

INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become.

Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE)

What is meditation and how does it relate to yoga? The first definition of “yoga” in the *Yoga Sutras* is “quieting the mind.” This is essentially the same definition for Meditation - stopping the chatter in our brains for a brief time by being in the moment. This may sound easy, but it takes a great deal of practice to achieve.

Meditation is simply being entirely present in the moment. In normal everyday life we spend most of our time concerned about the future, be it ten minutes from now or a month from now, or dwelling on the past. In meditation we close off all extraneous thoughts and simply immerse ourselves in the moment. We create stillness in the mind and then surrender to it.

Yoga and meditation go hand in hand. Doing yoga postures requires your concentration. If you have a problem with a pose, do an assessment - is your mind wandering somewhere else or are you in the moment?

The first step is to be comfortable. Although Lotus Pose is supposed to be the ideal position in which to meditate, few of us can sit that way. What is important is that you are comfortable and that the spine is straight. You can sit in a chair. The only position that I do not recommend is reclining. This might work for a person very experienced in meditation, however a beginner will invariably fall sound asleep. The back of your hands are resting on your thighs or knees with the palms facing upward. Touch the index finger to the thumb.

There are many techniques to help you get started. One is the use of guided meditations. These are recordings, usually from 5 to 30 minutes in length, that help you to direct your thoughts. It is hard to “think of nothing” and most of the techniques are designed to trick your mind into limiting extraneous thoughts by getting you focused.

Start in a very quiet, dimly lit room. If there is background noise that you cannot eliminate, try headphones. A candle is also good to visually focus upon before you close your eyes. Once the eyes are closed, bring your focus to the