with Blocks and Blanket

Handouts



Teaching Instructions:

1. At the beginning of each class explain what Sacred Breath Stress Reduction (meditation) is:
 - a. “Sacred Breath is a system of stress reduction that helps you release tension, stay positive and achieve a higher sense of inner peace in your everyday life.”
2. Detail your lesson plan for the day. For example,
 - a. “Today we will do a 10 minute relaxation followed by a 20-minute meditation on positive thoughts.”
3. Set up each class informing about proper posture, encouraging beginners to use chair/wall support, folded blankets and blocks under the hips or to assume a fully lying position.
4. Begin each section with a relaxation technique (sample script follows or create your own)
5. Remember meditation is a slow, reflective practice, so allow plenty of natural pauses in your instructions and actual meditation for silence and reflection.
6. For beginners, start with shortened meditations (15-20 min.) and work up to longer practices.
7. Provide ways out for people uncomfortable with certain techniques, for example chanting Sanskrit mantras. Always offer English equivalent and non-spiritual mantras such as “one.”

Progressive Deep Relaxation: Muscular/Autonomic/Mental Relaxation

Script (use this before meditation, assumes lying position)

Practice Time: 10-15 minutes

(To be read slowly out loud by a teacher or friend, or record your own voice of the practice)

Relax on your back, arms at your side, palms turned up toward the ceiling, for deep relaxation. You will be alternately contracting and then relaxing each part of the body.

Bring the awareness to the right foot and leg - stretch out the leg, squeezing it tight, raise it one foot off the floor - RELEASE. (Repeat for the left leg.) Roll the ankles from side-to-side and relax the legs.

Bring the awareness to the right arm - stretch out the arm, the fingers, making a fist, raise it one foot off the ground - squeeze tight - RELEASE. (Repeat for left arm.) Roll the wrists and relax them.

Squeeze in the buttocks, pulling in the anus muscles - tight! - RELEASE. Inhale, puffing out the lower abdomen. On the signal we will let the breath gush out of an open mouth. Open - RELEASE. Inhale, allow the air to come up into the chest - open the mouth - RELEASE.

Keeping the arms in place on the floor, curl the shoulders up in front of you, almost bringing them together under the chin - RELEASE. Gently roll the head and neck once or twice, returning it to the balance point of the body. Stretch out the face, open the mouth, stick out the tongue - RELEASE. Curl the face into a ball, squeeze in the lips, eyes, forehead - RELEASE.

Now that we have physically gone over the body, keeping it still, we'll have a mental check. With the mind we will go over each part of the body. If you encounter any tension, concentrate on releasing that tightness.

Bring the awareness into the toes, soles of the feet, tops of the feet, ankles, up the shins, calves (concentrating on releasing any tightness), back of the knees, knee caps, front of the thighs, back of the thighs.

Bring the awareness into the fingertips, palms of the hands, back of the hands, wrists, forearms, elbows, upper arms.

Bring the awareness into the lower abdomen (pelvic region), upper abdomen (rib cage), relax all internal organs.

Be aware of the buttocks (concentrating on releasing any tension of the spine, now coming up the spinal column vertebra by vertebra, releasing the entire back as your awareness comes up, lower, middle back, upper. Release the shoulders from the neck outward, back of the neck, head, top of the head.

Bring the awareness to the throat and lips, nose, cheeks, eyes, eyelids, eyebrows, forehead. Bring the awareness to the breath. Without controlling the breath, witness the inhalations, exhalations. Standing apart, witnessing the flow of the breath. (1 minute interval)

Sample Meditation #1: Love and Kindness Meditation

1. Establish a comfortable posture.
2. Begin to breathe into your chest area, your "heart center".
3. Breathe in and out from that area, as if you are breathing from the heart center and as if all experience is happening from there. Anchor your mindfulness only on the sensations at your heart center.
4. Now, breathing in and out from the heart center, begin to generate a kind feeling toward yourself. Feel any areas of mental blockage or numbness, self-judgment, self-hatred. Then drop beneath that to the place where we care for ourselves, where we want strength and health and safety for ourselves.
5. Continuing to breathe in and out at the chest, now say to yourself "May I be happy, healthy and strong." Say to yourself... "May I be happy, healthy and strong."
6. Next, move to person who most invites the feeling of pure unconditional loving kindness, the love that does not depend on getting anything back. The first person is usually someone we consider a mentor, a benefactor, an elder. It might be a parent, grandparent, teacher, someone toward whom it takes no effort to feel respect and reverence, someone who immediately elicits the feeling of care. Repeat the phrases for this person: " May he/she be happy, healthy and strong."
7. After feeling strong unconditional love for the benefactor, move to a person you regard as a dear friend and repeat the phrases again, breathing in and out of your heart center.
8. Now move to a neutral person, someone for whom you feel neither strong like nor dislike. As you repeat the phrases, allow yourself to feel tenderness, loving care for their welfare.

9. Now move to someone you have difficulty with -- hostile feelings, resentments. Repeat the phrases for this person. If you have difficulty doing this, you can say before the phrases, "To the best of my ability I wish that he/she be happy, healthy and strong." If you begin to feel ill will toward this person, return to the benefactor and let the loving kindness arise again. Then return to this person.
10. Let the phrases spread through your whole body, mind, and heart.
11. Now, radiate loving kindness out to all beings. Stay in touch with the ember of warm, tender loving-kindness at the center of your being, and begin to visualize or engender a felt sense of all living beings.
12. Now say to yourself, "**May all beings be safe, happy, healthy**"

Sample Meditation #2: Breathing Meditation using Soham Mantra

1. Establish a comfortable meditation posture. Allow your meditation posture to feel relaxed and comfortable
2. **1. Become aware of your breathing.** Feel the sensations of cleansing and nourishing that accompany each breath.
3. **Relax your abdomen** and rib cage so that your breathing flows effortlessly.
4. **Weave each breath smoothly into the next**, letting the breath flow without jerks or pauses.
5. **Continue observing your breathing** until you feel your nervous system relax. Maintain the smooth flow of breathing even when distractions disturb your mind
6. **No we will use the mantra *soham*** (pronounced “so-hum”). Link the sound *so*... to your inhalation and the sound *hum*... to your exhalation.
7. Let the breath and mantra flow together in perfect harmony, until your mind rests in the sound of the mantra.

Sample Meditation #3: Trataka (Candle Gazing)

Explain: The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, a 15th century text on Hatha yoga, defines trataka as “looking intently with an unwavering gaze at a small point until tears are shed.” This simple technique has a purifying, invigorating effect on the mind and improves concentration, paving the way for a deeper meditation practice. Because it is one of the *shat kriyas*, or six cleansing actions, trataka also cleans and heals the eyes. Another yogic text, the *Gheranda Samhita*, states that the practice cultivates clairvoyance and inner vision.

1. Assume a comfortable meditative posture with your head, neck, and trunk aligned. Set a candle two feet in front of you, with the flame positioned at eye level.
2. Begin with your eyes closed, surveying the body and watching the breath until it becomes calm, regular, and even. Then open your eyes and rest your gaze on the middle part of the flame, right above the tip of the wick. Keep your eyelids slightly more open than usual, and maintain your gaze without blinking or blurring your vision for as long as possible.
3. Observe any thoughts that arise, watching them come and go without becoming engaged.
4. Close your eyes only when they begin to strain and water, and you can no longer sustain the gaze. (You can cup your palms and place them gently over the eyes to ease the strain, but do not rub the eyes; because the tears you have shed are carrying away impurities, wipe them gently with a tissue.)
5. Then find the afterimage of the flame in your mind’s eye, resting your awareness at the *ajna* chakra, or eyebrow center.
6. If the image moves up and down or side to side, stabilize it by bringing it back to the center, and continue to fix your gaze until the impression disappears.

Sample Meditation #4: Gayatri Mantra

Explain: The Gayatri Mantra is the oldest mantra known to humanity. The mantra is chanted in Sanskrit and is most effectively sung in the original language. The mantra purifies the listener and chanter. It appeals to peace and wisdom for all. (Repeat up to 108 times). Mala beads can be used for meditative counting.

Sanskrit: Om bhur, bhuvah, svah
tat savitur varenyam
bhargo devasya dhimahi
dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

English: We meditate on that most adorable, most desirable, and most enchanting light of ours, who is our creator, inspirer and source of eternal joy. May this light inspire and illuminate our intellect and dispel darkness.

1. Sit in a comfortable seated posture. Establish relaxed breathing and spend a little time feeling the breath flowing in the nostrils. This will calm and focus your mind.
2. Now visualize a golden, sunlike orb, and bring that golden light into yourself. Let it enter at the eyebrow center, and then have this light travel slowly down to the region at the center of the chest.
3. At the chest, feel the golden rays of the sun spreading out through your whole body and mind.
4. Give a moment of thanks for your life.
5. Then, at the center of this golden orb, which rests the heart center, begin to mentally repeat the gayatri mantra”

Om bhur, bhuvah, svah
tat savitur varenyam
bhargo devasya dhimahi
dhiyo yo nah prachodayat

6. Recite it as if the consciousness at your heart has merged with your internal sun, and the sound now flows from the core of that sun.
7. From there, let the sounds of the syllables resound in your entire being.

Sample Meditation #5: Exploring Sensations (Vipassana)

1. Sit in a comfortable seated posture. Establish relaxed breathing and spend a little time feeling the breath flowing in the nostrils.
2. As you try to stay with the sensations of the breath, you will begin to be aware of mental reactions to physical sensations, whether pleasant or unpleasant. When there are pleasant sensations, you might develop a long fantasy about how close you are to a “big experience.” When there are unpleasant sensations, you might convince yourself that you will never be able to meditate, and in fact need to go to a hospital.
3. Your attention will naturally be drawn away from the sensations of the breath to other sensations in your body, especially pain.
4. It is important to learn to be steady through uncomfortable sensations. Sitting still contributes greatly to peace of mind.
5. It is equally important not to cultivate a tendency towards strain by forcing yourself to sit through unbearable pain. Be patient and kind to yourself. You will learn when to sit still and when to move.
6. Now, bring some interest to the actual physical sensations. What do you notice about the sensations when you bring your awareness to it?
7. See if you can tell the difference between pain as a sensation in your body and the reaction to it in your mind: the unpleasant feeling-tone, the thoughts, etc.
8. It can help to label the sensation with the noting technique. Words like “burning,” “tingling,” “cutting,” or “twisting” describe the sensation more clearly than the general word, “pain”.
9. If the pain gets more intense, try relaxing more on the out-breath and breathing into the pain. Or you can try “sweeping” your attention through your body from the top of your head to your toes.
10. Feel free to change position if the pain becomes unbearable. You may sometimes experience pain not as something solid but as changing, flowing sensations.
11. As soon as the sensation no longer draws your attention away, return to the sensations of the breath.

Sample Meditation #6: Chakra Meditation with Hatha Yoga

This example is a **60-minute** practice.

1. **15 minutes of Hatha:** Practice some hatha Yoga postures (asanas) or simple stretches, along with some breathing practices (pranayama). Do rhythmically limbering movements like cat/cow, sun salute arms, sun or moon salutations.
2. **30 minutes of Chakra Meditation:** Breathe through the seven chakras (3-4 minutes per chakra)
 - A. **Bring your awareness to the base of the spine...** Breathe into the area...Imagine the area balanced and relaxed... Visualize the color red...Observe the grounded connection of your body with the earth
 - B. **Now bring your awareness into your hips...** Breathe into the area ...Imagine the area balanced and calm... Visualize the color orange...Imagine your breath flowing through your hips smoothly like water.
 - C. **Now bring your awareness to your abdomen...** Breathe into the area ...Imagine your abdomen calm and settled... Visualize the color yellow...Now see a burning flame, flickering with heat.
 - D. **Next, draw your awareness to your heart...** Imagine your heart open and vast.... Breathe into the area... Visualize the color green...Now see clouds of compassion arising from your heart.
 - E. **Now, journey to your throat...** Breathe into the area...feel your breath rise through your throat and out to the nostrils... Visualize the color blue... Imagine your breath infinite and without any boundaries.
 - F. **Next, draw your awareness into the space between the eyes...** Breathe into the area... Visualize the color indigo...Now experience your mind free of negative thoughts and filled with the ultimate intelligence
 - G. **Finally, arrive at the crown of the head...** Breathe into the area... Visualize a white, blissful light... Imagine the white light penetrating your entire body, leaving it blissful and relaxed
3. **15 minutes of Meditation:**
 - A. **Now say to yourself, “I am one.”** Inhaling “I am”...exhaling “one”. Continue repeating “I am one.” Allow yourself to experience a sense of wholeness.

Sample Meditation #7: Seven Masters One Path (Universal)

Directions: Spend 4 min. or 20 breaths per expansion (about 30 minutes total)

- We are now going to do a meditation that explores watching the breath, quieting the mind, accepting the truth, opening our heart, healing negative emotions and experiencing the bliss of our true self.
 - Come to a comfortable sitting or lying position
1. **Expansion 1:** Gently turn your attention to the air flowing in and out of your nose ...observe the rise....and the fall of the breath...expand your awareness to include movements in your belly.....your ribcage....your chest and shoulders...say to yourself “**I am breathing freely....I am breathing freely....I am breathing freely...**”
 2. **Expansion 2:** Expand your awareness into your heart, beating right in the middle of your breathing...now have awareness of your whole body, here in the present moment...Expand your awareness into your heart, beating right in the middle of your breathing...now have awareness of your whole body, here in the present moment...your feet...your hands...your face...your whole being...be aware of the sounds around you...and now say to yourself, “**My Mind is quiet...my mind is quiet...my mind is quiet...**”
 3. **Expansion 3:** And as you now hold your attention toward your heart, notice how you feel toward your own self...observe whether you feel light or heavy in your heart...contracted or expanded...if you're judging yourself, just let the judgments go...forgive yourself for everything that needs forgiving...just let the love flow...and say to yourself, “**I love myself, just as I am...I love myself just as I am...I love myself just as I am.**”
 4. **Expansion 4:** Be aware of your breathing...your heart...your whole body presence...and begin to be aware of where your personal bubble of awareness meets the infinite loving presence of God...tune into the emotional upsets and wounds that you feel today...just let them be there...and surrender to spiritual guidance as you say a few times, “**My heart is open to receive...my heart is open to receive...my heart is open to receive.**”

5. **Expansion 5:** You're aware of your breathing...all of the various sensations coming to you right now from outside your body, and from inside...as you stay aware of your perceptions from the outside world, at the same time, look with part of your awareness in the opposite direction, inward to the source of your awareness...without any effort, simply be aware of what you're perceiving moment to moment and, at the same time, who is doing the perceiving...as you look inward and become one with your inner core of being, say to yourself a few times..., “ **I know who I am....I know who I am....I know who I am....**”

6. **Expansion 6:** Allow your breaths to come and go on their own...listen to the sounds around you...pay full attention to what is happening right now...experience all at once...pure awareness...of the whole...let thoughts fall away...memories fall away...desires fall away...give yourself permission to be totally free, to experience what actually is...this...here...now...experience the moment of life...be totally attentive...extraordinarily quiet...complete sensitive...whole...and loving...when there is love, there is nothing more to do...where you are have bliss...be open to new experiences as you say, “**I am here....now...in bliss. I am here....now...in bliss. I am here....now..in bliss.**”

Allow your meditation to deepen...

Questions

1. A dominant metaphor in meditation is that living is sometimes sleeping. What is wakefulness and according to the mindfulness tradition, what does it imply?
2. How would respond to a student that was concerned about “doing it right” (meditating)?
3. Describe the analogy or comparison of yoga to that of ocean waves?
4. Why is lying down a good posture for meditation?

5. How can mindfulness help with pre-occupations with karma?

6. Meditation philosophy describes how people create constructs of “Self” and thereby limit their experience and choose behaviors and thought patters that maintain or ego. Take a few moments to ponder this thought. Now write down the associations you have created about yourself...who you are...how you think other people see you...your identity as you know it.

7. How do you define anger? Recall a time that you were angry and describe the situation as objectively as you can. How did you feel? How did you react? How did you think? How does meditation help with anger?

8. “How wonderful, how wonderful. All things are perfect, exactly as they are.” What does this statement mean in context of mindfulness meditation?

9. Lie on your back. Allow a gentle smile to come on your face. Now, try to get angry while you still smile and breathe deeply. What was the result?

10. Write 20 synonyms that you believe effectively convey the concept of meditation.

11. Describe the concept of self-remembering?

12. In your own words, describe the Gayatri mantra and what it means.

13. What are some practical tips to help avoid sleeping during meditation?

14. How might compassion meditation be used to deal with problems of modern day living?

15. Based on current research about meditation, how might you respond to the following objection? “I can’t meditation I’m just not a relaxed person. I have always been unable to focus.”

16. Record the script for Seven Masters One Path (self-recording). Next, play the script to use for yourself as a personal practice. Describe your experience below.

Meditation Teacher Training Quiz

1. What is one of the biggest misconceptions about meditation?
 - a. It is easy
 - b. You should not have any thoughts
 - c. You will fall asleep
 - d. It is a state of consciousness

2. What is the original text that describes the eight fold path?
 - a. Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
 - b. Bhagavad Gita
 - c. Hatha Yoga Pradipika
 - d. The Bible

3. Prana literally means:
 - a. Downward
 - b. Light
 - c. Life force
 - d. Control

4. Mindfulness describes a meditation practice that:
 - a. Explores thoughts, sensations and emotions
 - b. Examines the current moment
 - c. Is based in the eightfold path
 - d. Is based on Tai chi active movement
 - e. A and B
 - f. A ,B and C
 - g. D only

5. The four states of consciousness are:
 - a. Waking, dreaming, meditation, sleeping
 - b. Waking, dreaming, sleeping, trance
 - c. Altered, dreaming, sleeping, trance
 - d. Dreaming, sleeping, waking

6. This term means the ability to love and share empathy for others
 - a. Impermanence
 - b. Compassion
 - c. Bliss
 - d. Higher consciousness

7. This type of yoga is principally concerned with breathing, postures and lifestyle:
 - a. Bhakti
 - b. Jnana
 - c. Karma
 - d. Hatha
 - e. Raja

8. All are included in the five afflictions that cause pain and suffering except:
 - a. Ignorance
 - b. Attachment
 - c. Diversion
 - d. I-am-ness
 - e. Will to live

9. This breath has an audible characteristic often compared to the sound of ocean waves
 - a. Lightening bolt breath
 - b. Ujayyi
 - c. Bellows breath
 - d. Sensing breath

10. The three aspects of the yogic breath include:
 - a. Inhalation, exhalation, suspension
 - b. Inhalation, exhalation, retention
 - c. Inhalation, suspension, retention
 - d. Exhalation, suspension, retention

11. All of the following are physiological responses to the fight or flight response except:
 - a. Muscle tension decreases
 - b. Heart rate increases
 - c. Blood pressure increases
 - d. Breathing rate increases
 - e. Metabolism increases

12. Herbert Benson's relaxation technique is a form of what type of meditation:
- Mindfulness
 - Tai chi
 - Yoga
 - Mantra
13. Mantra meditation is done with the intent to
- Support the ego response
 - Strengthen the vocal cords
 - Teach pitch and tone
 - Clear karma
14. According to John Selby, author of *Seven masters, One Path*, the life and path of Jesus exemplifies what quality that is cultivated in meditation:
- Accepting the truth
 - Self-remembering
 - Watching the breath
 - Opening the heart
15. This mudra is known as the prayer gesture:
- Anjali mudra
 - Cin mudra
 - Varada mudra
 - Yoni mudra
16. This chakra is associated with union or bliss:
- The sacral chakra
 - The heart chakra
 - The throat chakra
 - The crown chakra
17. This mantra is known as the universal sound of the universe
- Lam
 - Ram
 - Om
 - Vam
 - Ham

18. If someone is uncomfortable with a religious association and meditation, as a teacher you should:

- a. Tell him/her to leave class
- b. Discuss the importance of religion
- c. Review the importance of God in the Sutras
- d. Ignore their concern until the end of class
- e. Provide a way out and support the student in leaving

19. A simple model for overcoming stress in real life is to:

- a. Stop, breathe, reflect, choose,
- b. React, argue, fight, scold
- c. Argue, ignore, flee, hold onto
- d. Stop, breath, react, hold onto

20. Describe the yoga cycle of pain and suffering:

Course Completion Checklist

To complete the course do the following:

- Teach 20 classes, giving a feedback form to one person in each class to complete. Try to use each of the sample meditations included in this home study.
- Read the assigned reading and answer the questions pertaining to the readings
 - Selby, John (2003). *Seven Master's, One Path*. HarperCollins: USA.
 - Kabat-Zinn, John (1994). *Wherever you go there you are: Mindfulness meditation in everyday life*.
- Complete the Sacred Breath Meditation Quiz
 - Some questions may require additional research beyond the contents of this home study.
- Burn a CD of your self-recording of Seven Master's One Path or save to a jump drive
- Return completed materials to KCFitnessLink, along with Balance Yoga Certification materials. KCFitnessLink, 510 N. 6th Street, Kansas City, KS 66101