

Mindfulness

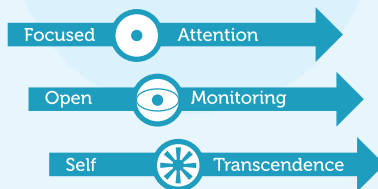
~ A Guidebook of Meditations ~



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Meditating in the Mindfulness Tradition

Meditation is simple but not easy. The basic steps can be laid out in clear, straightforward instructions, as we have done here with focus on the fundamental skills of mindfulness. We assume that you are ready to begin a serious practice; we do not try to convince you of the value of this practice. The whys and wherefores of meditation can be found in other places, including our companion booklet, **The Mindfulness Model: How Meditation Can Transform Us**. Here we present a simple guide to practice.



A general checklist for meditations:

- ☑ a tranquil environment
- ☑ a comfortable posture
- ☑ a timer set to a predetermined duration
- ☑ gently closing the eyes and letting go of the world's many distractions
- ☑ focusing on the breath
- ☑ paying attention to the body, the mind, or awareness itself
- ☑ concluding by rubbing the palms and then gently touching and opening your eyes

But don't let this checklist fool you. Putting these things into practice can be - and almost assuredly will be - challenging!



Premeditation

Purpose

The goal of mindfulness meditation is unencumbered moment-by-moment awareness. Benefits such as stress-reduction, physical wellness, athletic success, enhanced intellectual abilities, or spiritual experiences are only collateral gains from the practice. They are not its principal goal. When the aim of meditation becomes any one of these secondary elements, the practice may not reach its maximum potential.

Frequency

To strengthen moment-by-moment awareness, you can engage in regular periods of training. For this, you need to set aside frequent times to exercise the discipline of mindfulness. The regularity of practice is more important than the length of each practice session. The purpose of special training periods of meditation is to inculcate mindful awareness throughout the day.

Begin with modest goals so the training is easily manageable. Over time, you can increase the duration and frequency of the practice as it becomes more enjoyable and results become more apparent. A good rule-of-thumb for beginners is to commit to practice five minutes each day. As you progress, you may want to meditate for 30 to 45 minutes once or twice a day.

Time

The best time to practice is the time that fits your schedule and most effectively enhances your alertness. It may be when you awaken, a few minutes during a lunch break, or just before bed. The specific time is not as important as the willingness to practice daily.

Place

Find a tranquil place. You will discover that mustering the energy to meditate, just for a few minutes, can be easily achieved. Having a consistent, quiet, pleasant location will enhance the desire to practice. The meditation space need not be designed or decorated in any special way; rather, it should be suited to the techniques of the practice. Walking meditation, for example, may require a different setting than sitting meditation. Be sure to find a place that will minimize the external distractions such as television, cell phones, or excessive noise..

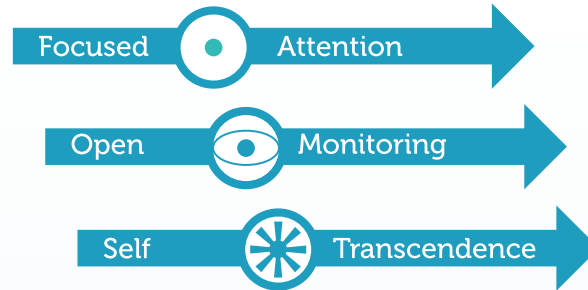
Preparation

Be sure to wear comfortable clothing appropriate to the environment, so you are not too warm or cold. Set your cell phone to airplane mode, and use a timer to discipline yourself to practice until the end. Most cell phones have a timer function, and special apps can be downloaded for the purpose of keeping time.



Meditations

Meditation takes many forms, determined by different mental and physical techniques. There are three basic mental practices: focused attention (anchoring attention to a single thing, such as breathing), open monitoring (creating greater awareness), and self-transcendence (going beyond thoughts). There are also several basic postures and physical activities, such as sitting, body scanning, and walking.



Mental Techniques

- Observations and Awareness -

Focused Attention

When you first begin to meditate, it is important to strengthen the ability to keep awareness focused, that is, anchored to one point. Developing focused attention is essential to helping the mind observe its own dynamics. In sitting meditation, the focal point can be the breath. Soon after you begin to concentrate on the breath, however, the mind begins to drift. This is normal. The goal of concentration practice is to observe when the mind slips away from its focal point. When your attention becomes occupied with something other than the breath, gently escort it back to the sensation of breathing. Make no judgments about the wayward nature of the mind. Simply observe and return. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat. Over time, you will discover that the mind wanders less often, and it required less effort to stay focused.



Open Monitoring

Mindful awareness involves another meditation technique: open monitoring. With focused attention, we gain facility in concentration. While focused attention helps us stay aware of a single item of experience such as the breath, open monitoring allows us to broaden the scope of observation and attend to whatever thoughts, sensations, or other experiences that arise.

Begin the open monitoring practice by concentrating on the breath until you feel relaxed and alert. Then allow yourself to become receptive to whatever you are experiencing. You may hear a sound. Let your attention observe it. But only be an observer. Don't allow your consciousness to become absorbed with the thing you are watching. Stay attentive to the fact that you are being attentive. Let your thoughts and sensations come and go, passing like clouds across a clear blue sky. Thinking and attention are two distinct mental functions. Be attentive without thinking.

As you proceed with this practice, you will gain greater awareness of how the mind functions. You will see how easily you are distracted. You will see how seemingly random thoughts arise and how you get enthralled by them. You will see how your thoughts shape experience and how often they bear little resemblance to reality. You will observe your prejudices and judgments and begin to relinquish them. And you will learn that when you do not react to such thoughts and remain only an observer, then only you are able to manage them more effectively.

Repeat the practice as often as needed. Stop when your timer indicates.



Self-Transcendence

Self-transcendence is a type of mindful meditation distinct from focused attention and open monitoring. Unlike these other two, however, there are no specific techniques associated with it. Self-transcendence may occur at any time during a period of meditation, or it may not occur at all. It may even happen during moments when you are not meditating. We have no control over self-transcendence; it can only be identified after it has happened.

The reasons for these curious features derive from the nature of self-transcendent experience. Self-transcendence is the dissolution of the boundaries of the self and the ego. During these moments, the subject-object dualism (“self” as opposed to “world”; “me” versus “other”) we ordinarily experience is transformed into what philosophers call “non-dualism” and psychologists call “flow.” One loses the sense of being an individual entity and glimpses pure awareness. Self-transcendence may last only a few moments or for longer periods, but it is, by nature, episodic.

While there are no particular meditative methods to generate this experience, mindful meditation does enable us to be more receptive to it and to identify it in retrospect.



Physical Techniques

- Postures and Movements -

Sitting

Sitting meditation (or simply “sitting”) helps develop the techniques that can be used in other meditation practices.

Find a comfortable sitting position. You may sit on the floor or ground, with or without a cushion, or on a chair, stool, or small bench, whichever is more comfortable. Use the method that you find most enjoyable. If you sit on the floor or ground, cross your legs. You can use any number of yogic postures (e.g., full lotus, half lotus, Burmese style). If you sit on a chair or stool, keep your feet flat on the floor. If you use a small bench, such as a seiza bench, bend your knees and rest your weight on the bench as it supports your thighs.

Place your hands on your knees or thighs or keep them lightly folded on your lap.



Now, straighten your back by elongating your spine. Imagine your head being gently pulled upwards toward the sky or ceiling. During your meditation, occasionally check to see if your back is straight. Avoid leaning on the back of a chair if you are using that method. Draw your shoulder blades toward one another, allowing the chest to expand.

Bring your attention to the muscles in your head and face. Let them relax. You may close your eyes or keep them open, directed at a point on the ground six or seven feet away.

As you allow your breath to come to a natural rhythm, determine where you can sense it most prominently. You may find that you feel your breathing best around your nostrils or in the expansion and contraction of the chest or abdomen. Focus on this region of your body and try to maintain your attention there.

When you are prepared, you may employ the techniques associated with focused attention, open monitoring, and self-transcendence.

Body Scanning

You will need to allocate about 20 minutes for this exercise. It is best to omit the timer for this practice to ensure you have sufficient time to complete it; try not to hurry through it.

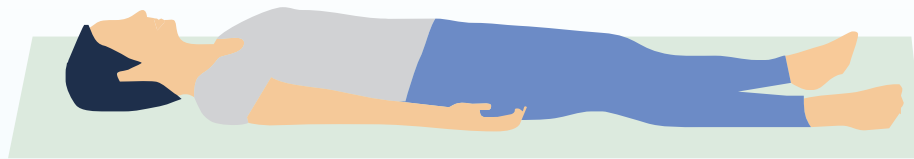
The body scan is best practiced in a lying position, but it can be adapted to sitting or standing. For the sake of clarity, we will describe the practice in the prone position.

Lie on your back and feel the pressure of the ground on your body. Let your shoulders, back, and hips settle onto the surface on which you're resting. Move your shoulder blades together slightly to allow your arm sockets to move downwards and towards your feet. Allow your hands to rest palms up. Let your feet fall open, away from each other.

Take a few deep breaths and become attentive as the breath resumes its natural rhythm. Focus attention on the sensation at the nostrils or with the rising and falling of the abdomen or chest. If your mind begins to drift and dwell on thoughts or sounds, lightly return it to this sensation.

Concentrate your efforts on being fully present to your experience. With each exhalation, feel your body become heavier and more relaxed.

Now direct your attention to each part of your body sequentially, begin at your feet. Let go of any tension you may feel and allow your feet to relax as you breathe out. Repeat this procedure as your awareness moves progressively from your feet to your head.



From the feet focus on the legs. Let go any tension you may feel, and let your legs relax. Continue to your hands and arms, your abdomen, chest, and back, then to your neck, shoulders, and head.

Now that you have settled into a completely relaxed position, let yourself feel your whole body as a single object. Continue to breathe naturally, letting yourself become more and more relaxed as you do.

Now focus your awareness on your scalp and the area on the top of your head. Allow your attention to move systematically throughout this area. Be open and inquisitive. Try to feel the sensation in that area of your body as it is. Be aware of the quality of the sensation. You may feel tightness, tingling, pressure, stiffness, or nothing special. If there is no sensation, just notice. Whatever the sensation, simply permit it to be what it is, without judgment. Now, let go of those sensations in this part of the body and continue to breathe naturally.

Proceed in this fashion, giving attention to your face, eyes, nose, cheeks, mouth, chin, jaw, and ears. Then observe the back of your head, neck, and shoulders. Now, bring your awareness to your arms, wrists, and hands. Survey each of your fingers.

Now direct your awareness to the top of the chest. Follow the ribs to the upper back and shoulder blades. Move down the spine to the lower back, and then bring your awareness to the abdomen, hips, and groin. Observe the legs and knees. Give attention to your ankles and heels, the tops and soles of your feet, and finally to your toes.

Now, allow your awareness to encompass your entire body. Take time to feel the sensation of being fully alive in this moment. You may feel deeply relaxed and suffused with a sense of well-being and peacefulness.

When you are ready to end the meditation, slowly move your fingers and toes, and then your arms and legs. Open your eyes and gently move the other parts of your body. Then very carefully, roll over to one side and use your arms and hands to bring yourself to a sitting position.

Walking

Find a suitable location, indoors or out. A path ten feet in length will suffice. It can be carpeted, a bare floor, concrete, or grass. Walking barefoot enhances the experience.

Stand tall with your spine elongated and arms by your sides. Relax your jaw and smile slightly. Take a few slow, deep breaths.

As you stand, briefly survey your body from the feet to the top of your head, releasing any tension as you do. Take a moment to appreciate your surroundings. Pay special attention to the sensations at the bottom of your feet.

Focus on the ground about six feet in front of you. You can place your hands in front of you or behind. You can also allow the arms to remain at your sides and swing slightly as you move.

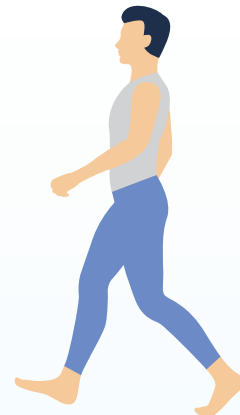
Begin to walk using small, careful steps. Mindfully, lift your right foot, move it forward, placing it a few inches beyond the toes of your left foot. Then allow your weight to shift onto your right leg and mindfully lift your left foot, placing it on the ground a few inches beyond the toes of your right foot. Shift the weight of your body forward onto your left leg. Repeat. Walk more slowly than usual. Take your time. Although you'll be walking, you're not going anywhere. Walking meditation has no destination but awareness.

Focus on the sensations of your feet as they contact the ground. If you are distracted by a thought, you can gently return attention to the soles of the feet. At any time, you can pause to refocus your awareness and then resume your walk.

You can also direct your awareness to the sensation of your whole body. Try to get a sense of the body as a fully integrated being, alive to the world. Regardless of technique, your objective is to keep your attention on each moment, as time moves from one instant to the next.

When you reach the end of your path, come to a complete stop. Stand still. Briefly scan your body or simply take a few moments to enjoy your environment. When you are ready, begin slowly and mindfully to turn around 180 degrees. Stop your turn when you're facing the other end of the walkway. Once again, set your intention to be mindful during the next segment and begin again.

You can walk for as long as you like. Thirty minutes is a good time.



Cultivating Compassion

In the mindfulness tradition, compassion means willing happiness for oneself and others. Meditation practice affords an opportunity to generate feelings of compassion and kindle a willingness to act on those feelings. Many techniques for cultivating compassion are available to the meditator. One prominent method involves recalling a particular person or persons and silently reciting wishes for their well-being and freedom from suffering. This mediation technique can be fruitfully used to begin (or end) a sitting meditation exercise.

Prepare for sitting meditation in the manner described above. After you have relaxed and settled into your practice, let your attention focus on a mental image of yourself. Now, silently (or vocally if you like) recite the following statements:

- **May I be well and happy.**
- **May I have no fears or sorrow.**
- **May I be healthy and free from illness.**
- **May I live calmly and peacefully.**

You may revise these wishes in any way that you find effective. It is important for your words to feel authentic.

Continue the practice by calling to mind your loved ones. You may think of them each in turn and include as many as you like. These are the persons in your life for whom well-wishing is usually easy: parents, spouse or partner, children, teachers and mentors, siblings and other relatives, and friends. Use the individual's name as you recite your wishes.

Then think of a person or persons for whom your feelings are relatively neutral: perhaps a store clerk you see on occasion or a neighbor you know only by sight. Repeat the set of wishes with them in mind.

Now, if you are able, consider someone for whom you have an aversion. Start with a person whom you mildly dislike and over time introduce others for whom your aversion is stronger. Recite the statements and call each person by name.

Follow the same procedure for all human beings and, finally, all living beings.



Summary

Preparation

- find a comfortable and stable sitting position
- elongate the spine
- focus attention on the breath at its most prominent location

Focused Attention

- when the mind wanders, bring awareness back to the breath
- refrain from judgments about the wandering mind; simply observe

Open Monitoring

- allow the mind to become receptive to all thoughts, sensations, and other experiences
- whatever happens, happens
- refrain from judging your experiences
- observe your thoughts and sensations as they arise and dissolve
- notice their impermanence
- try not dwell on any particular experience; let it come and go

Self-Transcendence

- be receptive to moments when the sense of the individual, isolated “self” dissipates
- the experience can be glimpsed only in hindsight
- when it is over, let it go

Body Scan

- lie down and relax
- beginning with the toes and feet, progressively relax each part of the body
- when you reach the scalp, progressively move awareness downward
- pay attention to the sensation (or lack thereof) of each part of the body
- as you conclude, feel the sensation of being alive as a whole organism

Walking Meditation

- find a suitable location
- remove your shoes, if possible
- stand erect, elongating the spine
- begin to move forward taking small steps
- attend to the sensation of moving through space or to the soles of the feet
- occasionally stop to appreciate your surroundings
- when you reach the end of the path, stop and turn around
- begin to walk back to your starting point
- repeat

Cultivating Compassion

- develop a set of statements to wish happiness for oneself and all other beings
- systematically call to mind specific individuals and wish them well
- include family, friends, acquaintances, difficult people, all humans, and all beings

Daily Practice

Focused Attention Meditation

- Focus on Breath -



Begin by finding a **quiet environment**

- Sit in a **comfortable position** - put your hands on your lap - Keep your spine straight
- Slowly and gently **close your eyes** or gaze downward or towards the tip of your nose
- Bring **stillness to your body**
- At your own pace – **take 3 deep breaths in and out**. Relax the body
- Keep your eyes closed
- Observe how your body begins to relax just by taking long deep breaths
- Breathe normally at your own pace



Watch your breathing. Recognize the movement of your abdomen and chest

- You will have many thoughts. **Allow yourself to let go of your thoughts**
- Let go of thoughts about - **your work and professional life**
- Let go of thoughts about - **your home and personal life**
- Let go of thoughts about **your friends and social life**
- Let go of thoughts of **material possessions - the house, the car, the cell phone**
- Let them pass



Let your thoughts pass

- **Try not to make any judgments** about the thoughts
- **Become aware of your thoughts**
- Acknowledge them and bring your focus back to your breath



For the next several minutes focus on your breath. Deep breaths in and out. Recognize the movement of your chest and abdomen.

- Deep breaths in and out at your own pace
- Relax the body
- Calm the mind
- Make no judgment
- Observe your breath



For a few minutes, breathe again at your normal pace

- Recognize the level of awareness you have over your breath.
- Achieve a level of **awareness over your mind**
- If your mind begins to wander, bring it back to focus on your breath
- **With each breath, allow yourself to go into a deeper state of relaxation**
- Relax the body – calm the mind – let your thoughts pass - make no judgments- become aware
- Complete tranquility – Hold this state of complete awareness



30-second period of silence

- 3 deep breathes in and out
- Repeat softly the words **May peace tranquility and equanimity come to me**
- Rub your hands, touch your face and eyes, and gently open your eyes and become aware

Open Monitoring Meditation

- Observe the mind -



Begin by finding a **quiet environment**

- Sit in a **comfortable position**
- Put your hands on your lap or knees
- keep your spine straight and imagine your head moving toward the ceiling or sky
- slowly and gently **close your eyes** or gaze downward or towards the tip of your nose
- At your own pace - **take 3 deep breaths in and out**. Relax the body
- Keep your eyes closed
- Observe how your body begins to relax just by taking long deep breaths
- Breathe normally at your own pace



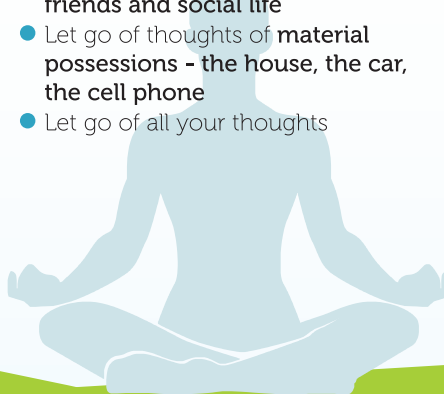
You will have many thoughts. **Allow yourself to let go of your thoughts**

- Let go of thoughts about - **your work and professional life**
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- Let go of thoughts about **your friends and social life**
- Let go of thoughts of **material possessions - the house, the car, the cell phone**
- Let go of all your thoughts



Let **your thoughts pass**

- **Try not to make any judgments** about your thoughts
- **Just become aware of your thoughts**
- Simply **acknowledge the thoughts** and bring your focus back to your mind with complete awareness of the moment





For the next several minutes focus on your mind. Recognize when a thought enters your mind and when it goes away.

- Relax the body.
- Calm the mind.
- Make no judgments .
- Observe your mind



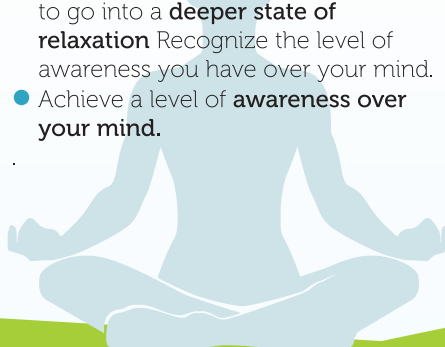
Allow yourself to go into a deeper state of **open-monitoring meditation**

- Become a calm and **silent observer** of your thoughts
- Imagine you are **sitting by a river bank** and your thoughts are like sailboats. Simply let the thoughts pass. Recognize the control you have over your mind.
- If your mind begin to wander, **return to observing your thoughts**
- With each second, allow yourself to go into a **deeper state of relaxation** Recognize the level of awareness you have over your mind.
- Achieve a level of **awareness over your mind.**



Repeat softly the words **may peace, tranquility, and equanimity come to me .**

- Rub your hand, touch your face and eyes and gently open your eyes and become aware



Self-Transcendence Meditation

- Going Beyond Thoughts -



Begin by finding a **quiet environment**.

- Sit in a **comfortable position** - put your hands on your lap - Keep your spine straight
- Slowly and gently **close your eyes** or gaze downward or towards the tip of your nose
- Bring **stillness to your body**
- At your own pace – **take 3 deep breaths in and out**. Relax the body, keep your eyes closed
- Observe how your body begins to relax just by taking long deep breaths
- Breathe normally at your own pace



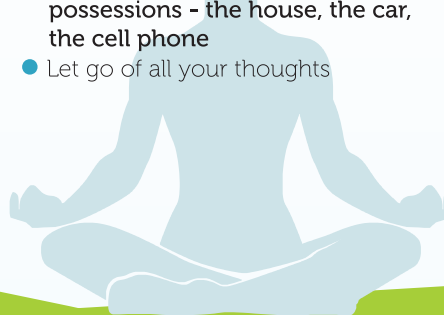
You will have many thoughts. Let's learn how to let go. **Allow yourself to let go of your thoughts**

- Let go of thoughts about - **your work and professional life**
- Let go of thoughts about - **your home and personal life**
- Let go of thoughts about **your friends and social life**
- Let go of thoughts of **material possessions - the house, the car, the cell phone**
- Let go of all your thoughts



Let **your thoughts pass**

- **Try not to make any judgments** about the thoughts
- **Just become aware of your thoughts**
- Simply **acknowledge the thoughts** and bring your focus back to your mind with complete awareness of the moment





For the next several minutes focus on your mind. Recognize when a thought enters your mind and when it goes away

- Relax the body
- Calm the mind
- Make no judgments
- Observe your mind



Allow yourself to go into a deeper state of **self-transcendence meditation**

- Become a calm and **silent observer** of the moments
- Observe the **moments in between** your thoughts
- Imagine a rubber ball dropped from a height. With each bounce it decreased in height until it rests quietly on the ground. Likewise **let your mind become quiet** by letting go of thoughts. If your mind begins to wander, just observe the thought and then let it go
- Notice and experience the **silence in between the thoughts**
- Recognize the level of awareness you have over your mind
- Achieve a level of **awareness over your mind and transcendence beyond thoughts**



- Repeat softly the words **may peace, tranquility and equanimity come to me**
- Rub your hand, touch your face and eyes and gently open your eyes and become aware



Conclusion



We said at the beginning that mindfulness meditation is simple but not easy. The steps involved, as we have seen, are not complex. But putting them into practice can be challenging. We are conditioned to resist being quiet and paying close attention to ourselves and the world around us. Most of us live our lives according to habit, dulled to the mysteries and beauty of our existence. Is it any wonder that there is so much unhappiness and suffering?

The key to handling the difficulty of meditating is to harness the very power of habit that so often anesthetizes our lives. Making meditation a priority and disciplining ourselves to make it part of our daily routine will allow the practice to become easier over time and will pay dividends in awareness and happiness.

About Advancing Mindfulness

The vision of Advancing Mindfulness is to help us experience joy and happiness in our daily lives. It is a journey that can be achieved through knowledge, awareness, and practice.

- We teach classes online to help advance the cause of mindfulness in our communities, in our nation, and in our world.
- We conduct in-person classes at college campuses, churches, and workplaces to provide personal meditation experience.
- We hold weekend retreats to bring like-minded people together to experience the happiness and joy of mindfulness and to carry it with them into their daily lives.

In collaboration with other leaders in the field, such as Jon Kabat-Zinn and Congressman Tim Ryan, we have engaged the United States Surgeon General on working towards a strategy to bring mindfulness to the mainstream in America. Advancing Mindfulness is about how we can create a world beyond violence, beyond anger, beyond ignorance, beyond greed, and beyond ego. Advancing Mindfulness is about how we can transform our lives toward greater physical wellness, peace, compassion, insight, and spiritual growth.

**Register online at www.AdvancingMindfulness.com
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About the Authors



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Mark W. Muesse is an emeritus professor at Rhodes College in Memphis, where he was chair of the Department of Religious Studies and Asian Studies program. A native of Waco, Texas, Muesse attended Baylor University and Harvard University, where he earned M.T.S. and M.A. degrees and a Ph.D. in The Study of Religion. He has been Professor of Theology at the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary in Madurai, India and traveled extensively throughout Asia to pursue advanced studies in meditation and contemplation. He is an award-winning teacher and has taught courses in world religions, philosophy, and spirituality. Dr. Muesse has produced four lecture series for The Great Courses, including **The Great Religions: Hinduism; Religions of the Axial Age; Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad**; and the best-selling **Practicing Mindfulness: An Introduction to Meditation**. He is also the author **The Hindu Traditions**, **The Age of Sages**, and **Four Wise Men: The Lives and Teachings of Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad**.



Dr. Manoj Jain

Manoj Jain, MD MPH, is a physician, writer, and national leader in healthcare quality improvement. Dr. Jain writes regularly for the **Commercial Appeal**, **Washington Post** and **Huffington Post**. He has been interviewed by CNN and National Public Radio. He received engineering, doctorate, and public health degrees from Boston University and is an adjunct assistant professor at Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University. He teaches meditation, has conducted research on spirituality and medicine with Herbert Benson of Harvard Medical School, and co-moderated a White House Roundtable Discussion about Complementary Therapies in Rehabilitation, along side pioneer Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. He is the founder and chairman of the annual Gandhi-King conference on Nonviolence (www.gandhikingconference.org). His most recent publication is a children's book titled: **Mahavira: The Hero of Nonviolence**.

Contact us at info@advancingmindfulness.com

Meditation is simple but not easy. Our guidebook can help make it easier.

In our **Mindfulness - A Guidebook of Meditations**, we present a checklist for a novice and even an expert meditator to help bring the practice into daily routine, much like a physical work-out or a daily shower.

Of the thousands of meditations within spiritual, religious, ethnic, scientific, philosophical and individual traditions each has a different mental technique and a physical technique.

We categorize and present mental techniques of three types : focused attention, open monitoring and self transcendence.

We present physical techniques that include sitting meditation, body scans, and walking meditation.

Starting a mediation practice takes just ten minutes, and our guidebook provides sample minute-by-minute guides. You will enjoy this practical booklet as well as its complementary text, **The Mindfulness Model - How Meditation can Transform Us**.

"In this booklet, **Mindfulness - A Guidebook of Meditations** Muesse and Jain succinctly describe fundamental meditation techniques. For anyone who is ready to begin a serious practical engagement with meditation, this text is a good place to start."

-Tim Ryan, United States Congressman and author of **A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit**.



Advancing Mindfulness

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