

[Meditation: the Key Is Preparation](#)

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## Meditation: the Key Is Preparation

You've heard you are not your mind, body or emotions. Here's a way to experience that reality every day.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

Meditation is a long journey, a pilgrimage into the mind itself. Generally, we become aware that there is such a thing as meditation after the material world has lost its attraction to us, and previous desires no longer bind us to patterns of fear, greed, attachment and ramification. We then seek through philosophy and religion to answer the questions, "Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?" We ask others. We read books. We ponder and wonder. We pray. We even doubt for a while that there is a Truth to be realized or that we with all our seeming imperfection can realize it if it does exist. Oddly enough this is the beginning of the meditator's journey on the path, for we must empty ourselves fully before the pure superconscious energies can flow freely through us.

When we try to internalize awareness too quickly through various intense and sometimes fanatical ways, we reap the reaction. Meditation goes fine for a brief span, but then externalizes again according to the programming of our family

and culture. To permanently alter these patterns, we have to work gently to develop a new lifestyle for the totality of our being: physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. This we do a little at a time. Wisdom tells us that it cannot be done all at once. We have to be patient with ourselves. If we are impatient on the path, failure is in view. We are going to fail because instant spiritual unfoldment is a fairytale concept. It is far better that we recognize that there will be difficult challenges as the subconscious looms up with all of its conflicts and confusions, heavy and strong. If our eventual goal is clearly in mind and we have a positive step-by-step plan on how to reach that goal, then we won't get excited when something goes wrong, because we view our mental and emotional storms in their proper and temporary perspective.

In the beginning, it is best to find a suitable room that is dedicated solely to meditation. If you were a carpenter, you would get a shop for that purpose. You have a room for eating, a room for sleeping. Now, you need a room just for the purpose of meditation. When you find it, wash the walls and ceiling, clean the windows. Prepare a small altar if you like, bringing together the elements of earth, air, fire and water and any divine images that inspire you.

Establish a time for your meditations and meet those times strictly. There will be days when you just don't feel like meditating. Good. Those are often the best days, the times when we make strong inner strides. The finest times to meditate are just before sunrise and sunset. The period of meditation should be from ten minutes to one-half hour to begin with.

By sitting up straight, with the spine erect, the energies of the physical body are transmuted. Posture is important, especially as meditation deepens and lengthens. With the spine erect and the head balanced at the top of the spine, the life force is quickened and intensified as energies flood freely through the nerve system. In a position such as this, we cannot become worried, fretful, depressed or sleepy during our meditation.

But if we slump the shoulders forward, we short-circuit the life energies. In a position such as this, it is easy to become depressed, to have mental arguments with oneself or another, or to experience unhappiness. So learn to sit dynamically, relaxed and yet poised. The first observation you may have when thus seated for meditation is that thoughts are racing through the mind substance. You may become aware of many, many thoughts. Also, the breath may be irregular. Therefore, the next step is to transmute the energies from the intellectual area of the mind through the breath, in just the same way as the proper attitude, preparation and posture transmuted the physical-instinctive energies. Through regulation of the breath, thoughts are stilled and awareness moves into an area of the mind which does not think, but conceives and intuitis.

There are vast and powerful systems of breathing that can stimulate the mind, sometimes to excess. Deep meditation requires only that the breath be systematically slowed or lengthened. This happens naturally as we go within, but can be encouraged by a simple method of breathing, called pranayama, during which the breath is counted: nine counts as we inhale, hold one count, nine counts as we exhale, hold one count. The length of the beats or the rhythm of the breath will slow as the meditation is sustained, until we are counting to

the beat of the heart. This exercise allows awareness to flow into an area of the mind that is intensely alive, peaceful, blissful and conceives the totality of a concept rather than thinking out the various parts.

After you have quieted the body and the breath is flowing regularly, close your eyes. Close your ears and shut off the external sense perceptions. Having thus quieted the outer forces, we are prepared to meditate. Just sitting is not enough. To meditate for even ten or fifteen minutes takes as much energy as one would use in running around the block three times. A powerful meditation fills and thrills us with an abundance of energy to be used creatively in the external world during the activities of daily life. Great effort is required to make inner strides; we must strive very, very hard and meet each inner challenge.

But what to meditate upon? What do we focus on during meditation? Usually the sincere devotee will have a guru or spiritual guide and follow his instructions. He may have a mantra, or sound, which he concentrates upon or a particular technique or attitude he is perfecting. If he has no guru or specific instructions, then here is a raja yoga exercise that can enhance inner life, making it tangibly real and opening inner doors of the mind. Use it to begin each meditation for the rest of your life.

Simply sit, quiet the mind and feel the warmth of the body. Feel the natural warmth in the feet, in the legs, in the head, in the neck, in the hands and face. Simply sit and be aware of that warmth. Feel the glow of the body. This is very easy,

because the physical body is what many of us are most aware of. Take five or ten minutes to do this. There's no hurry. Once you can feel this warmth that is created by the life force as it flows in and through the body's cells, go within to the next step.

The second step is to feel the nerve currents of the body. There are thousands of miles of nerve currents in each of us. Don't try to feel them all at once. Start with the little ones, with the feeling of the hands. Now, feel the life force going through these nerves energizing the body. Try to sense the subtle nerves that extend out and around the body about three or four feet. Tune into the currents of life force as they flow through these nerves. This is a subtle feeling, and most likely awareness will wander into some other area of the mind. When this happens, gently bring it back to your point of concentration, to feeling the nerves within the body and the energy within the nerves.

The third step takes us deeper inside as we become dynamically aware in the spine. Feel the power within the spine, the powerhouse of energy that feeds out to the external nerves and muscles. Visualize the spine in your mind's eye. See it as a hollow tube or channel through which life energies flow. Feel it with your inner feelings. It's there--subtle and silent, yet totally intense. It is a simple feeling. As you feel this hollow spine filled with energy, realize that you are more that energy than you are the physical body through which it flows, more that pure energy than the emotions, than the thought force. Identify yourself with this energy and begin to live your true spiritual heritage on this Earth. As you dive deeper into that energy, you will find that this great power, your sense of

awareness and your willpower are all one and the same thing.

The fourth step comes as we plunge awareness into the essence, the center of this energy in the head and spine. This requires great discipline and exacting control to bring awareness to the point of being aware of itself--pure awareness, not aware of any object, feeling or thought. The Yajur Vedas states, "Subtlest of the subtle, greatest of the great, the atman is hidden in the cave of the heart of all beings." Go into the physical forces that flood day and night through the spine and body. Then go into the energy of that, deeper into the vast inner space of that, into the essence of that, into the that of that, and into the that of that. As you sit in this state, new energies will flood the body, flowing out through the nerve system, out into the exterior world. The nature becomes very refined in meditating in this way. Once you are thus centered within yourself, you are ready to pursue a meditation, a mantra or a deep philosophical question.