

Expect Wonderful™

by meredith murphy



developing detachment and neutrality through meditation

One of the most valuable practices in developing detachment and neutrality is meditation that cultivates mindfulness, or develops what is called, “witness” consciousness. I practice a combination of Tibetan/Zen/Taoist Meditation, which is one way to cultivate the natural state of mind, which is spacious and quiet.

The reason this meditation works is that your mind is truly naturally spacious and quiet—like the sky (that’s the metaphor/image I love). And like the sky becomes has sun and clouds and moon and lightening and other phenomenon move through/across it, the sky is just the sky—spacious and unchanged by say a flash of lightening. When we train our mind in this type of meditation we become increasingly detached from the “lightening” of our mind. This detachment creates a gap, or space, and it is in this space that we experience freedom. We can relate to life in freedom rather than by reacting, or identifying with what flows through our mind. The benefit of practicing this type of meditation specifically is that you grow in your ability to simply observe thoughts and images, or even whole story lines and emotions as they arise and naturally dissolve, without getting being one with them—becoming them, or getting attached in them or pushing them away. Thus you begin to not build up congestion through incomplete experiences, for you flow, as if on an inner tube down the river while noticing friends on one shore and yucky experiences on the other—you neither grab at things, nor push them away, you take what the Buddhist’s call “the middle way” you flow, allowing all that arises to rise and dissolve, as you continue to be present, detached and neutral about everything.

The photo above is me meditating at the Krishnamurti Center in Ojai, CA. It’s helpful to meditate in a quiet place and returning to the same place paves the way energetically.

As Krishnamurti and others have meditated here, the energy was very wonderful to shift into and the space itself supported my focus. I've meditated outside, and in many places, with others who are experienced and with "newbies" who are learning. All of it is valuable, but the most precious for me is meditating, in my own home, early in the morning, with myself. I make a cup of green tea, or coffee first, and enjoy that on my cushion before I sit. Sometimes if I'm hungry I eat a banana. You can have breakfast first too. Do whatever works for you and supports you in being present. You'll see that as with all things, being loving and attentive to yourself, allowing rather than being critical, allows the experience to arise effortlessly.

how to practice

1. Choose a quiet place and a quiet time in which you will not be disturbed. Ideal times are early in the morning. It's okay to have coffee/tea first :) The energy is quieter early in the day, which supports the experience you are cultivating, but any time is fine. Also, if possible sit at around the same time each day—this helps to build the habit and help you get into the meditation quickly; you're cultivating a pattern of being.
2. Set a timer. You don't want to be checking the clock during meditation to see how much more time, or how much time has already gone by. In the beginning it's beneficial to sit for at least 15-20 minutes. Some people don't really experience their mind quiet until closer to 40 minutes. Choose what you can. I personally like to sit between 30 and 60 minutes as after an initial period of setline the energy deepens and expands and I feel the benefits exponentially. Whatever feels right to you and works for you is good. Just choose a time frame and stick to it. Set a timer on your phone, or somehow so it will go off when you're don't and place it out of eyesight.
3. Practice every day. If possible. It's called *practice*, right?
4. Sit upright in a way you are comfortable but most importantly so that your spine is straight. You can sit in a chair or on a meditation cushion. It's good to be comfortable so sit however is easiest for you—that way you minimize any way you might be distracted by the body while you meditate.
5. Place your hands palms-down on your thighs.
6. Keep your eyes open and look in front of you and downward—say 12-18 inches in front of your body, toward the floor. Keep your gaze soft, looking at this same general spot, not focusing, just resting your eyes there. This is your position for the entire meditation. Once you begin, try not to move physically. If your feet or hips or legs fall asleep, shift to a new position and again, then try not to move.
7. Breathe normally. Pay attention to your breathing; meaning what you are doing now is looking softly downward and just noticing your breath. Notice that as you inhale, there is a rising in your abdomen. As you exhale, feel your abdomen relaxing back into its neutral position. Just notice this. Softly.
8. While watching your breath you will discover you are no longer watching your breath, you are thinking. You'll discover you are making a grocery list, thinking

about a person, engaged in a mental conversation, or having images flash through your mind.

9. In this practice, we're simply going to name the thoughts and images that arise, by saying to yourself, quietly, gently, neutrally when you notice this is happening, "thinking."
10. As you label the thoughts "thinking" the attitude is mellow. Detached, friendly and relaxed, like gently telling a puppy, "sit." Just observe and label.
11. Then return to watching the breath.
12. Do not be concerned with how often or how much this happens. If your mind wanders, no problem, just come back. You don't have to make any effort to change what's happening, just label it, "thinking," and return again to watching your breath.
13. The part of you that is observing and labeling the thinking is called the Witness Consciousness, or the energy of Mindfulness - and is the part of our mind that remains forever untouched by its contents - by the thoughts and images arising within it. A traditional metaphor for this aspect of mind is that it is similar to the deepest part of an ocean - which remains calm, still & silent, even if at its surface, waves (of thinking, emotion, or sensation) are raging.
14. When the alarm goes off, turn it off. Take a moment to come back to your body and notice how you feel.

notes

The great thing about meditation is that it's not about effort or trying to do it right. You just have to show up. There is no way to do it wrong. So give up evaluating or comparing and just do it. Do it when it seems wonderful. Do it when it's not. Just keep doing it. The practice does the work, you show up. Trust it. Humans have been using it for a long time and it's well known for its benefits.

As a little side note especially to the metaphysically inclined: it's good to remember the purpose of witness meditation is NOT to have phenomenon show up—like to start channeling or see angels or anything. The practice is to quiet the mind and experience the natural spaciousness and peace that is your true presence. So if you start having these experiences, don't become enamored with them, just label them "thinking," and return to your breath.

For questions about meditation and your practices to cultivate happiness, joy, clarity and presence in life, I am happy to be of service. Feel free to get in touch via email: Meredith@ExpectWonderful.com

Namaste!

Meredith