

Twelve Tips for Meditation

1. Make your meditation period a priority. Schedule it into your day just as you would a doctor's appointment or a hockey game.
2. Use some kind of timer so you don't have to keep looking at your watch to see if your time is up. Choose one carefully. A ticking timer can ruin your focus. Timing CDs are available. Download a timer app for your smartphone from wccm.org. You can also make your own timer if you have the dubbing ability – you can add your choice of music for the beginning and end of your meditation.
3. Try to meditate around the same time each day. Regular meditation times help you mind and body begin to quiet down. Before a meal is better than after – our brains are less alert when the body is busy digesting food.
4. Set aside a place that's reserved only for meditation. Your mind and body will come to recognize that this is the place to be quiet. After a while, simply entering that place will have a calming effect.
5. Select a chair that helps you keep your spinal column erect during meditation. If your head, neck, and spine are aligned, you won't be tense. The back of our chair should come no higher than mid-back – if it's too high, you will tend to slump forward and fall asleep. A special chair used only for meditation will let your mind and body know that your time of stillness is beginning.
6. There are many ways to begin your meditation period. Some light a candle. Some read the day's psalm or Gospel passage. Some simply breathe deeply several times, while tensing and releasing different muscles, to trigger the 'relaxation response'. They let their breathing slow down and become regular, as they integrate it with the rhythm of the mantra. Some people splash water on their faces, to make themselves completely alert. Some take off their shoes. All of these are personal choices; whatever you choose to do is OK.

7. Stick to your allotted time. Don't extend your meditation period if it is going 'well', and don't cut it short if it's going 'poorly'. Be faithful, and be gentle with yourself.
8. 'Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good.' In other words, do what you are able to do NOW. Don't wait for the perfect time, place, mood or circumstance. Just make a new start each day.
9. In one of John Main's talks he says: 'To meditate you must learn to be still. Meditation is perfect stillness of body and spirit. In that stillness we open our hearts to the eternal silence of God, to be swept out of ourselves, beyond ourselves, by the power of that silence. Where are we when we meditate? We are in God. Where is God? God is in us. The presence in our heart of the living Christ, and the supreme task of every life that would be fully human is to be open to that presence.'
10. In addition to the spiritual effects of Christian meditation there are physiological effects as well, if we can persevere over the years. These benefits can include less stress, less anger, anxiety and depression, increased energy, greater creativity, emotional wellbeing, self-confidence, patience and self-esteem, not to mention anti-aging benefits. St Paul hints at some of these fruits of the Spirit. Since we are one entity – body, mind and spirit – these side effects of meditation can be accepted graciously with thanks. However, John Main felt we should keep our priorities straight. Meditation is primarily a faith-filled spiritual discipline of prayer. Any health side effects should be considered secondary.
11. Don't get upset at continual distractions. The mind wants to be in control in meditation. Thoughts, images, insights, emotions, hopes, regrets and even brilliant ideas can arise and distract us. Don't use any energy to dispel them. Simply ignore them and say your mantra. We cannot force this way of prayer through sheer will power. No

matter how distracted we are when meditating, our will remains tuned to the presence of God. To handle distractions, we need a gentleness and patience that will reveal the Spirit, working silently within us.

12. Lay aside expectations, goals and results. Be as open as you can to whatever happens in your own meditation experience. There is no such thing as a right or wrong, good or bad, meditation. Meditation challenges us to overcome our self-centeredness. Can we meditate without concern for where God is leading us? Can we meditate faithfully when distractions bombard us? Can we meditate when nothing 'happens'? Jesus asked his disciples, 'Could you not watch one hour with me?' In our daily meditation we watch this one hour with Jesus. We surrender ourselves and rest in God.

From the Newsletter of the Canadian Christian Meditation Community, Winter 2017 Issue, p. C3-C5.