



July 2005

Topic of the Month – Meditation

(Dhyana – limb 7 of the Asthtanga Yoga 8 limbs of Yoga as taught in the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali)

Being present (last months topic) is learned through meditation. Meditation is where we “practice” being present so we can more easily recall how to be present while living our lives.

ॐ Being present just means being with what you are doing and not thinking about something else. Our brain is wired to only be able to do one thing at a time — when we multi-task (even thinking about work, etc. while doing the dishes is multi-tasking) we can only give one of the tasks our attention while the other task runs on “auto-pilot”. When on auto-pilot the chance of error is increased.

How to Meditate:

Just Sit! I agree having a routine or technique can help us prepare for a meditation practice, however do not let the excuse of not having one keep you from trying — you can establish your own.

Sit and try to be aware of what is around you:

- ॐ I like to meditate outside weather permitting. As I sit outside and settle in to calming my mind I start to notice the birds. Their chirps become my meditation; I notice as my meditation deepens I notice the birds more and more.
- ॐ Also for an outdoor meditation using the sun works well too. I sit facing the sun; feeling the warmth of the sun on my body I meditate on the sun. I see the sun at my heart, illuminating my body from the inside out. I see my heart as the sun radiating my heart energy toward my brain, in my meditation I see my brain as the moon. Just like the moon reflects the sun's light so too do I feel my brain reflect my heart's light.
- ॐ If an outdoor meditation is not possible when indoors I like to use my breath. Focusing on the breath somewhere in your body increases blood flow to that area bringing healing and rejuvenation. As you sit with your breath;
 - ॐ Feel your breath in your nostrils; then get more specific and feel your breath in your left nostril. Or maybe your right nostril, is one nostril more open than the other?
 - ॐ Feel the air from your breath go down your trachea, feel the air reach your lungs.
 - ॐ Feel your lungs expand with as air enters your body
 - ॐ Feel your lungs expand onto your ribs and feel your lungs push on your ribs physically changing their shape.
 - ॐ See if you can feel your lungs press on your back ribs.
 - ॐ Try to fill your entire body with your breath

As you increase awareness, do not “think” about what you are noticing around you, do not label it as good or bad, pleasant or irritating. It just is. This is practicing awareness with detachment.



Meditate to be constantly observing. Be an observer.

It is about awareness (waking up), being fully alive in the moment. Initially we are aware of the “gross” elements; the person in front of us, for example. As we deepen our awareness we become aware of what the person in front of us is saying or not saying “between the lines”. This helps us respond appropriately. This deepening of awareness will happen in many other areas of our life.

How NOT to meditate

Meditation is not about psychoanalyzing your thoughts or yourself! This is rehashing the past, if we keep doing that we are not moving forward.

It is not about generating a good feeling or a secure feeling.

Meditation is NOT about being able to sit for long periods of time. This is mistaking the method for the goal. It is not about being a good meditator. It is about being aware of our life and what is going on “behind the scenes”.

Is thinking so bad anyway? Meditation is not the absence of thought!

“Quit obsessing about whatever is swirling around in your mind!”

As you sit and meditate you slow down the brain waves, you clear out some of the “junk”. As this happens you may find clearer thought. This is why sometimes during meditation an “answer” (so to speak) comes to mind.

It is **awareness** of the Destructive thoughts vs. Constructive thoughts that meditation develops.

Yoga puts emphasis on controlling our thoughts because we identify with what is in our mind. Be aware when you are having a destructive thought and replace it with a constructive thought.

The calm amidst the chaos (de-stressing)

Why is yoga so highly recommended? One of the primary benefits; De-stress — meditation calms our nervous system.

Yoga and meditation strengthen the mind; a strong mind is able to focus, a weak mind flits around wondering and worrying which lead to frustration and anxiety.

A strong mind keeps us focused during the dramas of our life, reducing stress.

A focused mind creates satisfaction, peace, happiness, and serenity.