



## Guidelines for Meditation Practice

*“There is a state beyond both effort and effortlessness.*

*Until it is realised, gentle effort is necessary’*

Ramana Maharshi

The central invitation of this teaching is relax into the ground of Grace, and be as you truly ARE. From the non-dual perspective, we are inherently that which we seek and more – the depth of our being IS God, IS love, joy, beauty, infinite depth, strength, intelligence itself, and our potential to express and live that is literally infinite. The core problem is that this depth is covered over by layers of adaptive defences, habits of mind, emotional reactions and internal agitation that is the human condition asleep to itself.

Commonly we are busy trying to fix or change or check out of our current state. This activity keeps our disconnection firmly in place. Meditation helps address this on so many levels: it guides us how to BE STILL, relaxing the usual interference and calming the surface agitation of body, heart and mind. It orients us within rather than towards outer distractions. It increases witness consciousness, making us wiser and less reactive. It is profoundly nourishing and rejuvenating, connecting us with the source of peace. It makes us receptive to the more subtle dimensions of grace and guidance.... not to mention offering countless physiological and psychological benefits. Suffice to say, meditation greatly supports your capacity for inquiry, for coming to know yourself as you truly are. Meditation shows you how to rest in God, drink from the stream that can truly quench your thirst, and abide there.

## Beginning your Practice

***Dis-engage from usual distractions:*** Sit somewhere comfortable where you won't be distracted (cellphone/ computer off etc).

***Posture:*** Sit in an upright posture with your spine erect, neck long and slightly tucked in. Have your hips square and feet on floor (or in comfortable lotus). Never cross your legs and slouch – or attempt to meditate lying down unless physical limitations require this. Relax your jaw and let tongue touch roof of mouth lightly. Let your hands facing upwards on your lap, or together on lower belly.

***Dedicate your practice to the benefit of all beings.***

***Give thanks for the blessing of receiving the teachings/ practices....*** and all who have played a part in handing them to you.....

***Invite Grace to guide your practice:*** If you have an inner guru or teacher, visualize their hand upon your crown.

## ‘Mountain of Presence’ Meditation

(Download a guided version at [www.mirandamacpherson.com/in-the-sanctuary](http://www.mirandamacpherson.com/in-the-sanctuary))

The ‘kath’ or ‘dan tien’ is the deep belly center, located about 2 inches below your navel and in towards the core. Human spiritual physiology contains three primary centers – which really offer us three ways of experiencing true nature – Head (clarity) Heart (intimacy) and belly (immensity).

My teachings encourage an integrated awakening and so it helps if we aim for balance and engage practices that support that. Most people in the west have very under-developed belly centers, and very egoically developed head and heart centers.....which is what produces a jumpy, distracted mind and a reactive heart that tends to feel unsupported. Concentrating on the breath rising and falling in the deep belly is so straight-forward that anyone can do it. It does not require a belief in anything, but is surprisingly powerful in its impact. It is especially great at grounding us, cultivating inner support in the subtle body, brings us into the immediacy of the present moment, quietening the mind. Most importantly, it helps us relax ego efforting and control, which arises as a compensation for feeling dis-connected from the Grace of the ground of Being.

**CORE PRACTICE:** As you sense the ground underneath your feet, chair underneath your body, consider what lies below the earth we see – rocks, minerals, water, and deeper still into immense dynamic energy arising out of infinite space that is the ground of all being. Sense that immense power beneath you that rises up like a vast mountain with no circumference. Sense your lower body as part of that mountain, the crest of that mountain resting in your deep belly center. Keep awareness concentrated on the breath rising and falling in the deep belly, and feel yourself dropping down into that infinite true ground.

When distractions arise, just bring focus back to sensing the breath in the belly, sitting in a mountain of immense presence. Over time a sense of inner stability will arise.....at which point you relax the concentration and just rest. Just Be in the deep ground of silence.

### **Three important things about meditation:**

- ❖ Be patient but persistent and show up for your practice not because you ‘should’ but from your heart’s love for contact with what’s real.
- ❖ While the goal of meditation is ‘samadhi’ – just resting in pure being, this is rarely possible unless we have sufficient one pointed concentration. The Mountain of Presence concentrates the attention in the deep belly, and tends to be very helpful in quieting the mind, and supporting a more robust presence. This helps offset the pace of our modern life. When you feel sufficiently grounded, quiet and concentrated, slowly let go of the concentration of belly in breath and just rest.
- ❖ Sitting still but floating about in your thoughts and feelings (mentally reviewing the day, planning, analysing, processing feelings etc) is not meditation! Even if you need to bring your focus back to the point of concentration every two seconds for the whole practice period, you will gain more benefit than just mind wandering.
- ❖ If you get sleepy in meditation, increase the volume of your breath, open your eyes slightly letting them rest softly on a neutral point, or stand if you have to. If agitation is more your challenge, sharpen your focus on the concentration, and bring yourself back often. Don’t make it mean anything about you that your mind is jumpy. Sometimes that’s just how it goes. With practice that will change.

As we deepen in our practice over time, we become more steady in our seat of awareness. It does not mean distractions don't arise, it is that we come back to the practice more easily and rest there longer....It can lead us to unbroken concentration, and this is when our practice of self-inquiry really takes off. Unbroken concentration does not mean that thoughts, feelings and memory does not arise, just that we are not pulled off our intention by them. We can witness, and our focus becomes crisp, awake but effortless. This is what we most need to embody our inner realisation into daily action.

### **Transitioning back into Activity:**

While many people like to set a timer for their meditation practice, be real with yourself and do not set unrealistic expectations. Better to commit to 10-15 minute sits and build up to half an hour or more. Assess your lifestyle and capacity and see what you can build in regularly. Refuse to attack yourself if you don't do it – instead, inquire into why. What is your resistance is actually about?

The transition from silent interior meditation to action is important. Think not of 'ending your meditation', but rather bringing the meditative awareness into movement and action of the day. It is more natural than you think to engage in all kinds of activities from an inner point of non-doing. (It actually heightens more of our capacities). These pointers will help you transition:

- Let eyes open softly. Instead of reaching out with your eyes in the usual way, let light and color and shape come to you.
- Let sounds come to you. See if you can allow them all equally.
- Sense your feet, legs, pelvis, seat, the space around you. See if you can relate to the body as your vehicle – that YOU are not just a body and a mind – but awareness – a point of infinite light that happens to be inhabiting and expressing through this particular vehicle.

Give thanks. Pray, journal or chant as your heart wants to.