



Powerful Meditations to Conquer *Stress & Anxiety*

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An Inward Journey

In the chaos of your life, do you often wish you could stop time and get rid of your stress and anxiety?

Today's culture seems to be conspiring against us, seducing us into looking outside ourselves for our happiness, instead of *within*. However, once you learn how to look within yourself, ***you can achieve that feeling of stopping time for a moment, while you gain peace.***

Try it now. Observe the flow of your thoughts and the images fluttering through your mind. Try to focus on one thing: your breathing.

Pause and give it a try.

Do you find yourself branching out from that one thought in a hundred different directions? Let the thoughts arise. Observe them and let them be, without delving into them. It's like watching cars pass by on the street.

[Meditation](#) can relax your body and calm your mind, but only if you allow it. With practice, the explosion of thoughts will dissipate as you clear your mind and let go of the chaos.

Breathe Right and Get Rid of Stress

Making some time for yourself every day allows you to reduce the stress you accumulate through your relationships, your job, and the wear and tear of everyday life.

You need a moment in time where you can be free of the expectations of others and have a chance to breathe. ***Set at least 15 minutes aside every day to de-stress.***

Start your relaxation session by stretching your muscles and loosening them, getting rid of the tension. Follow that with *pranayama*: a deep breathing yogic exercise which is a terrific stress eliminator and rejuvenator. *Pranayama* also increases mental clarity and concentration, prevents depression, and helps you sleep better. This exercise will be described in detail below.

You can also [use effective breathing techniques](#) without having to stop for a relaxation session. Have you noticed that the pace of your breathing increases when you're agitated? ***Calm your mind with deep, rhythmic breathing through your nose.*** Avoid breathing through your mouth.

Throughout the day, notice whether you're breathing through your nose or through your mouth. The nose acts as a filter for irritants in the air, such as dust, pollution, and smoke. Also, watch whether you're raising your shoulders when you breathe. You should be expanding your rib cage and abdomen (rather than your shoulders) with each breath as the air flows deeper into your lungs.

Guided Meditations

Pranayama

Pranayama comes from the words “*prana*” and “*ayama*.” *Prana* is the vital energy that pervades the cosmos and sustains the nervous and cellular tissues of the body. “*Ayama*” is rhythm or flow.

When you inhale, you take in this prana. When you exhale, you eliminate poisons in the body. If you keep this in mind during your *pranayama*, you'll benefit even more. ***In essence, pranayama is rhythmic breathing which stimulates the vital energy of the body and mind.***

Here's the pranayama technique, step by step:

1. **Sit up straight.** If you can't sit in the lotus position (cross-legged), sit with your legs folded under you like the Japanese. Keep your spine straight.
2. **Breathe in.** Inhale deeply through one nostril while you keep the other closed with your fingers.
3. **Hold it.** Hold your breath for 10 seconds.
4. **Breathe out.** Exhale the air through the other nostril, which you have kept closed with your finger, and then inhale again through that nostril.
5. **Repeat.** Do this with alternate nostrils for 15 minutes on an empty stomach.

Pranayama can relieve many illnesses including hypertension, depression, anger, migraines, asthma, and bronchitis.

Tips to Remember

- * The place where you do your *pranayama* should be clean, airy and peaceful.
- * You should not perform *pranayama* under a fan.
- * Do your *pranayama* preferably in the mornings before breakfast. On no account should it be done on a full stomach. There should be a gap of 3 to 4 hours after your last meal.

trate

When you start meditating, it might be difficult to concentrate due to the presence of distracting thoughts in your mind that leave you feeling restless. ***While distractions are always a possibility, they should not stop you from meditating.***

If you feel you need to relax first before meditating, ***here's a simple Zen meditation of counting your breath:***

1. **Find a comfortable position.** Sit up with your spine straight whether you're in a chair, kneeling or cross-legged. You may even lie down on a mat or carpet without a pillow if you're sure you won't go to sleep!
 - * You may have noticed how straight The Buddha sits under the Bodhi Tree or how stately the pharaohs appear as they sit straight and tall upon their thrones. The ancients knew the importance of aligning the spine!
 - * *An upright vertebra opens the channels of energy that run through the center of the body.* This posture creates physical wakefulness and spiritual awareness.

2. **Narrow your vision.** As for your eyes, the best technique is to keep them half open and focus on the floor before you at a distance of 4 to 5 feet. If you close them completely, you might go to sleep, and if they're wide open, you may get distracted by something crossing your line of vision.

3. **Breathe deeply.** Take a few deep breaths and slowly exhale. Don't try to control your breath. Just let it find its own depth and rhythm. Try to breathe through your nose at all times.

4. **Count ten breaths.** Count *one* when you inhale. Count *two* when you exhale. One way to help yourself concentrate is to stretch out each counting word (one, two, three, and so on) for the entire length of the breath. For example, "*O-o-o-n-n-n-e. Two-o-o-o-o-o-o. Three-e-e-e-e...*"
 - * If you lose count, start at one again.

5. **Pay attention to what's happening in your body as you breathe:** the rising of your belly, the expanding of your rib cage, and the air traveling through your nostrils.

* If your breathing seems labored and your body tenses up as you breathe, ***remember that you're not controlling your breath.*** You're merely following it

Getting Down to Meditating

Once you're in a relaxed state and ready to meditate, you can focus more on *observing* your breath. If you've done the above preparation exercise, just stay sitting in the same position and continue to breathe in the same way.

Only this time, ***you won't be counting breath.*** Instead, you'll only be observing changes in your body as you inhale and exhale. You can focus on the rise and fall of your stomach as you breathe.

Whichever point of focus you choose, stick with it for all sessions. ***Whenever you notice the wandering of your mind or the chatter of your thoughts, return to the sensation of your breath.***

At the end of your exhale, before you inhale again, there's a tiny gap. During this pause, you can direct your focus to your hands. Just decide on this point beforehand and stick to it during your sessions. Of course, as you resume breathing, you'll return your attention to the rise and fall of your belly or the sensation of the air entering and exiting your nostrils.

Gradually, as you meditate from day to day, you'll find the constant chatter in your mind quieting down. This meditation technique, used by Zen monks, will not only de-stress you, it will help you appreciate and accept wholeheartedly each moment of your life.

With practice, you'll be able to detach yourself from distracting thoughts. You'll observe them instead of getting attached to them.

You'll discover the tricks your mind plays on you and how it s and suffering. Once you can see this won't be disturbed by the workings of mind.

The Relaxation Response

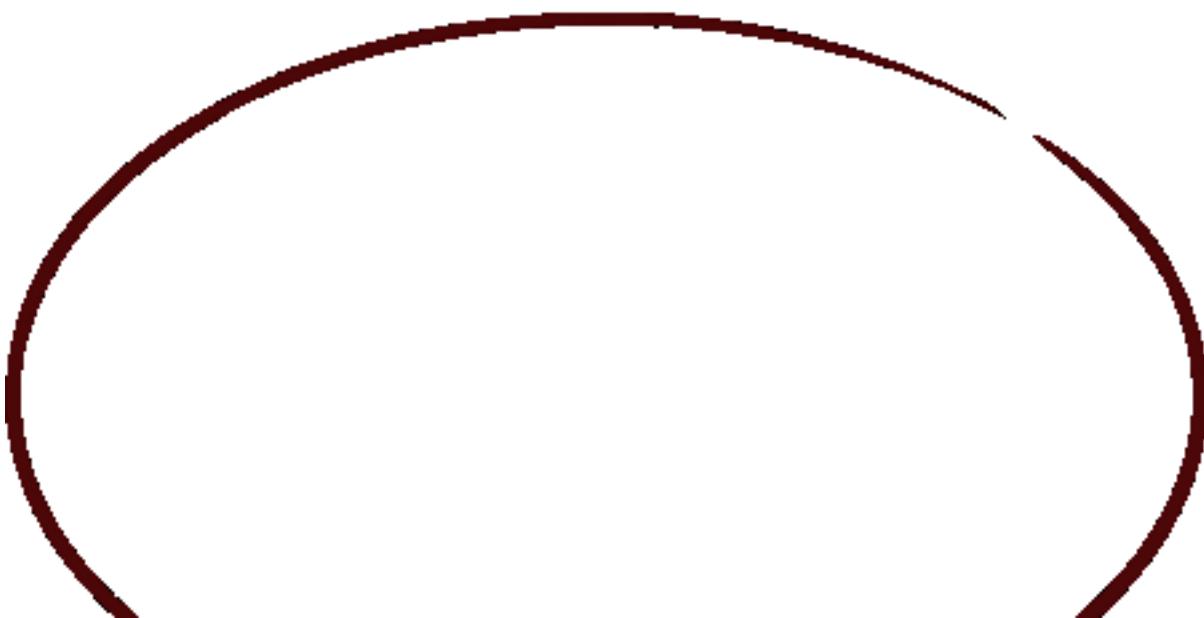
Developed by Herbert Benson, MD, a Harvard Medical School professor in 1970, ***this meditation technique is especially good for reducing stress levels.*** It's based on Transcendental meditation techniques. Practice it for 15 to 20 minutes every day for a peaceful mind.

1. **Prepare.** Sit comfortably in a place where you won't be disturbed.
2. **Choose an object to concentrate on.** The object can be a visual symbol, a sacred object, a word, or a phrase (mantra) that you repeat in your mind. You can look at this object during your meditation or see it in your mind's eye.
3. **Keep your attention on this object.** Return to it if you find yourself straying.
4. **Be receptive.** Keep yourself open to all impulses and sensations. Allow thoughts, feelings, and images to gently flow through your brain without trying to analyze them or dwell on them.

The Peaceful Place

This meditation is great for reducing stress and anxiety as well as promoting healing. It relaxes the body easily and quickly.

1. **Prepare.** Sit comfortably as in the previous meditations, close your eyes halfway, and take a few deep breaths.



2. **Visualize yourself in a peaceful, safe, protected place.** This can be a favorite setting in nature (like a forest, meadow, or beach), a beautiful place you've been to, or you can create a place in your imagination.
3. **Experience the setting vividly.** Take your time building it. See the colors. Hear the sounds of nature. Smell the flowers, the bittersweet scent of the woods, or the fresh aroma of the sea. What do you feel? Sand or leaves under your feet? The breeze on your skin?
4. **Then just let go.** Relax in this place of comfort and tranquility.
5. Stay here as long as you like.
6. **Bring yourself back.** When you feel completely rejuvenated, gradually open your eyes and return to the present moment. Try to keep the feeling of this peaceful place with you as you go about your daily routine.

Stress Buster Meditation

This imagery exercise will slow down your heart rate and raise your body temperature, which are physiological signs of relaxation. Many patients have been healed of their minor stress-related illnesses within a few weeks of practice.

Test the changes for yourself. Record your pulse rate and temperature before and after doing this meditation. ***The best time to do this exercise is during your lunch hour or after work.***

If you're wearing any tight clothing, loosen it. For example, your belt or waistband shouldn't constrict you. Neither should your bra restrict your breathing. Relax, keeping your spine straight and your head aligned.

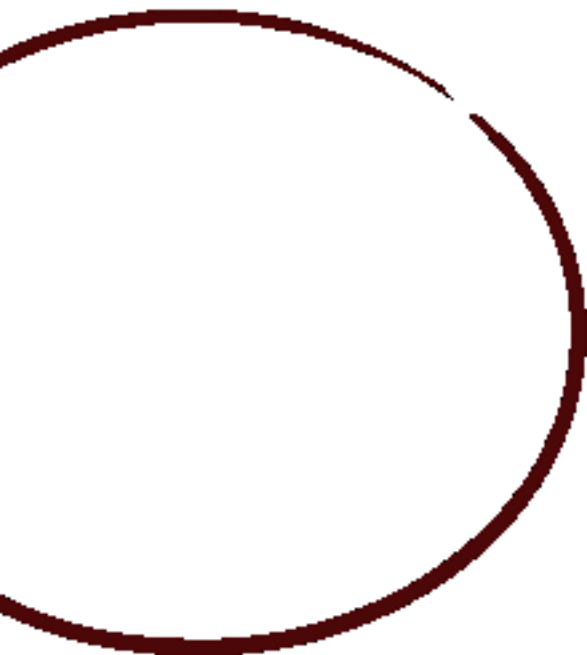
1. Inhale deeply and hold the breath for a while.
2. Exhale.
3. Take another deep breath and once again hold it for a few seconds.
4. Exhale with a "Haaaaaa!"
5. Breathe normally for a few seconds, concentrate your breath.
6. Inhale again and tell yourself "I am..."
7. Exhale and tell yourself "...relaxed." Feel your body sink deeper into the mat or surface on which you're sitting.
8. Inhale and exhale in this manner until you feel all the tension melt away. On each inhale, say, "I am" and on each exhale, "relaxed."

The Worry White-Out

Do you tend to worry too much? If you do, you'll make yourself vulnerable to a variety of maladies from headaches to heart disease.

This ancient technique will help you wipe out your anxiety.

1. Relax yourself and imagine that it's a perfect day and you're sitting in a green rolling meadow dotted with wildflowers. The sky is filled with a rainbow of colored lights.
2. A shaft of white light finds you. The light is brighter than a hundred suns.
3. Feel the light making the top of your head warm.
4. Feel the light penetrating your skull and flowing into your head.
5. Now it's warming the inside of your head.
6. Feel it flowing down your neck and into your chest.
7. The light now radiates into your arms all the way to your fingertips.
8. It flows into your stomach and then into your legs, feet, and toes.
9. Feel yourself brimming over with light.
10. Feel the light cleansing you.
11. ***All negative thoughts and emotions are dissolving into the light.***



Imagine that the impurities in your body and mind are flowing out of you in the form of dark smoke, which a gentle breeze quickly blows away.

13. Spend a few moments in this state of cleansing before gradually opening your eyes.

Life Energizer

Use this technique to relax yourself instantly and get focused before a stressful event. This exercise will increase blood flow and relax muscles.

1. Close your eyes and try to relax.
2. Imagine that your body is made up of trillions of cells packed tightly together. (*Note: If you look at a piece of body tissue through a microscope, you'll find there are spaces between the cells. In reality, they are not packed tightly together.*)
3. Imagine that the cells in your body are being crushed together even more tightly. From head to toe, you're a mass of extremely dense matter.
4. Now add some space between these cells so they have room to breathe and move around.

5. Now the cells throughout your body begin to move to a beat. They're dancing! Feel them dancing inside you from head to toe. It's the rhythm of life.
6. The energy is bubbling up within you. You feel as though you're a bottle of champagne which has just been uncorked.
7. Spend a few moments experiencing this joyful dance.
8. Slowly open your eyes when you feel you're saturated with energy. Retain the feeling as you go about preparing for the event at hand.

Mindful Eating

The ordained Zen monk and teacher of meditation, Stephen Bodian, mentions this wonderful technique in his book, *Meditation for Dummies*.

Practicing it will eliminate the stress you 'bring to the table,' and improve digestion, as well as enhance your enjoyment of food.

1. **Pace yourself.** Before you begin your meal, take a few moments to appreciate its source: the earth, sunshine, farmers, and the Creator. Eat slowly and chew your food thoroughly.
2. **Focus** on your hand as it lifts the first morsel to your lips.

3. **Totally experience your food.** Notice the flavors that flood your mouth. Feel the textures and take in the aroma. Watch your mind as it forms judgments about the food. You might think it's too salty, too spicy, or quite delicious, and more. You may be disappointed or happy with it. Pay attention to these feelings.
 4. **Take note of your conversations.** If you talk while you eat, notice how this affects you. Does it take away from your enjoyment? Does a particular topic cause you to lose your appetite?
 5. **Maintain awareness.** Continue to be aware of the taste of your food throughout your meal. It may be a little difficult at this point because you already know how it tastes. Don't give up! Keep paying attention to the flavors with each bite.
- * If you find yourself getting distracted, pause between bites to take a breath.

Stress is the inevitable fallout of modern living, and it must be disposed of to stay healthy and free of depression and anxiety.
Meditation is one of the best ways to deal with stress.

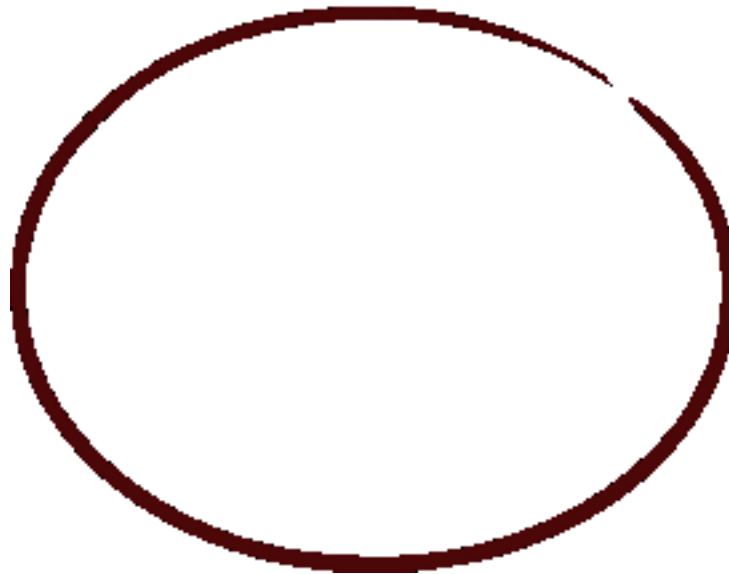
Final Thoughts

If you're more visually oriented, choose the *imagery exercises* to



relieve your stress. If, on the other hand, you're more rooted in your physical senses, go for the meditation techniques that require deep breathing.

Regardless of the meditation techniques you choose, stick with it and you'll soon benefit both physically and mentally!



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

[The Life Coach Dr.](#)

[Health & Healing Blog](#)