

The Preliminaries; how to get your mind in a groove so that meditation becomes less of a struggle - the answer to the statement we hear in the rooms, "Well, I just can't meditate."

Meditation means focusing the mind on a single object; and meditation to be meaningful, it is best to focus it on a meaningful spiritual object to help us develop deeply and truly. While just sitting and staring at a candle flame, or a new age CD is calming, and has some benefits of being calming, this kind of calm will likely be go out the window as soon as you hit traffic on the 101.

And even this kind of focus is challenging to most people; to just plop down and shift straight away into 3rd gear, without putting the mind into neutral.

The Preliminaries to Meditation help one get into that space, and then open the door to the most powerful meditations, and can be used within any tradition or background; they are likely several thousand years old, and have been passed down in an unbroken tradition to the present day.

Each of the steps outlined below can fit on to a single file card; take about a few minutes for each step of the preliminaries' any longer and your concentration may begin to get tired or vague. Some of the steps below have a bit more explanation, but with practice, a short "outline" style will become easy to use.

Preliminary to The Preliminaries: A couple tips on posture and planning your meditation to help your practice.

Sit comfortably; crossed legs is ok, no need for a lotus position. Most important aspect is to have your back feel straight - straight spine helps blood flow best and averts drowsiness; eyes closed or open. Eyes closed if you tend to be distracted easily. Eyes slightly open if you tend to fall asleep easily. Make sure you are comfortable. If it hurts to start, you'll just be meditating on how uncomfortable you are. So, if you are in any discomfort, find a position where you can sit without distraction of sore knees, ankles and so forth for 10 to 20 minutes. Using a chair is completely fine. Avoid meditating on your bed; all that sleep energy is collected there! Best to find a place that can be dedicated to your practice, and to try to do it the same time every day; your practice will develop a terrific inertia. Give yourself enough time on both sides as well - getting up, having some tea, time to meditate, time to get to work without being late!

1) Watch the breath

"watching the breath" means feel the sensation:

cool coming in, warm going out

2) 10 breaths

if distracted by dinner, thoughts, start the count over

be very attentive and honest, if you get to 2 or 3, that is very common!

* Not main meditation - this is a warm up
to get the mind in Neutral

3) Refuge

Refuge = Shelter

out of our problem, going for shelter from the rain of problems

Refuge can be realizing our way of trying to control the world doesn't work,
and has taken us to the realization we need to find another way

=> refuge in 1st 3 steps

- 1) powerlessness (to control the world - to direct the show)
- 2) taking refuge in a power greater than ourselves
- 3) taking refuge in a spiritual solution

4) Bodhicitta

Generate Compassion - "bodhicitta"

: Love = happiness

: compassion = removing suffering

Bodhicitta is an ancient word meaning
soaking our mind with love and great compassion

Think of someone specific you know who is sick, or suffering, or struggling. See them very clearly, imagine how they might actually feel.

Think about how much you wish you could help them to be ultimately free of all their suffering and problems.

Focus and meditate on the wish you could remove their suffering in an ultimate way.

5) Invocation

Invite your Higher Power to meditate with you, to help you.

Your Higher Power, a holy being, whatever is truly meaningful for you, living or historical, imagine them as really there, three dimensional. Not flat like a picture or painting.

Feel their warmth, imagine their scent.

Especially see their eyes looking at you, filled with love; totally in love with you, happy you have finally asked them to come; and they are smiling radiantly with love and joy to be there with you. They are so in love with you!

Whenever you think of them, they do come; even though we can't see them, they are there with you.

Feel their presence and love, and know that if you peeked with your eyes, you might see them...but they are faster than us at this point!

6) Prostration

Namaste - Prostration

Feel a genuine awe and mentally bow down to them to acknowledge their amazing qualities

do this by thinking of a quality in them you wish you had, or would love to have; think of a specific quality you deeply admire

This is a mental prostration

7) Offering

Offering

beauty, nature

A classical offering is the sky filled with flowers, a gorgeous magical sunset;

The most precious offering is our own efforts;

Especially with a character defect we are working on

They are so happy; they are even more in love with us if that were possible!

8) Confession

Purification = 4th step - "confession"; clearing our conscience

obstacle to meditation is a noisy conscience.

confessing something specific - NOT "oh, I'm a bad person!"

feeling regret = not shame; shame is unproductive; regret is proactive

purification of the negative echoes of a negative action have 4 "powers"

- power of our program, solution, HP, contrary action
- of promise - be realistic - not "never going to yell at X again"; but rather for next 5 minutes, or even just to the end of this sentence!
- power of regret
- power of make up activity - doing a kindness specific that matches the action; contrary action

9) Rejoicing = 10th step: Positive Inventory

Rejoicing

Cultural conditioning to just see what is wrong with us; our personality flaws our disease just sees negatives, even creates them out of good things!

Think of a good deed, an action of kindness you did, or especially a thought - a victory over a character defect such as jealous - where we instead were happy for someone getting something nice

Rejoice => Rejoice in others kindnesses you have seen, or have heard about

it is no problem to rejoice in something we've done before we're proud of; this is not wrong to be proud about something kind we have done in a sweet way, not arrogant; we go over and over our negative stuff; we need to give equal time to go over and over our positive stuff. It is more than OK to use the same thing

more than once! (how much have we beat ourselves up over a mistake in the past?!)

10) Requesting help and teachings

Ask for guidance; request teachings from your Higher Power

remember these teachings often come thru others
often in a negative way ==> to learn new responses

Also, request for teachings as well as to continue to get forma teachings from listening at meetings, through your sponsor, through your friends in the program

"Higher power works through other people"

11) Asking our Higher Power to stay close, and live long

Ask for your HP to remain close to you in this life and whatever follows, and to live long. And even just as importantly, is to ask that the people in your life who help and inspire you as loving friends and family, to also remain close in your life, and to have long, healthy lives. Think of specific instances where you have been surrounded by such love and kindness and joy (it's supposed to be fun as well!), and make prayers to The Powers That Be that it may always be like that.

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--- one step left of preliminaries you do after the Main Event meditation; here is where you can stretch, scratch, itch, and then return to your breath
do the Main Meditation Event (on your HP, on Developing a Compassionate Heart, and so forth)

12)

Dedication

Dedicate the goodness, the virtue, which is huge, from thinking about these holy things, to your friend who is suffering you thought of earlier, and like the ripples moving out from a small pebble thrown into the largest lake, the ripples go out until they touch and remove all the suffering of those around you physically as well as in your life that come to mind, and also give and fill them with every kind of happiness....from physical things, to spiritual things, to freedoms from cravings, to having every wish and aspiration they have fulfilled the moment they think of it spontaneously and effortlessly. And that they then may be able to help others too.

13)

Invite your Higher Power to come to rest in your heart.

Return the focus on imagining their presence meditating with you, loving you, there to help you,

they rise into the space in front of you,
turn to face the same way as you,
become about an inch tall,
come to rest upon your head (imagine you can feel the love and the slight pressure!)

they descend down slowly as if there is an elevator shaft made of light
(this is similar to the central channel in various yoga practices)

and come to rest upon a rose at your heart center, in a room the size of a pea from the outside; from the inside it is huge, spacious, filled with golden light, love, warmth, and your HP is happy to be there; there the moment you think of them. "When we Pause", as it says in the Big Book, think of them there, ask for their help and blessing and guidance. And feel their love and joy, so happy you invited them, so in love with you for undertaking such a holy spiritual practice of meditating on love and compassion; the wish to help others. To share the solution with others so they too can be happy, joyous and free. The golden radiant light of love radiates out in the same way, into your heart, and out into the world, person to person, until the light envelops the world and meets back at your heart, having brought every being to the same state of free from suffering, and filled with love for others.