

Tips for Meditators

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- + Don't try to 'stop' your mind: this is impossible and a common source of frustration in beginners, who think it should happen (and right away).
- + Work with what you've got. Don't force anything. Build on your strengths: many of which are unknown. Take a break from it when you need to; then resume when refreshed. Expect ups & downs in your practice, with an overall growth trend.
- + As with other physical habits of sleep and eating, the body thrives on regular rhythms. Although this is challenging in urban settings, it is a helpful goal. Regular practice will make it both easier and deeper.
- + Don't fixate on time. Longer sessions are not necessarily better. Many contemporary forms have 30-minute lengths, based on the blood and Qi circulation of ~28 minutes. Mindfulness practices researched 20 minutes as a good minimum for busy practitioners. However with practice even 5-10 minutes can make a significant difference in your day, especially if done multiple times. This may be due to the acceleration of human experience and growth.
- + For chronic issues, prevention and well-being, once daily suffices. For acute issues, such as a common cold, aim for practicing twice daily.
- + Evaluate a practice by its results: how you feel during the meditation and throughout the rest of the day (or night if doing a practice for sleep). Notice your energy level, mood, and also interpersonal relations for comparison.
- + Meditative practices may be the most cost-effective healthcare intervention. Developing this potential will benefit both you and your community.
- + Whatever occurs during a meditation is very most likely exactly what you need. Don't judge or compare your experience to another--or an idealized concept.
- + FOR ORGAN MEDITATION notice whatever you notice: without judgment, yet with a scientific curiosity. Typically, students feel very calm to the point of sleepiness during this sequence. It is found to be very calming and balancing as a result. For beginners, usually just 1-2 of the organs may come into awareness. Notice whatever you notice without judgment initially, and interpret or analyze it only after leaving a meditative state.

There are usually 3 patterns of perception that meditators start with, based on their experience and capacities:

- Physical- anatomy and physiology
- Energetic- Colors and feelings associated with the Bio-energy/Qi, often confirmed by accumulated collective knowledge
- Symbolic- Poetic realization of symbols or words that may not make sense in the moment

As an example, take the Liver as it may appear during meditation:

1. Physical- the biliary network looks like an upside-down tree

2. Energetic- some may see a blue-green color while meditating on their liver, a common association that is found to Chinese medicine.
3. Symbolic- others may perceive their liver as a plant, especially with some prompting. Chinese medicine associates this organ with 'Wood.' The practitioner realizes it as their imagination, but with some reflection it can be useful information when integrated with real data.

Someone with experience with anatomy may feel at home with #1, but be surprised or puzzled on how to interpret the other levels if they appear.

+ As in life, whatever happens in meditation, don't take it too seriously, or invest too much in one experience. A scientific habit of mind is good training here: one of independent investigation, reflection, persistent study, and open-mindedness.

+ There are many types of meditation with different aims. Not all are ideal for busy people with pressured lives. The ones given here were tested on busy students and clinicians, locally and for decades. Find what works for you. This takes time, but don't give up.

+ Some recommended websites for meditation research that can both inform and inspire a practice:

- NIH-NCCAM <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation-in-depth>
- Qigong Institute <https://www.qigonginstitute.org/>