

# MEDITATION

Meditation is the practice of **passively** and **uncritically** focusing attention on the breath, or a particular word, phrase, or object and observing thoughts, emotions, and sensations without judgment. The purpose of meditation is to promote calmness and wellbeing, detach from anxious thoughts, improve concentration and mental clarity, develop greater self-awareness, etc. Regular meditation trains the **attention** and **awareness** and brings mental processes under **voluntary control** through mindfulness, or being attuned to the present moment.

## Benefits

- Slows down breathing and heart rate for improved health and stress management
- Can improve academic performance, concentration, reaction time, and memory
- Used successfully in the treatment of high blood pressure, heart disease, migraine headaches and autoimmune diseases such as diabetes and arthritis
- Helpful in curtailing obsessive thinking, anxiety, depression, and hostility
- Helpful in developing a calm detachment from concerns and worries instead of becoming stuck in and upset by them
- May enhance empathy and self-esteem

## Concentrative Meditation

Concentrative Meditation emphasizes the **concentration of attention**.

This kind of meditation involves focusing on a single object such as a sensation of one's breath, or a sound such as a ticking clock, or the repetition in one's mind of a simple phrase or word, or an object such as a burning candle or a painting. It is difficult for the mind to stay concentrated, so when one's attention wanders from the object, one gently returns their attention patiently back to the object.

## Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness Meditation emphasizes **awareness**.

This kind of meditation involves paying attention, without judgment, to present thoughts and feelings. Present moment awareness is key to transforming anxiety into calmness because it allows one to observe one's anxious thoughts without judgment, recognizing them simply as thoughts, and to maintain calmness and steadiness, instead of eliciting fear.

Mindfulness meditation trains one to *live in the present moment*. There is no room for anything else to intrude – including fears, worries, or anything in the past or future that could be stressful. Mindfulness practices are uniquely suited to addressing fear and anxiety.

## More Information

Learning Meditation: [www.learningmeditation.com/](http://www.learningmeditation.com/)

Mayo Clinic: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/meditation/HQ01070](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meditation/HQ01070)

National Institutes of Health: [nccam.nih.gov/health/meditation/](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/meditation/)