

A Guide to Meditation Styles



The origin of meditation dates back so far it is hard to pinpoint the time of inception. It is thought that it was mainly a practice between master and apprentice; therefore did not include written documentation.

Meditation is a common and very popular practice in current times. Similar to Yoga and exercise, there are many different styles available to you. If you're new to meditation, it can be overwhelming knowing what each style offers and how to choose which one will work best for you.

Here are a few common meditation styles summarized:

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation involves paying attention to the present moment, deliberately and non-judgmentally. The key is to simply become aware of and consciously notice what is happening in the body and mind, without trying to change it. It is about cultivating an attitude of unconditional presence in the moment and accepting whatever is.

Bodyscan

The aim of the bodyscan is to:

- Be aware of the different regions of your body and allow yourself to experience how each part feels, without trying to change anything
- Let go of restlessness
- Train attention

The body scan ranges between a wide and narrow focus of attention; from focusing on your little toe all the way through the entire body. The body scan trains your mind to be able to move from detailed attention to a wider and more spacious awareness from one moment to the next.

The body scan can be based solely on awareness, or can also include guided relaxation.

Guided Relaxation

This is a meditative process guided by a trained practitioner or teacher. There are many forms available. These include in-person sessions, sound recordings, via written text, video, or audiovisual media comprising of verbal instruction, music, or a combination of both.



Progressive Relaxation

A form of guided relaxation. Based upon the practice of tensing, or contracting one muscle group at a time followed by a relaxation phase with release of the tension.

Mindful Breathing

The Science of Breath- Breathing has the ability to affect our entire physiology. Shallow, rapid breathing can produce stress, while deep, slow breathing induces relaxation. One stimulates the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and the other, the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and recovery).

Abdominal Breathing- Breathing to the belly uses the largest and lowest regions of our lungs, bringing the most oxygen into our body. This can invigorate and energize the cells of the body.

Nostril Breathing- Breathing through the nose, rather than the mouth, taps into our parasympathetic nervous system by activating the vagus nerve, the main pathway used by the gut-brain axis that links the microbiome with brain, mood and cognitive function.

Visualization

This is the cognitive process of purposefully generating mental imagery, simulating or recreating a desired perception in order to promote positive emotions and experience a subsequent beneficial physiological, psychological, or social effect.

Mantra Meditation

Mantra meditation is the process of repeating a sound in the form of a syllable, word, or phrase to achieve complete focus and relaxation. You can choose a word for something you want to invite more of into your life (love, peace, patience, abundance, etc), or a phrase or affirmation that feels uplifting to you such as "I love and accept myself"

There is plenty of resources online to find the above meditation exercises and more. Feel free to start with our audio recordings on our **Curtis Health.com/Thrive page** under Mindfulness & Meditation/ Audio MP3.