

The Meditation Fundamentals Spiritual Schools are Getting Wrong

What Is Meditation?

Meditation is deepening into clarity beyond the boundary of the body and the mind.

With so many spiritual traditions and schools teaching – and so many people practicing – meditation, you would think there'd be a consistent, solid understanding in how to meditate, as well as what the techniques and the goals are in meditation practice. Sadly, in many places this is not the case today, and although the fundamentals and methods of meditation are at the core of every spiritual tradition, these practices have been largely overlooked or oversimplified, even though they are the very cornerstone to spiritual self-development.

The results of proper meditation are their own reward, such as a clearer, calmer, more focused mind and a radiantly exuberant, blissful Awareness. However, there are many incomplete understandings and teachings present in the more commercialized spiritual setting today, eager to talk about results while skipping over foundational methods and practice, or worse, presenting a calmer, clearer mind as the end of the path. The reality could not be further from the truth; a calm, stable mind is the beginning and foundation. Psychological work and development in meditation leads to the mystical experience, and is not an end-result, but the first of many major milestones in meditation.

Neither mental activity nor unconsciousness are meditation.

'Transcendental meditation' so-called, for instance, is nothing more than learning how to project into fantasy, and does nothing to enhance clarity or increase our understanding of ourselves and the nature of reality beyond any more than a very base level. Guided meditations engage the mind and implant suggestive messages or construct vivid environmental images and experiences that may seem useful, but understanding how these processes work on a deeper level isn't looked at or discussed.

Meditation is deepening into clarity beyond the boundary of the body and mind.

Meditation has many stages of development as well as many applications, but generally, meditation is deepening into clarity beyond the boundary of the body and mind. A meditative state is free from the undulation of mindstream, from forward or past-looking, and characterized by a calm, fully relaxed presence free from expectation or any desire for results. Through a strong, stabilized will and an intention to deepen one's state constantly and joyfully, one elevates beyond the realm of mindstream engagement and enters a vastness of Awareness that's available to anyone with the determination and foundation to sit in single-pointed focus and disengagement from mind contents.

Mindstream: The contents of the mind. Meditation is a state free from attachment to mindstream.

Some schools do get it right and provide a proper basis for meditation, but many either use the above-discussed methods or suggest that anyone can – and should – jump right into practicing meditation directly. If it's that easy, anyone should be able to drop right into a meditative state whenever they like, so we're going to perform a short experiment to see what happens when we try to meditate.

A Quick Experiment

What does that mean? Forget about the process, go ahead and meditate. Clear your mind and relax into a state of pure Awareness without any entertainment of mindstream. Yes, right now! Just close your eyes for a few minutes, we'll be right here.

What We Learned

...So how'd you do? If you're one of the rare few with an already-stabilized mind who can rest gently and calmly upon void without drifting either unconscious or into heavy mind engagement, that's an amazing and excellent quality. But for most of us who may find it difficult to focus the mind anywhere for more than a few moments without the mind pulling us away into distraction, it's unreasonable to expect a very advanced thing to occur without properly exercising the tools that make meditation possible.

Meditation is like the glassy surface of a lake; the undulations of thought are like ripples that make seeing a calm, clear surface impossible.

We will examine those tools briefly here and we examine them in their full depth and development at The Lucid Sky, but you can check out Seeking the Seeker for in-depth videos exploring authentic methods of meditation. However, for now, let's look at what just happened when we tried to meditate.

Maybe you were reminded of an appointment next week. Or perhaps you got dragged back into an argument you had three days ago. Either way, thoughts and impressions from memories of the past and projections of the future bombard and distract us completely away from meditating. Meditation is like the glassy surface of a lake; the undulations of thought are like ripples that make seeing a calm, clear surface impossible.

Any authentic method, school or teaching addresses the core problem first.

All of this is happening when we just try to sit in calm and quiet. These distracting undulations of the mind are like a disease that needs proper treatment – i.e. proper technique and practice – to cure. This is exactly what a lot of schools, teachers and so-called 'gurus' are overlooking in their presentation to would-be meditators. Stabilizing mind is synonymous with building a strong foundation, developing the tools of Will and Intention. Not being able to meditate or having the appropriate tools to stabilize one's mind is a foundational problem that needs to be fixed both within these schools and teachings, and within ourselves. *Any authentic method, school or teaching addresses the core problem first, which is a distracted and undulating mind.*

A Doing of Non-Doing

At first when we attempt to meditate, our busy minds are so active – or conversely, we're so exhausted – that we either can't disengage from the mindstream, or we slip right off into unconsciousness. Neither mental activity nor unconsciousness are meditation. An active mind incapable of ceasing is called 'being entangled in mindstream', and dozing off during practice is called 'being in a ghost cave,' because nobody's home.

Meditation is a state that arises naturally when the right conditions are present.

Meditation is something everyone can do, but not something everyone can do right away if they're missing the fundamental tools that make relaxing into a state of meditation possible. The schools that skip this foundation are just setting you up for failure; it's sad to say that we're aware of so many students of different schools who've spent years dedicated to meditation practice without first establishing a solid foundation.

Those years were mostly wasted when 6-12 months of solid developmental practice from the right foundational approach could swiftly lead one into insightfulness, blissfulness and realization of their essential nature – the goals of an authentic meditator.

*Keep to nonbeing, yet hold on to being,
And perfection is yours in an instant.
When the distant winds blend together,
In one hundred days of spiritual work ...
in one year you will soar as an immortal.*

– *The Jade Emperor's Mind Seal Classic*

As such, saying that meditation is something that you 'do' is a bit of a misnomer. In the beginning, it's not so much 'things being done' as 'what's being undone': filters, habits, impressions and mindstream, all keeping us wrapped up, engaged and entangled in delusion while missing out on the great joy and wonder that's always present and unfolding right now. Yes, this means that the investment to the contents of your mind are keeping you from experiencing something incredible and totally beyond what the mind is capable of conceiving.

In meditative practice therefore, we don't start by meditating right away – this comes later and happens automatically once a solid foundation is established. That's why meditation is called a 'non-doing'; it happens automatically and becomes our natural state once we cease engagement with the mindstream. Once we recognize the mindstream for what it is – transient and illusory, holding no intrinsic value – we can investigate our essential nature in an unfettered state, cutting loose of the illusory in order to find the real and the essential.

Stages of Deepening

Meditation deepens into many stages as we develop and strengthen our ability to abide in clear, present Awareness free from attaching to and identifying with mindstream. Anyone jumping right into 'trying' to meditate or teaching meditation without a solid foundation is practicing incorrectly, because if attachment to mindstream is present, being present enough to meditate isn't possible.

This is why achieving a meditative state comes in stages of deepening, because it's unrealistic to expect to drop a lifetime habit of engaging the mind to enter a pure state of meditation right away. The ancient Vedic, Yogic and Tibetan stages of meditation themselves indicate these stages of deepening that must occur first before we can reach a meditative state ::

- 1 **Correct Posture :: Asana**
- 2 **Turning Inwards & Withdrawing the Senses :: Pratyahara**
- 3 **Connecting with Energy :: Pranayama**
- 4 **One-pointed Focus :: Dharana**
- 5 **Meditation :: Dhyana**
- 6 **Bliss of Clear Light :: Samadhi**
- 7 **Stream Entry :: Samyama***

These 4 stages prior to meditation constitute the foundation essential to establish before meditation can ever occur. Does this mean that if we haven't established such a foundation, meditation is difficult, and that without this foundation, it's likely that we haven't ever meditated for any significant length of time before?

Most likely, **yes**. What's always overlooked in a process becomes a stumbling block to progress, and the chief cornerstone to any successful meditation practice are the fundamentals of posturing, sense withdrawal, connecting with energy, and one-pointedness.

Asana, Pratyahara, Pranayama and **Dharana** are natural stages of deepening prior to meditation, but during the establishment of the foundation, effort is required to develop and strengthen them. Such is the saying, *"It takes effort to reach the effortless."*

The Ingredients for Success

Aside from being part of the natural deepening process, knowing what these stages are and how to work in them is crucial because these preliminary stages are necessary in developing the **3 Keys to successful meditation** ::

- **Will :: This is our ability to focus and concentrate the mind in one-pointedness without wavering.**
- **Intention :: This is our desire to deepen clarity and intensify our connection with the energy.**
- **Vitality :: This is the degree of 'charge' or energy capable of expressing itself and being sensed by our Awareness.**

As we mentioned previously, meditation is a state that arises naturally when the right conditions are present. You don't tell a flower how to bloom or force it to bud, that would just kill it. Instead, you provide it with the right nurturing environment and nutrients ::

- **A sharp, focused Will is like sunshine for a flower, clear, warm and radiant.**
- **A deep, heart-felt Intention to connect is like the water necessary for growth.**
- **A strong connection to the Vital current of energy that's always flowing within us is like good soil, an essential support.**

Building the Foundation

The foundation is essential; instead of skipping over fundamental practices, teachings from authentic traditions and schools emphasize the development of Will, Intention and building Vitality for the beginning practitioner. Basic posturing and stretches help relax the body and avoid impinging nerves and the flow of energy. Mudras and breathing direct sensation and calm the heart and mind. Bringing our focus inward strengthens Will and allows us to begin discovering the sensations of our energy body.

Skipping over these crucial basic techniques will lead only to frustration and loss of interest in meditation, when proper foundation work can in itself be rewarding and lead to encouraging confirmatory experiences that yes, you can meditate, yes, it is blissful, and yes, you can enact profound change towards how you perceive and enjoy the life you're living. We will explore these stages in more detail in the next article The Seven Stages of Deepening, and will also explore other foundational techniques essential to success.

Something for Everyone

Will. Intention. Vitality. Without these things, no matter how wonderful, strong or resilient the seed, it will never blossom. With the right ingredients present, the seed's sprouting and the flower's blooming are inevitable. Such is it with meditation. That said, meditation is for everyone.

Anyone who's cultivated themselves through the right foundational methods can achieve the state of meditation, and anyone can work on developing and perfecting the tools necessary for meditation to occur. It's only difficult if you try to jump from A to Z without taking the necessary steps in between.

<https://khepferharu.wordpress.com/2017/01/27/the-meditation-fundamentals-spiritual-schools-are-getting-wrong/>

* Origin of the term 'Samyama' is the Yogasutra of Patanjali:

1. spatial concentration of consciousness is "concentration" (Dharana),
2. concentration which is directed on one point is "immersion" (Dhyana)
3. to be empty in our own natural form is "enlightenment" (Samadhi),

These three are summarized into one "Focus of Consciousness" (Samyama) "

Patanjali, YS 3