

## **Certificate in Meditation Teaching and Holistic Human Development.**

### **Module One Foundation Studies in Meditation**

#### **CONTENTS**

- History and Theory of Meditation
- Meditation in the Western World
- Brainwaves in Meditation
- Some Meditation Techniques and Styles
- Developing Meditation Routines
- Deepening and Refining Your Own Practice

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## History and Theory of Meditation

Meditation has been recorded in history, through written texts and even cave drawings, for thousands of years, dating back to ancient times. Indian artefacts reveal the existence of a Meditation style called Tantra dating back 5,000 years.

At any time where a person's mind is either totally quiet or completely focused (without thought outside of one particular chosen stream), Meditation is being practiced. This can be achieved in a wide variety of ways and through a diverse range of Meditation styles and techniques.

Some of the earliest written records of Meditation (called Dhyana), come from the Hindu traditions of Vedantism around 1500 BCE. The Vedas discuss the meditative traditions of ancient India.

Around the 6th to 5th centuries BCE, other forms of Meditation developed in Taoist China and Buddhist India. Dhyana, in early Buddhism, also took influences from Vedanta by the 4th century BCE.

BCE stands for 'Before the Common Era' and it is basically equivalent to BC, except that it doesn't have the Christian religious connotations of BC (before Christ). That makes the usage preferable for some scholars and CE means the Common Era. And it starts with the Julian calendar.

The exact origins of Buddhist Meditation are subject to debate among scholars. Early written records of the multiple levels and states of Meditation in Buddhism in India are found in the sutras of the Pāli Canon, which dates to 1st century BCE.

The Pali Canon records the basic fourfold formula of salvation (which we might read as enlightenment or being saved from suffering) through the observance of the rules of (1) morality, (2) contemplative concentration, (3) knowledge and (4) liberation, therefor placing Meditation (contemplative concentration) as a step along the path of salvation. By the time Buddhism was spreading in China, the Vimalakirti Sutra which dates to 100CE included a number of passages on Meditation and enlightened wisdom, obviously referring to Zen.

In the west, by 20 BCE Philo of Alexandria had written about "spiritual exercises" involving attention (prosoche) and concentration and by the 3rd century Plotinus had developed meditative techniques. However, this did not attract a following among Christian meditators. It is recorded that Saint Augustine experimented with the methods of Plotinus and failed to achieve ecstasy.

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism introduced Meditation to other oriental countries.

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Bodhidharma is traditionally considered to have delivered the concept of Zen to China. However, the first original school in East Asia was founded by his contemporary, Zhiyi, in the 6th century in central China.

Zhiyi (538 AD-597 AD) is traditionally listed the fourth patriarch but is generally considered to be the founder of the Tiantai tradition of Buddhism in China. His usual title was Śramaṇa Zhiyi, linking him to the broad tradition of Indian austerity (or self-discipline).

Zhiyi managed to methodically organize the various teachings, that had been imported from India, in a way that their relationship with each other made sense. Won Hyo and Uisang promoted Korean Buddhism in the 7th century.

Won Hyo (617AD – 686 AD) was one of the leading thinkers, writers and commentators of the Korean Buddhist tradition.

Uisang (625 AD - 702 AD) was one of the most eminent early Silla Korean scholar-monks, a close friend of Won Hyo. He travelled to China, studying at Mount Zhongnan as a student of the influential Huayan master Zhiyan

There is evidence that Judaism has inherited meditative practices from its predecessor traditions in Israelite antiquity. For instance, in the Torah, the patriarch Isaac is described as going 'lasuach' in the field - a term understood to be some type of meditative practice (Genesis 24:63). There are indications throughout the Tanach (the Hebrew Bible) that Judaism always contained a central meditative tradition.

## **Middle Ages**

With the growth of Japanese Buddhism, from the 8th century onwards, meditative practices were brought to, and further developed, in Japan. The Japanese monk, Dosho, learned of Zen during his visit to China in 653 and upon his return opened the first Meditation hall in Japan, at Nara.<sup>1</sup> Meditative practices continued to arrive in Japan from China and were modified.

When Dōgen also known as Dōgen Kigen, Eihei Dōgen, Kōso Jōyō Daishi, or Busshō Dentō Kokushi, a Japanese Buddhist priest, writer, poet, philosopher, and founder of the Sōtō school of Zen in Japan, returned to Japan from China, around 1227, he wrote the instructions for Zazen (or sitting Meditation) and established a community of monks, primarily focused on Zazen.

Early practices of Jewish Meditation grew and had changed by the Middle Ages and Hasidic (a Jewish religious group) variations were developed later. Jewish Meditation is a deeply religious activity that involves Kabbalistic practices involving prayer, mizvot (commandments) and study.

The Sufi view, or Islamic mysticism, involves meditative practices. Remembrance of God in Islam, which is known as 'Dhikr' is interpreted in different meditative techniques. This became one of the essential elements of Sufism as it was systematized in the 11th and 12th centuries. It is compared with *fikr* (thinking) which leads to knowledge.

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By the 12th century, the practice of Sufism included specific meditative techniques, and its followers practiced breathing controls and the repetition of holy words (mantras).

Eastern Christian Meditation can involve the repetition of a phrase in a specific physical posture and can be traced back to the Byzantine period. Between the 10th and 14th centuries, Hesychasm, which comes from the Greek, means stillness, rest, quiet, silence and to keep stillness was developed, mainly on Mount Athos, in Greece, and it continues to the present day.

Western Christian Meditation contrasts with most other approaches in that it does not necessarily involve the repetition of any phrase or action and requires no specific posture.

Western Christian Meditation progressed from the 6th century practice of Bible reading among Benedictine monks called 'Lectio Divina', (which literally means divine reading). It's four formal steps as a "ladder" were defined by the monk Guigo II in the 12th century with the Latin terms *lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio* (read, ponder, pray, contemplate).

Western Christian Meditation was further developed by saints such as Ignatius of Loyola and Teresa of Avila in the 16th century.

### **Modern History**

By the 18th century, the study of Buddhism in the west was a hot topic for intellectuals. The philosopher, Schopenhauer, discussed it and Voltaire asked for tolerance towards Buddhists. The first English translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* was published in 1927.

New schools of Yoga developed in a Hindu revivalism from the 1890s. Some of these schools were introduced to the west, by Vivekananda and other 'Gurus'. Other schools were designed as secularized variations of Yoga traditions for use by non-Hindus. For example, the system of Transcendental Meditation popular in the 1960s and numerous forms of Hatha Yoga, derived from the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga school, which became known simply as "Yoga" in western terminology.

Rather than focusing on spiritual growth, secular Meditation emphasizes stress reduction, relaxation and self-improvement. Both spiritual and secular forms of Meditation have been subjects of scientific analyses.

### **Today**

There is little doubt that the personal and spiritual benefits of Meditation have been recognized and implemented. From cave man to philosophers, religious leaders to scholars.

Over the past three decades, with new developments and improvements in technology, much scientific research has been conducted to explore the monitorable effects of meditation as a practice.

There have been over 3,000 scientific studies on the benefits of Meditation. These studies have included monitoring brain activity and brain changes as well as physical changes in the rest of the body.

## Meditation in the Western World

In the West, the earliest view was that Meditation induced a type of dissociative or catatonic state. Before Herbert Benson's pioneering research (described below,) Meditation was still considered a religious practice, not appropriate for healthcare settings.



**Herbert Benson, MD** (born 1935) is an American cardiologist and founder of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. He graduated from Wesleyan University and Harvard Medical School.

Benson is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and director *emeritus* of the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI). He is the author or co-author of more than 190 scientific publications and 12 books. More than five million copies of his books have been printed in many languages. (Please see reference list for titles.)

He has received the following awards:

- Mosby Scholarship Award of Harvard Medical School in 1961
- DHL (honorary) from Becker College in 1997, from Lasell College in 2002, and from Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology 2007
- Medical Foundation Fellowship during 1967–1969
- Fellow of the American College of Cardiology in 1976
- Medical Self-Care Award for 1976
- Honorary President, Chinese Society of Behavioral Medicine and Biofeedback in 1988
- Distinguished Alumnus Award of Wesleyan University in 1992
- DPS (honorary) from Cedar Crest College in 2000
- Hans Selye Award of 2000
- National Samaritan Award from The Samaritan Institute in 2002
- Mani Bhaumik Award from The Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology at UCLA, California, in 2009

Dr Benson is a pioneer in mind/body medicine and one of the first Western physicians to bring spirituality and healing into medicine. In his long career, he has defined the relaxation response and continues to lead teaching and research into its effectiveness in counteracting the harmful effects of stress.

Dr Benson, though mostly retired now, still lectures widely about mind/body medicine and the BHI's work. His expertise is frequently sought by national and international news media and he still appears in newspapers, magazines, and television programs.

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Dr Benson's research extends from the laboratory to the clinic and on to Asian field expeditions. His work serves as a bridge between medicine and religion, East and West, mind and body, and belief and science.

Benson really founded mind-body research, focusing on stress and the relaxation response in medicine, at a time when no one else was making the connection. He exposed (or more accurately reintroduced) the mind and body as one system, in which Meditation can play a significant role in reducing stress responses.

Dr Benson's impeccable credentials and university affiliation, along with the world class quality of his work, led to the publication of breakthrough articles on Meditation in the *Scientific American* and the *American Journal of Physiology*. His book, *The Relaxation Response* topped the best seller lists in the mid-1970, and (although increasingly difficult to obtain) is still widely read today.

Dr Benson's studies proved that Meditation counteracts the effects of stress. Under stress, the nervous system activates the "fight-or-flight" response. The activity of the sympathetic portion of the nervous system increases, causing a faster heartbeat, increased respiratory rate, elevation of blood pressure, and an increase in oxygen consumption, along with many other physiological and psychological reactions.

This fight-or-flight response has an important survival function. It helps us to either run fast, to escape an attack or to fight off an attacker with a greater amount of speed and power than we usually possess in our normal relaxed state.

But when it is activated repeatedly and for prolonged periods, as happens for many (if not most) people in modern societies, the effects are harmful and can be the cause of serious illness.

Many researchers believe the current epidemic of hypertension and heart disease in the Western world is a direct result of the inappropriate over functioning of the Fight-or-flight response. Understanding the Fight-or-flight Response, why and how it works, its effect on the body and the mind and how it can be better managed is a very important subject for any human. Especially for those people wishing to work in healing and stress management including Meditation teachers.

As you work through this course material you will come to see that research, from both the holistic and mainstream medical fields, have clearly proven the natural response of living organisms (all animals) is to respond to stress (including perceived danger) with the fight-or-flight response and the frequency that occurs, in our modern lives, combined with the lack of general knowledge (about the fight-or-flight response) and therefore the prolonged time spent in the fight-or-flight response, is a major contributor to poor health, disease and premature death in our modern world.

This training course will demonstrate that, without an understanding of the cause and effect of the fight-or-flight response and the ability to disengage from it, there is no way of curing any

illness, using any form of healing modality or medicine. However, once we have a clear understanding of how stress effects our bodies and how to elicit the “Relaxed Response”, we activate our bodies own innate healing ability...and astounding healing can and does occur.

Firstly, we must reduce the frequency and time spent engaged in the fight-or-flight response before any other healing can occur physically, mentally or emotionally to any significant or lasting degree.

Dr Benson, and many other researches since, have demonstrated the effects of Meditation are essentially the opposite of the fight-or-flight response. This is to say, the practice of Meditation reverses (or disengages) the Fight-or-flight response.

<b>Fight-or-flight character traits</b>	<b>Meditation character traits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increases the heart rate</li><li>• Increases the respiratory rate</li><li>• Increases blood pressure</li><li>• Increases oxygen consumption</li><li>• Increases muscle tension</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decreases the heart rate</li><li>• Decreases the respiratory rate</li><li>• Decreases blood pressure</li><li>• Decreases oxygen consumption</li><li>• Decreases muscle tension</li></ul>

Dr Benson studied the health impact of a type of Meditation involving the repetition of a word or phrase (called Mantra Meditation - this method is also used in some versions of Transcendental Meditation) and so created a non-religious version of the popular Transcendental Meditation (known as TM, which incidentally is trademarked by the Maharishi Foundation Australia and Global Mother Divine Organisation, forbidding anyone to teach it, without their express permission).

Dr Bensons technique was designed with the single-minded goal of achieving the same relaxation response that TM has been proven to trigger, without any dogma, religious associations or Gurus required.

Instead of using Sanskrit or other religious words, as is done in religious practices, he asked patients to use neutral words like “one” or “peace”. This approach allows those who are not religious, or whose beliefs may appear to conflict with the teachings connected to a particular Meditation system, to nonetheless participate fully in this health-promoting activity.

Through the works of Dr Bruce Lipton and many other researchers, we now know how powerful affirmative words are on our subconscious minds. As well as how influential words are on the molecular structure of water (which we are mostly made of) through the work of Dr Masaru Emoto. So, we might consider how important the choice of words used in these types

of Meditations actually are. The power is not held in the words themselves (though some sounds do create specific vibrations that are now shown to influence cellular behaviour) it is the emotions or mental connections we have, to the words that effects our molecular structure (our cells).

Dr Benson's research showed that Meditation is a practice that helps people achieve balance both mentally, emotionally and physically and while it has taken several decades to gain acceptance in conventional medicine, it is now routinely used to treat a range of conditions including depression, stress and anxiety.

Some other clinical uses for Meditation include the treatment of sleep disorders, low self-esteem and a range of emotional problems. Meditation is also used to assist in overcoming addiction to smoking, alcohol and drugs. Clinical studies indicate that regular practice of Meditation can reduce blood pressure and greatly lower the symptoms of menopause and premenstrual syndrome and a wide range of other diseases. In fact, the list of ailments, disorders and diseases that can be greatly aided and, in many cases, completely overcome through the regular practice of Meditation is unlimited!

Meditation helps to lower the heart rate and the blood pressure, by slowing down the breathing which lowers the amount of oxygen needed for the body. Due to the slowing down of the mental processes during Meditation, muscles relax and the body begins to function at a calmer and more natural level, this assists in relieving muscle pain, improves the function of the immune system and returns the entire body to its natural balance.

## Brain waves in Meditation

The measurement of brain waves in Meditation is a relatively recent development, as scientists endeavour to determine how this ancient practice can reduce stress, increase feelings of wellbeing, alter hormones and benefit overall health.

During Meditation, brain waves shift through different stages. The most common being **Alpha waves**. Alpha brain waves in Meditation basically cause calming changes in the autonomic nervous system.

Regular introspective practice of this type reverses the roles of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems so that the, normally dominant, sympathetic nervous system takes a back seat to the, normally secondary, parasympathetic nervous system.

The **parasympathetic nervous system** is one of the three divisions of the **autonomic nervous system**, the others being the sympathetic nervous system and enteric nervous system.

The autonomic nervous system is responsible for regulating the body's unconscious actions, like breathing, blinking, swallowing, etc.

The parasympathetic system is responsible for activities that occur when the body is at rest, especially after eating, including sexual arousal, salivation, tears, urination, digestion and



defecation. Its action is complementary to that of the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for stimulating activities associated with the fight-or-flight response.

These changes to the autonomic nervous system, caused by Meditation, lower blood pressure and the heart rate. It also lowers the amount of stress hormones in the body, as well as calming the mind. One of these stress hormones is called Cortisol, which, interestingly, has been shown to encourage weight gain when it is elevated over the long term.

**Gamma brain waves** greatly increase during Meditation. Gamma waves represent intense focus and are usually weak and transient during normal brain activity. In experienced meditators, it has been documented that Gamma brain waves were especially high during Meditation in the left prefrontal cortex of the brain. This is an exciting finding, since this area of the brain is often associated with decreased anxiety and fear, increased positive emotion, and a decrease in depressive feelings and symptoms.

**Theta brain waves** in Meditation, are said to help open the 'third eye'. The 'Third or Etheric eye' is said to be the channel through which meditators gain enlightenment and wisdom through vibrations. From a non-spiritual perspective, we would liken this to tuning into our higher intelligence.

In practical terms, Theta brain waves invoke a deep sense of relaxation and also encourage creativity and make problem solving and memorizing easier. Most people have experienced a Theta state. For example, in the condition known as "highway hypnosis" where people can perform driving tasks so automatically they don't remember making the drive home. We sometimes refer to the Theta state as "zoning out".

Most people also experience Theta waves when they do any task that is automatic or almost automatic, such as folding clothes, washing dishes, etc. In many ways, you could call it 'auto pilot'.

Finally, **Delta brain waves** in Meditation are the slowest of all. Everyone experiences Delta waves during deep sleep, but Delta brain waves in Meditation help experienced meditators access the unconscious mind.

Their existence may also be part of the reason why newly learned skills are often best incorporated if one "sleeps on them" since they are associated with people's ability to integrate newly learned tasks. This is the method behind such things as language tapes played while the learner sleeps and probably the old adage of 'sleeping on a problem'.

*The benefits to be gained from practicing Meditation regularly are nothing less than colossal!*

The best things about Meditation are that:

- anyone can learn how to do it
- it can be learned at almost any age
- it can be practiced anywhere at any time
- it is safe and completely natural

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- there are no negative side effects
- it does not have to conflict with or challenge any personal or religious beliefs
- it is scientifically proven to improve health there is now no question that it can cure many diseases
- it is free

Meditation offers a completely drug free, self-empowered and natural way to greatly improve and maintain mental, physical and emotional health.

### **Preconception**

The only real barrier for Meditation, as a healing modality, is the preconceived ideas, beliefs, misconceptions, biases and prejudices some people still associate with the word 'Meditation'.

Many people associate Meditation with religion (generally someone else's weird religion) or with Hippies (flower power and being off with the fairies). Thankfully, as science continues to explore the benefits of Meditation, people are seeing Meditation in mainstream media a lot more and hearing about its positive effects.

Meditation is also recently being presented under the name, 'Mindfulness' and this practice is being well accepted into the mainstream, including the corporate world. Mindfulness is not a new name for Meditation, it is actually a Meditation style.

The more we use the correct name, Meditation, the more we help in removing archaic and unfounded ideas about what Meditation is and the faster we make it available as a healing modality to the wider world.

There are hundreds and maybe even thousands of Meditation styles. There is a style to suit every individual, in every situation and to achieve every result we could hope for. While Mindfulness is a highly beneficial Meditation style, it is not a cure all and it does not define Meditation accurately. It is a bit like calling all dogs, Labradors or all dancing the fox trot!

### **Meditation Techniques**

Most people choose to Meditate to bring peace and serenity into their lives, to be one with their inner selves, to heal and to improve their mental and physical health.

Meditation techniques can differ greatly from one culture to another and different Meditation techniques are suited to different personality types and different learning styles.

Some techniques are expansive and allow for the free flow of thoughts and the observation of the brain function.

Some types are concentrative and involve bringing focus into the thoughts.

Others require the total absence of thought all together.

Let's look at a few different Meditation styles!

## Some Meditation Styles

### Deep Muscle Relaxation Exercise

While not traditionally considered to be a form of Meditation, this deep muscle relaxation exercise is an excellent instant relaxation routine, but it is much more than that! *It is a very important tool for training the brain to adopt new habits where stress and the body's capacity for holding on to the effects of stress is concerned*, for the following reasons...

- It helps to quiet and focus the mind
- It releases tension from the muscles
- It regulates breathing
- It releases the body from the effect of stress (fight-or-flight response)
- It becomes a tool that can be used any place, any time to bring instant calm to the mind and the body
- It teaches our brains how to recognise and instantly address the symptoms of stress in the body and this is the **most important factor!**

Most people spend most of their time engaged in the fight-or-flight response, without even knowing about it. They are unaware of this because they have simply become used to the way it feels. Their brain has adapted to having tight muscles **all of the time** and it registers the sensation of muscle tension as normal. For many people, tensing a muscle proves difficult *because the muscles are already tense!*

Practicing the muscle relaxation exercise regularly (once every day at the very least) trains the brain to:

- (a) Recognise the difference between a tense and relaxed muscle.
- (b) Automatically relax muscles when they begin to tense.

This exercise is not just a fluffy relaxation routine that makes us feel good (though it does that too!) It is a crucial tool for re-training the brain; reversing many years of negative training that keeps the body in a state of muscle tension that is not only uncomfortable but also dangerous due to the knock-on effect prolonged muscle tension has on the body.

**Progressive Relaxation** was first developed by renowned American physiologist and physician in internal medicine and psychiatry, Edmund Jacobson.

This exercise illustrates the difference between a tense and a relaxed muscle.

#### **ACTIVITY**

*During each module of this foundation course, you will explore some different Meditation styles.*

*In Module One you will be required to practice and report on your experience using Mantra Meditation and Zen Meditation. You will also be required to practice the full body relaxation exercise every day.*

**Please practice the Progressive Relaxation Exercise** every day this week.

You can find the audio file (MP3) to listen to in your online classroom.

#### **Mantra Meditation**

The Mantra Meditation technique involves the conscious repetition of certain sounds or words that ‘entertain’ the conscious or logical mind, in order to achieve a meditative state. Mantra literally means ‘revealed sound’ or a combination of sounds that develop spontaneously.

First let’s discuss exactly what a “meditative state” actually is.

As you work through this course, you will gain a very clear understanding of what Meditation is. It might be exactly what you think it is, or know it to be, right now. Or, it might be a little, or a lot, different to what you think it is at this moment. It is a lot more expansive than most people realize.

A meditative state, which is usually the goal of practicing Meditation, is not necessarily having an empty or silent mind. Though it certainly can be. For, most people attaining a complete shutdown of thought for any prolonged period is near impossible. It is not the brains function to be completely silent. The brain is the organ, the mind is the process of the brain and the minds function is to think.

The goal of Meditation is not to reverse the natural process of the mind. It is to be in control of what the mind thinks about. This means we are no longer thinking about anything that is

outside of the present moment. We are not caught up in the past or projecting into the future. We are here, now. Fully aware in the present moment. This is the mind's natural (resting) state.

It is important not to confuse a mantra with religious chants. A mantra may be given by a guru, (it is worth mentioning here that we, at the IMTTA, do not support the use of the title or the function of 'Gurus'. The teaching we focus on is about bringing a sense of self-empowerment to our students rather than encouraging dependency on another person for their personal development) or a teacher or it may be a personally chosen sound or word, but the important thing is, the word needs to feel right, for the individual user.

For example: We might use an affirmation like "all is well" or "I am happy, healthy and relaxed" or a sound like "Om" (or Aum). When other thoughts enter the mind or the mind wanders we simply revert back to focusing on the chant.

#### **ACTIVITY**

##### **Mantra Meditation Practice**

*Choose a simple mantra and practice a Mantra Meditation for at least 15 minutes every day this week.*

*To practice your Mantra Meditation, simply sit in a quiet, comfortable position with your eyes closed. Breathe in and out gently a few times and then begin to repeat the mantra either in your mind or aloud. If your mind wanders, gently return your focus on the words.*

#### **Zen Meditation**

Zen, in its simplest and purist form, is about being in the Now. Right here, right now in this very moment.

Considering this moment is the only one we actually have, given that we can't go backwards or forwards in time, it is amazing how little time most people actually spend in attendance!

Our minds often flit from thinking about the past; what happened, why it happened, why she said that, what you should have said or done and the unknown future; what will happen, what if he says this, what if they do that, what should I make for dinner?

For many people, being present in the moment takes a great deal of effort when it should in fact be our natural state with memories and plans for the future being a conscious and productive choice we make, at certain times.

When we are living in the moment, we are switched on and alert. We feel awake and motivated. We see things for what they really are rather than distorting them through fear of

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what happened once, in a similar situation, or what might happen next. We are calmer, more peaceful and more in touch with our own truth.

We make better choices, wiser decisions and act rather than react. Learning to live in the NOW or re-programming your brain to do what it is meant to do (serve you rather than continually abduct you like some eccentric time lord) is much easier than it can seem.

Our brains love habit and create all sorts of scenarios to keep us supporting those habits. We hear people say things like “I can’t help it! I was born this way!” But we can all help it. The brain is not the operator it is the tool.

Zen Meditation is about being present in the moment. It is fairly easy for most people to practice because it is our natural state. You are not trying to learn a new skill you are simply allowing what is meant to be. That is, for you to be here, in this moment, alive...right now.

One of the many wonderful things about Zen Meditation is that you can practice it almost anywhere at any time. You can multi-task it which is wonderful for people with busy lives and you receive all the benefits associated with any other style of Meditation.

The best part about Zen Meditation is, it has a very valuable side effect. When you practice Zen regularly you start to teach your brain a new habit and remember, the brain loves habits!

You start to develop the habit of being in the NOW. So even when you are not intentionally practicing Zen, you start to be naturally awake and present in the moment.

Our senses provide a great anchor for practicing Zen Meditation; observing sound, smell and feel all help us to be in the moment. Even if you already practice Zen or any other style of Meditation regularly, these simple exercises below are going to fast track you to a more peaceful and more present mind.

**Zen Shower:** Every time you take a shower you have a beautiful opportunity to practice Zen. While you are in the shower focus on the experience you are having in that moment. Listen to the sound of the water; smell the fragrance of the soap as it mingles with the steam; feel the warm sensation of the water on your skin. Focus on what is happening right there in that moment.

If you catch your mind wondering on to other things outside of the moment, gently refocus on the sounds, smells and sensations in the present moment.

**Zen Sound Meditation:** To sit in Zen sound Meditation, get comfortable and close your eyes. Simply sit and listen to the world around you. Observe the noises you can hear. First in your immediate vicinity and then stretch your hearing out, listening for the sounds in the distance. Stretch your hearing even further, to search out the most distant and faintest sounds. Just observe and note what you are hearing. This a great way of being in the now because your mind is kept active searching for sound and is less likely to wander; the things it is occupied with, are happening in the now...Zen.

This Meditation is also great for people who have difficulty in finding a quiet or peaceful space for Meditation. The kids can be yelling, the traffic zooming past or other people on the bus chatting and they only contribute to, not detract from, your Meditation time.

Zen is a very important style of Meditation for us to adopt and understand both as meditators and as Meditation teachers. It is the only Meditation style that is suitable for all people regardless of their individual learning styles.

#### **ACTIVITY**

##### **Zen meditation Practice.**

Please practice Zen Meditation for at least 15 minutes every day this week.

#### **Key points**

Throughout history Meditation has been used by almost every culture in one form or another to improve their experience of life; to develop on a spiritual level; to increase mental function; to balance emotions and to improve physical health.

Modern science has researched the effects of Meditation and recorded those effects. The findings of this research provide proof that the mental changes, which occur during the practice of Meditation, alter brain waves. These altered states cause physical reactions in the body that promote healing and wellbeing.

Many conditions can be corrected and prevented through the regular practice of Meditation. As you work through this training course you will explore a wide range of Meditation styles and gain a great deal of knowledge about the cause and effects of stress along with highly effective ways of applying Meditation and holistic counselling tools to minimise the effects of stress and significantly improve physical, mental and emotional health.

## **Developing Meditation Routines**

Whenever you practice Meditation you will recognise benefits on some level. The size of the benefits will always be in direct proportion to the amount of time and regularity of your Meditation practice.

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If you practice Meditation for at least 20 minutes every day, you will discover life changing benefits on many levels. Some of these benefits will include:

- A significant reduction in the effects of stress in your life.
- A greater sense of calm and peacefulness.
- More clarity of thought.
- Greater self-confidence and improved self-esteem.
- A sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Better sleep.
- More physical energy.
- Increased motivation.
- Improvements in general health.
- Assistance in the treatment of illness and disease.

As a Meditation teacher, it is important that you maintain a regular Meditation routine. You will need to have personal experience to reinforce your studies and you will also be seen as a representative in your field. That is, the more benefits you gain from Meditation yourself, the better example you will be that what you teach actually works!

*(Don't let this statement freak you out! You do not have to be Ghandi or Mother Theresa, you only need to be you. Your clients and students will learn from you because you will have more expertise in this field than they currently do. However, you do need to lead by example. Not necessarily being 'perfect' but applying the knowledge you have. Knowledge only becomes wisdom when it is applied).*

When you begin to teach Meditation the most common statement you will here is "I just don't have time to Meditate!" In our, often hectic, modern lives, many people have forgotten how to take time out to take care of their own wellbeing.

There are simple things we must all do every day, in order to remain healthy and this includes eating, drinking water, sleeping, personal hygiene **and** Meditation. *Make it nonnegotiable!*

The objective is to find a regular time for the practice of Meditation in every day. For many people attaching this practice to another existing routine is most practical. For many, the mornings work best.

Not only can the practice of Meditation slide easily into the routine of starting the day for practical reasons, it is also a great way to begin the day on a spiritual and mental level. It can provide a fresh calm platform that will propel you into your day with a composed and positive mindset. It is also a wonderful way to start your day physically, with relaxed muscles, regulated breathing, relaxed heartbeat and normal blood pressure.



International Meditation Teachers & Therapists Association  
Practitioner Training Course

It is a lot further to come into a state of frustration when you begin the day at a point of complete calm.

You may already have a regular Meditation routine that works well for you and you are encouraged to maintain that routine.

However, if you find it difficult to Meditate daily, you will need to put some energy into developing a regular routine

When people first undertake to learn Meditation, and join a class or a group, like those you will facilitate, there is usually a wide range of motivating reasons behind their decision.

Often, they find themselves at a point in life where they feel an urgency to do something practical to improve some aspect of their lives.

They may be unhappy with an area, or all, of their lifestyle; they may be looking for ways to improve their health; they may be struggling with stress, anxiety or insecurity. Whatever their underlying reason, it is almost always a certainty that they feel they are not living the lives they desire, and this often means their daily lives feel out of control for them.

Therefore, new students often need assistance in developing Meditation routines that slide easily into their existing lifestyles. They need reassurance that the time they will spend in Meditation will not be an added burden for them, instead it will be an immeasurable bonus.

Beginning students who have limited time, will benefit most from developing routines that are shorter and more frequent. Attaching time for Meditation routines to existing regular activities like showering, meals and bedtime can be very helpful.

In the ideal situation, a person who can devote at least 20 minutes to Meditation first thing in the morning and last thing at night will reap the greatest rewards. However, shorter sessions more frequently will still return great benefits, and this is certainly better than not finding time to Meditate at all.

The following suggestions can help in finding the time and space to Meditate:

- Rise 20 minutes earlier every day and spend the extra time in Meditation.
- Sit in the bathroom and Meditate for 10 minutes prior to taking a shower.
- Spend the first or last 10 minutes of your lunch break in Meditation.
- Take 10 to 20 minutes before or after dinner to sit in Meditation.
- Go to bed 20 minutes earlier and Meditate in bed (It is fine to fall asleep during Meditation and this practice will improve sleep, however it should not be the only time you practice Meditation).

Once people develop the regular habit of meditating, they become hooked!

The positive benefits of a regular Meditation practice will make you want to find time to Meditate and you will become more productive and discover that taking time out to Meditate actually gives you *more* time in your day!

## Deepening and Refining Your Own Practice

**Setting the scene:** While the practice of Meditation can take place in any setting and at any time, it is very helpful, in developing a deep and purposeful Meditation experience, if you have a specific area set aside for your practice.

A corner of your bedroom, a secluded spot in the bottom of your garden or any other space where you can spend some time without being disturbed is fine. You might like to set your Meditation space up with beautiful things that help to create a tranquil and relaxing mood for you. This might include a comfortable cushion to sit on, candles and incense or aromatherapy oils.

Natural environments make perfect Meditation spaces. For example, the beach or forest, if you're lucky enough to be close to them. If not, you can create a natural feel to your own Meditation space with plants, small water fountains, river rocks from a garden centre and posters.

**Preparation:** The ideal Meditation routine will begin with relaxing the muscles in your body. This will be followed by slowing down your breathing and then moving into which ever Meditation technique you have chosen to practice.

If you do not already have one, take some time to create a Meditation space for yourself this week. In designing your space, consider your senses.

**Sight:** Light is important. It should not be too bright. Natural light during the day and dim lamp or candle light is great at night.

**Sound:** A CD player (or computer) for playing relaxing music is a fantastic addition to any Meditation space.

**Smell:** Relaxing oils and a burner, subtle incense or even perfumed fresh flowers are great.

**Taste:** In this case we will refer to your personal tastes rather than your tongue! Your Meditation area should feel welcoming and attractive to you so placing decorative items that appeal to you and make you feel good is very helpful.

**Touch:** You will need to be comfortable so perhaps a chair or cushions with soft fabrics to sit on.

**ACTIVITY**

Conduct a quick interview with three different people. Choose people you don't know especially well and try to pick three people who are quite different from each other.

During the interview ask them the following questions.

- Do you Meditate?
- If yes, what style of Meditation do you practice and what are the main benefits you feel you gain from your practice?
- If no, have you ever tried Meditation?
- If no, are you interested in learning to Meditate?
- If yes, what style was it and why did you not continue with it?
- Ask your three interviewees to explain their understanding of Meditation to YOU.

**ACTIVITY**

Create a Meditation space for yourself.

End of module.

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