

# TOWARD STILLNESS MEDITATIONS

Facilitated by Tony Murdock, MA  
Towardstillness@rogers.com  
(905) 820-4706

## MEDITATION CLASS 1: GETTING STARTED

Meditation is the art of stilling the restless mind and keeping a steady focus on an object. In its simplest application it can be used for relaxation and stress reduction, and bring us to an awareness of the important interconnection between our minds and bodies. Meditation can help us manage our physical and emotional pain and give us a tool to use to cope with the apparent disharmony in our lives.

At a deeper level, meditation can help us to release our emotional blockages. It can help us to face and work through our pain, and bring healing to the heart and body. This healing allows us to open the heart and integrate our spiritual nature with our mind, our emotions and our body.

When our mind and emotions are balanced and harmonized, then we have access to our true inner spiritual nature. We begin to have a healthy appreciation for our life and the lives of others. Our world is seen through new eyes, and we can start to perceive the interconnection and interdependence of all creation.

Meditation opens the door to higher consciousness.

## PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

There are some important points to keep in mind as you begin your meditation practice:

- **Discipline:** We need to make the effort. A burning enthusiasm and a sincere yearning will bring results.
- **The Proper Time and Place:** Choose a time and a place for meditation where you will not be distracted or interrupted. Mornings are best, or after work before supper. Unplug the phone. Give yourself permission to take this time for yourself.
- **Be Regular with your Practice:** To begin, try to meditate 15-20 minutes daily. In time, you may want to extend this period.
- **Make sure that your stomach is relatively empty:** Do not meditate on a full stomach. When we meditate we can interfere with the process of digestion. Besides, meditating on a full stomach can make one sleepy. It is recommended that you wait 3 hours after a heavy meal before beginning your meditation practice.
- **Proper Posture:** Meditations can be done sitting in a straight-backed chair, or on a cushion on the floor. Your back should be erect, but not strained. Your back should be away from the back of the chair or the wall. Your chest, neck and head need to be in a straight line. Your hands can be resting on your thighs, either palms downward for grounding, or palms upward in a gesture of receptivity.
- **Don't strain:** Don't strain in your practice. Your body is upright, but relaxed. Like a properly tuned violin string, your mind is not too loose, not too tight. Be focussed and alert. Be relaxed.
- **Keep your eyes closed:** However, if you feel that your posture has shifted, open your eyes slightly, adjust your posture, re-orient yourself, then close your eyes again and return your attention to your meditation.
- **Introspection:** Meditation helps us to get to know ourselves. This is not as simple as it seems. We need to make an honest inquiry into our own inner nature. Self-study gives us the perception and wisdom we need to make adjustments to our character, our actions and our attitudes, where necessary.
- **The right attitude:** Have the right attitude towards your meditations. Feel *good will* towards yourself and for your practice.
- **Mindfulness:** Remain alert, attentive and aware in your practice.
- **Concentration:** Maintain a steady mind. Keep focused. When the mind wanders, gently bring it back to your practice. **STEADY CONCENTRATION LEADS TO TRUE MEDITATION**
- **Witness:** Be a witness to your practice. Observe your thoughts and emotions as if they are not your own; observe them as if you are watching a parade, without attachment.
- **Surrender:** With surrender, we can let go of our ego's involvement in the process.

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- **Be Receptive:** When we are receptive to the possibilities, we are open to grace.
- **Be Patient:** Don't rush the practice. With regular practice, positive results are sure to come.
- **Be Present:** Don't let past memories or concerns for the future monopolize your awareness.
- **Smile:** As you begin your meditations, smile. Smiling can dissolve our inner shadows, and allow the light of Spirit to shine.
- **Have Faith:** Have Faith that the practice of meditation will be beneficial, and it will happen.
- **Devotion:** Open your heart with devotion and feel a compassionate interconnection with all beings.
- **Re-integration:** At the end of each meditation, always re-integrate your meditative awareness, your awareness of spirit, with your mind, your emotions, and your body. Feel your connection with the ground beneath you. And sit quietly for several minutes before getting up to end your meditation session.
- **Finally, if you are seeing a therapist, or are taking any form of medication, check with your therapist or doctor first before beginning any meditation practice.**

Regular meditation helps us move toward stillness. It helps us to develop and maintain steadiness of mind. Peace of mind, clarity of thought, **reduction of stress**, and a more positive outlook on life are just some of the early benefits of meditation. Just as regular exercise and regular preventative health care are important to continued health, meditation, practiced faithfully and regularly, will bring about definite improvements to an individual's general physical, mental and spiritual well being. When our minds are calm, our body relaxes. When our mind and body are relaxed, we move toward stillness. When we experience stillness, we are moving toward a harmony of body, mind, emotions and spirit that is our birthright. Then, when we tune into our inner spirit, and call upon spirit to integrate into our daily life, we are connecting to an essential aspect of ourselves that not only gives us comfort and strength. Spirit gives us the sweet power of transformation to grow, to be compassionate toward ourselves and to others, and to become fully human.

## KURMA NADI

This is a practice to develop steadiness and stillness.

The subtle nerve plexus called Kurma Nadi is located about 1" down from the notch in the centre of your collarbone and ½ " inside. It can be visualized as an oval tube about ¾ " long in a cool colour (blue, green, violet) according to your preference. Simply focus the mind there for about 5 minutes before or after meditation, or as a practice apart from meditation. If you have difficulty locating that precise spot with just your mind, simply press your finger on the skin 1" down from the collarbone notch and focus on that spot. The result will come just the same. Eventually, through that stimulation, you will be able to focus directly on the Nadi itself.

**Note: It is a good idea to do about 10 deep breaths before beginning this practice.**

## THE SO' HAM (HUM) BREATH

**Sah:** that – the macrocosm + **Aham:** I am – the microcosm = **So 'ham (hum).**

The microcosm is the same as the macrocosm. The individual self is the same as the Infinite Self.

Mentally chant the Sanskrit words So' ham as you watch the breath.  
"So" with the in-breath, "Ham" (pronounced = Hum) with the out-breath.

Simply repeat these words as you follow the breath.

Don't control the breath.

These words will help you still the restless mind.

These words will help you dive deep within yourself.