

Meditation For A Clear Mind



Solve Tough Problems with a Brain Reboot

I've spent a lot of time looking into different methods for solving problems and boosting my creativity. I've come to the conclusion that meditation isn't just for the monks. You can use meditation for finding solutions to difficult problems, taking control of your emotions or rebooting your brain.

I'm not big into the fancy mantras and religious overtones often associated with meditation. Instead I like to focus on practical meditation to focus your thoughts and cut out distractions. Meditation may sound a bit too New-Age for your tastes, but looking at it in a more practical light, meditation is similar to turning off unnecessary programs running in the background of your computer so you can devote more CPU power to a specific task.

How to Meditate

Meditation isn't hard to do, but it does require practice. When I first started using meditation I found it difficult to hold a visual scene for a length of time without allowing distracting thoughts enter. With patience I've become better at holding my focus and cutting out distractions. Here is how I enter into a meditative state:

Get into a position where you don't feel discomfort but aren't completely relaxed. I don't bother with becoming a human pretzel. The importance is that you shouldn't have distracting muscular tensions in your body that break your focus, but if you get too comfortable you may fall asleep. I usually sit upright on my bed or a pillow.

Close your eyes and monitor your breathing. It takes a few minutes to enter a meditative state. Focus on breathing in and out and slowly lowering your rate of breathing. I can sometimes go to twenty seconds for a single breath. This not only eliminates distractions but it forces your heart rate down and relaxes your body.

Once you've sufficiently slowed your breathing, start with some quick mental exercises. Run your focus around your body. Notice where your hands, feet, elbows and back are. Notice how they feel. In your relaxed state this will further sharpen your focus and drive out distractions.

Finally try a few visualization exercises seeing how long and how clearly you can hold a picture, sound or sensation in your imagination. I find once I can hold an image for about ten or fifteen seconds with enough clarity, I move on to the purpose I had for the meditation.

This entire process of getting into a meditative state only takes me about five to ten minutes. If you want practice, try getting into a meditative state when you are going to sleep. It will help you relax and won't take up any more time out of your day.

There are a number of ways you can use practical meditation:

Solving Tough Problems

One of my favorite ways to use meditation is to tackle tough problems. With daily distractions present, it can often be difficult to really think through an issue. Meditation can help eliminate those distractions and allow you to get some insight into what you already know intuitively.

Once you get into a meditative state, try to form a visual scene inside your head. If you are new to meditation, keep the scene as simple as possible so that you don't get distracted arranging the details. In this scene, imagine you are talking to another person. It could be a friend, family member or someone completely from your imagination.

Now have a conversation with this person asking for advice on the problem you are having. Don't think about what the other character should say, just imagine the conversation. You may be surprised at what this imaginary character comes up with. Because you are hearing the conversation before thinking about it, the answers you get are reflections of what you already feel but might not have been able to articulate.

Guiding Your Emotions

Another time I use meditations is when I'm trying to get control over my emotions. Sometimes I use it to relax when stressed or cheer myself up when blue. The basic idea here is that by meditating you can give yourself enough distance from your emotions that you may be able to see around them.

The technique I use for this is that once I get into a meditative state, I focus on my breathing and watch my thoughts. Whenever I feel anything I make a mental note of that feeling. The process of observing your own emotions

and acknowledging them gives you a bit of distance you wouldn't otherwise have.

Meditation isn't going to be a cure for your emotions, but it can give you enough distance to do something about them. If you are feeling lonely, meditating for a few minutes might give you enough distance from that mood to realize you need to go out and see friends. If you are feeling stressed, meditation may help you see more order in your current frustrations.

Reboot Your Brain

Going into a meditative state for ten or fifteen minutes is a really good way to give yourself a temporary break from your problems. Even though I am fully aware the entire time, I often get out of a meditative state feeling completely refreshed and awake. I liken this quick burst of energy to rebooting your brain, giving you a chance to unload that mental RAM for a few minutes to begin fresh.

Other Meditation Exercises

Here are some other ways you can use meditation:

Work on your imagination – Try using it to expand your creativity by thinking of new things that you otherwise couldn't before. If you get really good you can almost enter into a dreamlike state, except you have the controls.

Gain awareness of your body – Move your focus around to different aspects of your body. Notice the different muscles and tendons and the sensations you are receiving from them. This is especially helpful to master for exercising, as it allows you to focus on the muscles that are being used to ensure proper form.

Rehearse Yourself - You can use meditation to rehearse an upcoming event you want to perform well in. Athletes, presenters and entertainers often do mental rehearsals to ensure a good performance. These methods work even better when you enter a deep meditative state before using them