



A Beginner's Guidebook for Practicing Stillness

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The benefits of being still, clearing your mind and focusing on something positive in your life are that you are able to begin to see your life from a different perspective. Research from the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard University validates that meditation enhances intuition, improves concentration and

“Don't just do something, sit there.”
~Sylvia Boorstein, Meditation Teacher

decreases depression. A Duke University Medical Center psychiatrist, Harold Koenig, also believes that it benefits us physically through lower blood pressure, less stress and reduced anxiety. Many even believe meditation can help people live longer!

I always believe personal experience is more reliable than any body of research, so I'm going to suggest you try it for yourself and see what you notice! I know for me personally, the days I take a few minutes to practice 'being still' are the days that always go the smoothest. And the days I start off harried and rushed, are the days that seem to end the same way. With all the potential positive outcomes of being still – why not give it a try? Here's to a journey of quiet serenity!

Enjoy!
Kim

Start Small

I encourage you to take baby steps on this journey. Even though you might be excited to get started, don't begin with the intention of practicing 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes at night. I'm going to suggest you start with just five minutes. I want you to start off experiencing success.

When my son was moving up the ranks in Junior's Tennis, his coach had him playing in tournaments where the competition was well below his ability level. I asked the coach why he had him playing in these lower level tournaments. I thought he should be playing against players better than he who would push him to play better. The coach responded, "I want him to win. I want him to get used to the feeling of winning and I want him expecting to win every tournament he enters. Then, when he goes up against tougher competition, he'll be expecting to win because that's what he's become used to."

Same theory. Different sport. I want you to start small and experience success. I want you to get used to the feeling of success when you set out to be still and you do it – easily! Soon, you'll find yourself feeling so good about your 5 minutes that you'll decide to go for 7, or for 10 minutes.

2 Use a Timer

Some people just assume they'll know when 5 minutes is up. You won't! (You'll think it's much sooner than it is!) Your mind will also become pre-occupied with guessing the time instead of becoming blank or focusing on stillness. You couldn't play basketball without a hoop. You couldn't bake a cake without a pan. You couldn't drive a car without wheels. The right equipment is necessary. Use a timer so you can stay in the moment and not be checking your watch every few minutes!

3 Eliminate Distractions

The Buddha taught meditation with the eyes open. He wanted people to find stillness even in the midst of chaos. Something for you to strive for but not necessarily to start out with! Find a quiet place where there are very few distractions. In the beginning, even a barking dog can take you off your center. So find a quiet place, with no ticking clocks and just be.

4 Do It at the Same Time Every Day

Whether we like to admit it or not, our bodies crave routine. So create a routine associated with being still. I suggest you do it first thing, or at least before you leave your house for the day, because it's easy to 'forget' or 'get too busy' as the day goes on. This is especially true as you're just establishing your practice. It's also true if you're not yet particularly enjoying the process or looking forward to it.

5 Do It in the Same Place Every Day

Again, this is in part because you're establishing a routine. The other significant piece is that if everything is energy (and physics has proven it is), then that place will begin to hold the energy of stillness. It will be easier to quiet your mind and drop into stillness if you're in the same place at the same time every time.

Use a Focus Object

If it's challenging for you to just sit in the silence, then find something for your mind to focus on. I often like to use a mantra to focus on. A mantra is just a phrase you say over and over again in your mind. My favorite for meditating is "I am here now." I like it because it's short and only four syllables so I can regulate my breathe with it. "I am" on the inhale; "here now" on the exhale. This brings me to the breath, which is another thing you can focus on. You can just let your mind follow your breath. Focus on the inhale, and then focus on the exhale. Feel the air as it moves in and out of your body. Let everything fall away but the breath.

Use a Guided Meditation

If you're really having a hard time quieting your mind and becoming still, try using a guided meditation. A guided mediation can serve to keep you focused and on track. You'll find after a while you probably don't need it, but it can be of real benefit in the beginning. (A quick Google search will give you, literally, millions of options.)

Commit to 40 Days

I'm a strong believer in committing to something for 40 days. Previously, it was believed it took 21 days to form a habit. They've actually found it takes longer than that. So commit for 40 days. That's only 200 minutes – or three hours and 20 minutes of your life to create a habit with lifelong benefits. Look at your calendar, count 40 days from today and just decide you're going to do this from today until that date. It always helps to know the goal. Commit. Then follow-through.

Chart Your Progress

I built a successful business and raised responsible children based on the belief that what gets monitored gets managed and what gets managed gets done! But it all starts with monitoring. I've also used this concept to lose weight, give up coffee and make sure chores get done. I will find a way to track anything that I commit to, because it's in the monitoring that it gets managed – and it's in the managing that it gets done. So make a chart or some type of physical reminder where you can visually see your progress – or lack thereof!!

“Beyond a Healthy Discipline Be Gentle with Yourself”

This is one of my mother’s favorite sayings and I find myself repeating it often. It’s never more applicable than to meditation. It seems so simple to just sit and be still. But it’s not. If you’ve tried, you know. If you haven’t yet, you’re about to find out. So DON’T GIVE UP! Don’t beat yourself up. Just keep trying. It will get easier. In fact, someday you’ll even find yourself “craving” those few minutes of silence and it’ll feel as weird to NOT start your day with stillness as it would to start your day without brushing your teeth! Until you get there though, just remember, as my Momma always said, “Beyond a healthy discipline, be gentle with yourself.”