

JUNIPER'S LET'S MEDITATE

Part 1

TOPIC

*INSTRUCTIONS: Review the topic and do one or both of the daily meditations on page two.
Please write team@juniperpath.org with thoughts or questions.*



What is Meditation?

Meditation is a method to gain a more serene, harmonious way of being that enhances our experience and evokes our capacity to live fully and freely. The goals of *Let's Meditate* are to introduce you to the richness and potency of meditation practice, and to provide the instruction to help you become a competent and confident meditator. We begin with a definition of meditation.

Meditation is the act of concentrating on an object that enhances the mind.

"Act" means that meditation is a discrete endeavor. It is not something we recommend doing while busy with something else. Meditating is most effective when we do it all by itself.

"Concentrating" describes the process of focusing the mind and bringing inner distraction under control. In meditation we want to make the mind like a laser beam—sharp, clear, and focused—not diffuse and distracted. It is an exercise to bring the wandering mind back to an object of focus.

"On an object" means that meditation is not about turning our minds off or going blank but about anchoring the mind on a particular object and striving to keep it there. In some meditations that object is easy to find, like the breath. In others we have to put more effort into establishing the object, like a visualized image. The principle objects we use are the breath, visualized objects, and insights gained from reflecting upon specific topics.

"Enhances the mind" means that in meditation we do not pick just any object on which to focus but use objects that help bring about inner growth. This growth is characterized by qualities such as inner calm and ease, balanced and harmonious emotions, compassionate thought and action, and clarity to see beyond limiting stories and concepts.

The benefits of meditation come from repeated effort, like dripping water slowly smoothing jagged rock. Meditation is the water, gradually refining and polishing the mind. Regular practice is more important than the length of the practice; it is better to have a meditation session for even a few minutes daily than to have longer sessions less frequently.

One way to think of meditation is as exercise for the mind. Just as physical exercise strengthens the body, meditation strengthens the mind. To perform the exercise of meditation, we follow three steps:

- *Preparing*: attention to time, place and posture
- *Setting the object*: attention to the object of focus during meditation
- *Bringing the mind back to the object*: noticing the mind wandering and reengaging the object

We will develop each of these during this course. In the meantime, we invite you to follow the instruction for this week's meditation, and begin.

DAILY MEDITATION

Try to do one or both of the following meditations daily.

CONCENTRATION MEDITATION

- **Preparing.** Find a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position. Set a countdown timer for five minutes.
- **Setting the object.** Breathing normally, fix your mind on your breath, either at the tip of your nose or the rise and fall of your abdomen.
- **Bringing the mind back.** As your focus wanders from your breath, gently bring it back to the breath. Don't worry how much it wanders. Just gently bring it back.

Take a couple of relaxing breaths to conclude.

CONTEMPLATION MEDITATION

- Set a countdown timer for three minutes or more.
- Bring to mind what it would feel like to cultivate deep levels of calm, balance, compassion or clarity. Pick one for each meditation session. As you cultivate that feeling, hold it for the remainder of this part of the meditation. It may help to imagine how you might experience that feeling in particular situations.

Take a couple of relaxing breaths and conclude.

GROUP PRACTICE

The agenda is to facilitate a group meditation and discussion. Suggested times are approximate.

1. Concentration meditation (5 mins.)
 - Follow instruction above.
2. Review previous topic (5 mins.)
 - Because this is the first part of the course, discuss what brings the group to meditation and what they hope to gain from it.
3. Concentration meditation (10 mins.)
 - Follow instruction above.
4. Read and review topic (20 mins.)
5. Open discussion of topic or use these prompts (10 mins.)
 - What drives the need for meditation in today's culture?
 - How do you understand meditation—as a method, a path, an exercise for the mind?
 - How might calm, balance, compassion and clarity benefit your life?
6. Contemplative meditation (10 mins.)
 - Follow instruction above.