

Dr Jeannette Kavanagh

Counsellor and Psychotherapist

Member: Australian Counselling Association (MACA)

Anxiety Disorders Association Victoria (ADAVIC)

# How To Meditate

FINDING YOUR  
PATH  
To CALM



[www.drjeannettekavanaghcounsellor.com.au](http://www.drjeannettekavanaghcounsellor.com.au)

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## **Meditation: the foundation to calm**

Meditation is one of the practices I recommend in my *Calming Words* e-program. It is so absolutely vital that I call it the foundation to calm. That's because everything else is built on it, and everything else flows from it. It is the cornerstone of a calm life. Every person in the de-stress, anti-anxiety field agrees.

- Is your work so overwhelming that you're not sleeping well?
- Do you find it difficult to completely unwind, and relax?
- Do the stresses of daily life make you just a little bit more grumpy than you want to be with your friends and other loved ones?

Whatever reason you have for picking up this book to seek more calm, let me say this:

***The most direct route to calm is daily meditation.***

***It is the beginning, the middle and  
the end of the road to calm.***

***Meditation is it.  
In your search for calm it is vital.***

Those of you who want to triumph over your anxiety, panic attacks, agoraphobia and other phobias will find that meditation ALONE will do you so much good. In fact, some people find meditation so helpful that the many other therapies may not be necessary.

I'd go so far as to say that you cannot survive without learning meditation, and practising it for at least twenty minutes every day. Well, of course you'll survive, but you won't work to your peak, and nor will you live to your optimum age in good health.

Big claim?

Maybe. But meditation has now been accepted in mainstream medicine to be so efficacious that it's now finding its way into our mainstream medical teaching curricula. At long last.

Even better for you, it is as simple as they are effective.

You know it is. Or you have a sense that it is.

### **Breathing meditation**

In this section I explain the subtle and simple way to enter a truly calming and meditative state.

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I know it helps to be able to listen to someone guiding you through this process – certainly at the beginning. That’s why I made the MP3 audio file [Meditation Magic](#). That audio will take you through the steps needed to do what is called breathing meditation.

### Introduction to meditation

Meditation became more popular in the West in the late 1960s early 1970s. Its popularity was as a secular, or non-religious, practice. One that would have benefits for the physical and mental rather than the spiritual health of the person meditating. Of course, many people in the Western world also used meditation as part of their conversations with God, but generally meditation in the West has been about calming the mind, not nourishing the soul. That is in contrast to its very long history as an integral part of the practices of most Eastern religions.

With its popularity outside the nations where it originated there came also a great deal of misinformation. As a result, far too many people never really learned how to know when they were meditating at all, let alone properly. That also meant that far too many people had no idea what to expect as an outcome from their meditation.

Not surprisingly, they quit and now tell me with monotonous regularity “but *Jeannette*, I can’t meditate. I know you think it’s great and that it’ll do me good, but I just can’t do it”.

Meditation is very simple.

Nearly thirty years ago in 1985, when he wrote his book “[The Calm Technique](#)”, Paul Wilson gave that book the subheading “Meditation without magic or mysticism”. In his pack *Secrets of Calm*, Mr Wilson talks about choosing to use the terms ‘alone time’ or ‘self time’ to replace the term “meditation”.

That was done because he found people at his sessions were at least a little bit resistant, or even uneasy about the term ‘meditation’ which they associated with esoteric religious practices. At the same time, the busy executives, overworked parents and many other people who benefited from Mr Wilson’s secrets of calm were open to exactly the same practices – provided they were called something more familiar and comprehensible, like ‘alone time’.

To do meditation well is difficult for people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought up on a diet of constant self-gratification and over-stimulating environments. After all, every single thing you see, do, touch and think is a stimulus to your brain.

Imagine how much more stimulated *your* brain is than it would have been in the 17<sup>th</sup> century! Or even in the first fifty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before every room had a television set blaring in the background. Like a guest who never goes home.

**In contrast with our normally hectic, over-stimulating life,  
when you meditate, you simply do nothing.**

### The two main approaches to meditation

Though there are countless approaches to meditation and many religious rituals surrounding it, in broad terms there are only two main schools of thought about meditation.

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One approach requires only that you pay attention to a chosen point of focus – a sacred word, your breath being exhaled, a mantra. Once you focus on that point whenever your mind wanders off, you refocus on your breath, your calming word, your mantra.

The other school of thought is that the ultimate goal of meditation is to quieten your mind to the extent that you reach a stillness which is beyond the mind. In other words, for the many people who practise this second form of meditation, the whole aim is to effortlessly go **beyond the mind**. Naturally, that form of meditation does not use a point of focus, your breath, a calming word, or a sacred mantra. That's because although a single focus may slow your mind down to being in the moment, with only the thought of your sacred mantra, you are still keeping your mind thinking, engaged. And the whole point of entering the meditative state is to go beyond any thought – even that of a sacred word.

I'm not using that approach in **Calming Words** for two main reasons. First, I think that the breathing meditation I teach you is a very simple, brilliant, and very efficient way to slow your mind to the point where you can implement real change. You and I want to reverse the effects of stress in our life, or to eliminate anxiety, panic attacks and phobias from our life. To achieve those goals, the meditation practice in **Calming Words** is more than adequate.

Secondly, I think that the other main approach to the 'beyond the mind' meditation is a longer journey with much more subtle outcomes. In essence, I regard it as much more a religious or sacred path which may be immeasurably beneficial for your spiritual and hence your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. However, it is something which is beyond the scope of this book.

### The Benefits of Taking Time Out

So a mere forty years ago, people in the West first started extolling the benefits of meditation. During that period, the sceptics have researched, tested and quantified the changes that take place in the human brain when we meditate. You can read about the measured changes in brain chemistry and activity caused by meditation on [The Immrama Institute](#) site. In fact, you can read a number of articles extolling the benefits of meditation in [Time Magazine](#)

As so often, it was a case for the West of "*I'll only believe if I can see it, and test it.*" Now that the reports are in the public domain, we've come to accept that [meditation is good for our health](#) and wellbeing. In that knowledge, we've caught up with what people in many parts of the world have known for millennia.

We now realise and accept that it is good for humans to have respite from the demands of their lives.

I first learned to meditate many years ago at a Buddhist retreat. At the time, for me, it was a retreat from the noise of my hectic life, and from the clatter of the world at large. It's strange too, that although growing up as a Catholic, I had often attended retreats, I didn't connect that earlier experience with the meditative state.

In my self-help digital program [Calming Words](#) and in this book, I am not suggesting that meditation must have a spiritual motivation though for me it continues to nourish my soul.

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I promote its proven temporal benefits. If you practise the simple and very straightforward techniques I provide in this book to build your reserves of calm, you'll achieve wonderful and measurable outcomes.

You can always add its little sister book [How to Relax](#) for even more strategies. Click on the book cover or the link to buy it for less than \$1 on Amazon



### **Meditation can help to conquer fear of public presentations**

As you know from my website, I've done a lot of public speaking and I've designed and run sessions about how to make public presentations. From very early on in those courses, some participants came up to me after the program, one by one, and they told me that yes, they'd enjoyed the course, they'd learned some new presentation strategies and they'd found it useful.

### **BUT....**

The "but" part of their feedback was always the same.

Their main question was whether or not I knew of people who ran sessions about how to calm down before presenting.

They weren't concerned about the *butterflies in the tummy* we'd touched on as part of my initial public speaking seminars. These participants, sometimes amounting to half of all the people in a given course, had F1-11 bombers going around in their tummies!

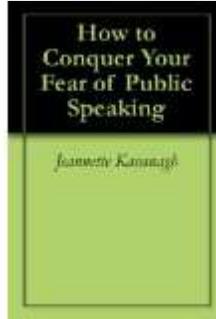
Some of them were more nervous than they wanted to be. Others were panic-stricken, anxious, terrified, about giving the talk, or presenting their research findings, or appearing in public for whatever reason.

### **Psychological strategies and meditation – a great combination**

I began to include in my training programs a range of strategies to manage the anxiety and panic many, or most, people felt about being the centre of attention. Into my public presentation training programs, I incorporated sessions run by some very eminent Psychologists known for their work in that field. Those Psychologists presented particular ideas and practice exercises as part of the courses, including information about the physiology of fear and how to counter its continuation. That's all included in my e-Program [How to Conquer Your Fear of Public Speaking: Presenting Your Best](#). It's available on Amazon for less than \$10. Click on the book cover.

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Consider investing in that book if you want a step-by-step guide on how to prepare your talks, public speaking protocols and how to conquer your anxiety. Don't worry: you can achieve public speaking calm with the meditation strategies in this little book.

Later still, after incorporating insights from mainstream psychology, I read a number of books on the subject of meditation and its therapeutic effects, including Ms Pauline McKinnon's book "In Stillness Conquer Fear".

Until my broader research into meditation, I hadn't made the connection between its deeply calming and reviving powers, and its possible role in eradicating performance anxiety and other types of anxiety, including panic attacks.

After I attended meditation sessions run by Ms McKinnon, I decided to offer meditation as another approach to gaining calm and confidence in public presentations. I was somewhat tentative at first because meditation was still seen as a bit *way-out*. It was seen as something mystical, which of course for millions of people it was, and is.

At the same time, I wanted to bring the documented temporal health benefits of meditation to people. Especially people who needed to find calm before performing in public.

## **Breathing meditation – a very ancient art.**

I want to tell you in the shortest, quickest time available:

### **How to do *breathing meditation*.**

My audio file **Meditation Magic** will guide you through this exercise. You can download it here just by clicking on this link – [Meditation Magic](#). That link takes you to my counselling website where you can download the file to your iPhone, iPad, computer, Samsung Galaxy – or wherever. This link opens to the file directly: [Listen Now to Meditation Magic](#).

You can research other ways to meditate. For the moment, let's keep it simple. Especially since this is the technique that works for me.

This ancient meditation is centred on breathing. To your slow, deep, diaphragmatic breaths there is only one more element to add – breathing meditation.

## **Why I made meditation a cornerstone of finding peace and calm**

For the moment, I want to quickly and simply tell you why meditation is one part of the foundation of my approach to bringing greater calm to your daily life. That's particularly the case if you want to conquer anxiety in all its forms and to eliminate panic episodes from your life.

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Quite simply, I know from my own experience, and the experience of many people who practise daily meditation, that it will act as a calming agent on you, and your body.

What I mean is that the calm reserves you develop during your meditation sessions are like any other reserves in your life. See your reserves of calm as being like the charge, the power in your car's battery.

### How to know if you're running low on calm

Unfortunately for humans, no one provides us with the flashing red light we see in our cars to tell us we are going flat, running out of petrol (gas) or calm. Sometimes, we only know that when we start having the obvious symptoms of stress – sleep disturbance, irritability, lack of concentration, lowering or lack of libido, high anxiety, and many other symptoms.

Life – even a relatively calm and peaceful existence in the country – life and the living of it, depletes your reserves of calm.

Even if you think you've escaped a lot of the stressors of modern life, it's difficult to remain unaffected by the stress and tragedy in other peoples' lives. Who among us did not register shock at the tsunami in Asia, the hostages taken in Algeria and the effects of famine in East Africa?

As we start 2013, Australia is being hit by an unusual level of natural disasters – bushfires in many states and floods in others. Not to mention the devastating earthquakes in New Zealand, and the cyclones and floods in the Caribbean and the United States.

All day, every day, we hear of a new tragedy.

### Meditation replenishes your inner store of calm

In response to all those forces working against your store of calm, I want only to say to you that when you use meditation you are “recharging *your* battery”, your power, your force. You are putting back, rather than depleting your original store of calm – each and every time you meditate.

Just think about it.

All you do while you are meditating is ....nothing.

Not a thing.

Absolutely nothing. You don't plan the next meal, or think about your problems, or run a marathon, or present a talk. Sometimes, within the meditation session, your mind may wander off onto things like picking up the dry cleaning, or some awful remark someone made to you. But when you really get the hang of meditating, you think about nothing. You are effortlessly aware of your breath and that's that.

At the very least, meditation is time out. How often do you hear yourself saying:

*“Oh yes. I used to do meditation in College but I just don't have time now”.*

### **Meditation is one of the most successful antidotes to stress.**

It lowers the level of lactic acid in your blood by 50% - lactic acid is produced when adrenaline pumps into your body in the flight/fight reaction.

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Meditation is known to actually [reverse the stress process](#).

Imagine. You are so busy that you cannot even allow your poor overworked mind, body and spirit a little rest from it all.

I'm here to say that if you want to reduce stress and its negative effects in your life, meditation is not an optional extra. It's non-negotiable. If you bought my e-program [Calming Words](#) and you want that to work to its optimum, meditation is definitely not a "I'll do it if I can find the time" option.

## **Meditation is fundamental.**

Do it, or don't do it.

That's your choice.

If you don't, I believe that you are missing out.

And of course I've met many people who say that they have tried to meditate, and they just couldn't do it. If you are one of those people, let me make a suggestion.

Give five minutes of your morning, and five minutes of your evening over to meditation.

That's right.

Surely you can spare five minutes at a time to sit and meditate. Interesting word that: "spare" – as if you have a finite amount of time in the bank, and you'll withdraw some for meditation.

Fact is, if you do give yourself over to meditation for even five minutes, I am certain that you'll be able to extend that to ten minutes.

By that time, you'll be hooked.

Hooked on the best thing you can do for your self.

Whether or not you have a phobia, or a number of phobias. Whether or not you have anxiety and panic attacks, or whether you are just generally feeling stressed, meditation will calm you.

## **Meditation is the best preventative medicine there is**

Look upon meditation as a preventative strategy in your path to peace from anxiety and panic attacks. Due to the fact that it calms your entire system, you will become far less likely to feel anxious.

I offer you breathing meditation because I know it will benefit your physical and emotional health. It's not a new test for you to fail. It is part of the foundation of your calmer life. I absolutely guarantee that meditation will be calming for you.

## **Let's begin. Find your calming space and turn off your mobile (cell) phone**

When meditating, it is vital that you are seated in a comfortable chair. But not so comfortable that you might doze off. Please never try to meditate while you are lying down. If you are lying down, it is very difficult not to just nod off. The fact is that research has now proved that meditation is far more restful and beneficial than sleep. Of course meditation is about not resisting, relaxing into your meditative state so if you're tired and you begin to nod off, just go with that. It's a strong signal from your body that you need a little sleep.

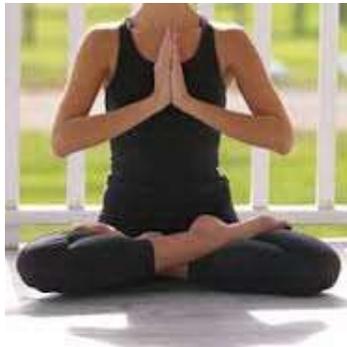
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So find a straight-backed chair, and yes, it can be an armchair. You'll sit in that with your back straight and your head up.

You most definitely do NOT have to sit in what we call the lotus position, though if you're supple enough, by all means.



Just as importantly, find a quiet place with no possibility of being disturbed. Translated, that means turn off your mobile (cell) phone, and put your landline on silent and let it go to message bank.

Paul Wilson sets out some pre-conditions for your first meditation experience, or your return to meditation. Instead of re-inventing a wheel so nicely turned, I have set out Paul's ideas in the following table.

### **Table 1 Before your meditation**

Prepare as well as you can for your meditation sessions. That will mean making sure that you are well rested and you're not likely to be disturbed during the meditation time. So do turn off all telephones.

Another preparation involves your attitude. Try to approach your meditation without judgement, and that includes not expecting too much from the first session.

### **Your sacred place of calm**

I find it helpful to set aside a place which is my meditation place.

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For me that is simply a particular chair in my room. The chair is something I look upon as my meditation chair, and just looking at it makes me relax. True.

The chair is a little bit away from everything else but I don't by any means live in a mansion, so it should be more than possible for you to set up a little space somewhere in your apartment, or room, or house where you know that is your meditating place. Or as some people call it – your alone time space.

Some of the young parents with whom I have worked call it their sanity space. Because once they became used to meditating and realised its profound benefits, they craved that respite, that time away from the joys and the demands of parenting young children.

The object of the breathing meditation is to focus your entire self on your breathing. In the meditation, you become as aware as possible of your breathing. Its ebbs and flows. Not in an evaluative, “am I doing this well?” way. You just listen to the sound of your intake of breath and your exhalation.

Always remember though that this is a relaxing, intensely calming, thing to do.

So please don't see it as any sort of effort. Some people in my meditation classes concentrate so hard on being relaxed, that they tense up with the effort.

Calm.

Be calm.

Eyes closed. Relaxed. Relaxing.

Just ignore everything around you. Any traffic sounds or even the creaking of the house.

Ignore too the thoughts that come into your head.

Make no effort.

Let the thoughts come in, and let the thoughts go out.

Your mind will quieten itself soon enough.

Soon you'll become aware of your deep breathing. You've brought to this meditation the right, diaphragmatic way to breathe. So now it's totally natural to you. If you need a little refresher on that, I have included some pointers at the end of this text.

Remember too from the exercise that it's not filling your lungs to the brim that is important. It's the relaxing exhalation.

### **Listen to your breathing.**

Listen to the air going in through your nose or mouth.

Listen as you let the breath out.

Feel the air brush against your lips as you breathe out.

Feel the life force coming into your body through that air.

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Breathing.

Being.

When your mind seems to be completely filled with your breathing, you begin the meditation.

Listen to the sound of your breath as you exhale.

Silently count one on your next breath out.

Then 'two' and so on until you reach four, when you start again.

'One', 'two', 'three' 'four'.

'One', 'two', 'three' 'four'.

Until all you are aware of is your counting ....one, two, three, four.

That's it.

It's too simple for most of us. We like complex, difficult-to-fathom, techniques. But the breathing meditation is exactly what its name implies.

It is you, the essence of you, being centred entirely on your breath and your breathing, one, ...two,... three, ....four.

Do that for fifteen to twenty minutes.

Each and every day.

Each time you breathe deeply, and slowly, listen to the sound of your breath.

Your breath going in.

Your breath going out.

### **Start out with five minutes practice**

Your goal is fifteen to twenty minutes minimum per day but as I said earlier, start small and work your way up.

You can't tell me, or even yourself, that you don't have even five minutes to try this out.

Please consider listening to [Meditation Magic](#) while you're starting out. Some people use it every time – to get into the zone, so to speak. Whatever makes it easiest for you to meditate.

### **Changing the rhythms of your brain**

When you enter the first phase of the meditative state, your brain rhythms go from your normal everyday Beta range of brainwaves to the Alpha state. In the Alpha range, your mind is at its most alert and most susceptible to suggestions for change. Alpha is simultaneously more refreshingly restful than the state you enter when you're deeply asleep, yet your mind is much more alert than when you are fully active and awake in the Beta state.

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The Beta level is what we would call our normal everyday, conscious state. In the Beta brain wave level, our brain is vibrating at 14 to 100 Hz per minute. That level of brain wave is even higher when our adrenal glands pump adrenaline into our bodies to prepare us to confront real, or imagined, danger, called the ***Emergency Response***.

Scientists who have been measuring human brain waves for all sorts of different reasons, have provided irrefutable evidence that when in a meditative state, the human brain enters the Alpha, and sometimes the Theta, and even Delta levels of brain waves.

The **Alpha** state is one in which you are concentrating at your peak. Sometimes, when you're totally mesmerized by a great movie you'll slip into that state of super wakefulness. In the Alpha state you're able to learn more quickly and efficiently.

**Theta** waves are slower still.

Normally, we enter that state only when we are asleep and dreaming. Through meditation you can be fully awake and within that Theta brain wave state. That is highly beneficial if you want to make positive changes in your life. Being in that state will increase your ability to make the changes in your attitude and your thinking that you need to make to triumph over your anxiety.

To very easily reach that Theta state, you can use the marvellous help offered by the [Immrama Institute](#) and their products, especially their range of [Insight CD](#) and [MP3](#). Those links take you to the Insight collection that has ocean waves in the background. I mention a little later the Insight products with gentle rain sounds.

Theta is also a state of tremendous stress relief. In the slower Theta brain wave pattern, the brain makes lots of relaxing endorphins melt your stress away. The slowest brain wave pattern is **Delta**, the brain wave pattern of dreamless sleep.

Each time you practise meditation, you will be reaching again the Alpha state of awareness.

Each time you practise meditation, you will be renewing your stores of calm, and you will be in touch with all that you need to overcome any of the problems which beset you.

Each time you practise meditation, you will associate the sound of your breathing with that state of calm tranquillity.

So think of the mnemonic DSLC. It stands for the four things you do during the breathing meditation.

You breathe:

**Deeply;**

**Slowly, while you**

**Listen to your breathing, and finally you**

**Count your exhalations 1, 2,3, 4; 1, 2, 3, 4; 1, 2, 3, 4; 1, 2, 3, 4;**

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The sound of your breath, going in and going out, will be like the cue, the physical signal, which you use in cued relaxation or autogenic training. It will condition your subconscious mind to relax.

Even when in the most stress-inducing situations, all you'll have to do is breathe deeply and slowly. As soon as your subconscious registers the sound of that breathing, it will send the trigger to your body to relax.

Repetition is essential for the real value of meditation to take effect. You will feel its positive effects after only 100 minutes. That's twenty minutes for five days. Less than a week.

But here's the best part.

### **An even easier way to meditate with the [Insight MP3](#)**

I'm not sure that the people at the [Immrama Institute](#) would be keen for me to suggest that their products are just an easy option for you. That's not quite what I mean. However, it does take a lot of practice and perseverance to be able to meditate so that your brain waves slow down to the Theta or Delta state. With their bi-naural beat technology, Insight range can bring about that change in your brain waves without weeks and months of daily practice on your part.

I use either my [Insight CD](#) with gentle sounds of rain in the background, or my [Insight MP3](#) every day. I don't see it as a way of cheating my way to a level of calm I probably couldn't reach on my own. I'm just glad I came across it six or so years ago and I'm even happier to tell you about it. And the good thing about all Immrama products? If they don't do for you what they do for me and what you want, you get your money back. Can't do better than that!

### **Meditating is like compound interest – the benefits are cumulative**

Mediation is indeed like compound interest in your bank account. The benefits are cumulative. Each time builds on the previous.

Each time you meditate it will be easier and quicker for you to reach the state of total calm.

Each time you meditate, you will be conditioning your body to know how to relax.

### **You say “I've tried meditating but I just can't do it”**

At any time during the session if you find your mind wandering away from the one focus, the counting of your breaths, just let it go.

Make no effort.

Start counting again and just let the thought dissipate.

Above all, r-e-l-a-x.

Don't use breathing meditation as yet another thing in which you will find yourself not up to par. You do it at your own pace.

When you start thinking to yourself that you've finally got the hang of it, you haven't.

Well, maybe you have, but the whole idea of breathing meditation is to rid your mind of all thoughts. Especially those very intrusive thoughts linked to judging your own efforts.

Your aim is to free your mind from all thoughts other than ...the counting of your breaths.

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# How to Meditate: Finding Your Path to Calm

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## **Meditation is simple and should be effortless – but it is an acquired skill**

Although breathing meditation is supremely simple, it is also something with which you have to become accustomed. After all, we spend our lives being bombarded by visual and audio images all day – and well into the night.

We are constantly thinking.

Constantly receiving information, processing it, analysing it.

Even within the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, we live at a much faster pace than our parents, and grandparents did.

So being still, being in the moment, having no thoughts, that quiet is alien to most of us.

That's why I say, if your thoughts wander, please don't assume that you can't do meditation.

It's very rare for someone to meditate as profoundly in their first few weeks, as they will after a few months. In a very real sense, you are exercising.

Although it's very different from resistance training to build biceps, triceps or any other ceps, you still have to put in the time, the training practice, to get to your goal.

And your goal is to just be. Sit in the quiet solitude of being.

Eventually, you will become one with your counting, and your breathing. You will become your breathing.

## **My mother still reminds me to do one thing at a time. And to do it well**

That is also a key principle in Zen Buddhism.

The principle applied to meditation is this: do all things to your utmost ability and concentrate only on the task in hand.

That translated into things in my growing up such as:

Always sit down to eat.

Don't talk while eating your meal.

Don't eat while listening to the radio or watching television.

That is, don't try to do two things at once.

Above all else, put all your effort, concentration and skills into whatever task you have.

Have you ever watched a young child at play?

They are a picture of Zen.

Every single atom of their being concentrated on one thing. At a time. Totally living in the moment.

That's what we're aiming for in this simple breathing meditation.

## **Variations on that meditation and relaxation theme**

So now all you have to do is practise how to meditate.

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## How to Meditate: Finding Your Path to Calm

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Many people have asked me over the years, what is the best way to meditate.

My answer is simple.

There is no best way.

There are literally thousands of different approaches to meditation. For me, the simplest is the best.

### **Deep diaphragmatic breathing is easy: your refresher course**

Breathing is the one thing that you've done most in your life. It is also something that you've done automatically.

Just as well too.

You also know that as soon as you feel under stress, the first thing that happens is that your breathing becomes quick and shallow.

Sometimes, when we are really terrified, as in a panic attack, we even hold our breath.

Fairly silly? Holding your breath. Let's start with an improvement on that shallow breathing.

I call it normal breathing – to differentiate it from deep breathing and breathing meditation.

### **Normal breathing.**

1. Gently and slowly inhale a normal amount of air through your nose, filling only your lower lungs.
2. Your stomach will expand while your upper chest remains still.
3. Exhale easily.

Continue this breathing pattern concentrating on filling only the lower lungs.

### **The Calming Breath**

This is the deep, diaphragmatic breathing that you will use when you feel any type of anxiety or panic. It's also breathing you practise every day to add to your store of calm and so that it can be immediately turned on when needed.

Like the normal breathing, this slows your heart rate and automatically brings about a sense of calm.

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### Breathing 101: or let's re-learn how to breathe like a baby

1. The first step is relatively easy. While you're re-training your body to breathe like a baby, some people advise that you lie on your back, with a pillow under your knees and a pillow under your head. In this position the diaphragm is not working against gravity, and you are not bringing any voluntary muscle into play just to balance and support your body.

The goal of diaphragmatic breathing, sometimes called abdominal breathing, or breathing coordination, is to get as much air **out** of your lungs as possible. So I want you to learn, or re-learn, to extend the exhalation, the breathing out, to its natural conclusion.

2. Make sure your jaw is loose. Check your body for other signs of tension. Before you start, make sure your teeth are not clenched and that you're comfortable.
3. Place your fingers gently on your stomach – about 2 inches or 4.5cms below your navel.



To check that you're breathing correctly, place your hands on your abdomen, just under your navel, fingers loosely interlocked. When you inhale, your abdomen should rise up, separating your hands. When you exhale, your abdomen will fall and your fingers will re-entwine.

4. Open your mouth and breathe in. You don't have to do all diaphragmatic breathing through your mouth. But at this point, it helps to keep your throat open.
5. Pause, and hold your breath while you count 1-2-3 out loud.
6. Exhale sloooooowly. Count quietly, almost in a whisper, while you breathe out as fully as you can, preferably to the count of 1-2-3-4-5-6 - or until the next breath comes.
7. Count quietly until the urge to inhale comes as a reflex – until you've exhaled so much that you're forced to breathe in, inhale.

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8. Continue in this manner.

### **Number one point about deep breathing: it's the EXHALATION that is most important**

Many people make the understandable mistake of thinking that the whole idea of diaphragmatic breathing is to take *as much air into* their lungs as possible. Almost like filling up a balloon.

In fact, the opposite is true.

Of course it's important to breathe in that life-supporting Oxygen. However, the big mistake in breathing is made on the OUT breath. We're so keen to fill up, to get more oxygen that we don't spend enough time really emptying out all that carbon dioxide.

So, the aim in this exercise is to **practise extending the exhalation**, the breathing out, as long as possible with sound, **but not by making an effort.**

You must never force the inhaling or exhaling. Just the fact of priming the diaphragm to make the sound when counting is enough.

You may eventually be able to get to a count of 40 or 50 when you're exhaling but that is not your goal.

*Your goal is to relax.*

While you are counting, you can make sure that the diaphragm is rising. Once you feel that you know the difference between real diaphragmatic breathing and more shallow breathing, you can do these breathing exercises sitting or standing.

### **Practise this standing up too**

Stand up. Place your hands on your tummy just below your navel. Let the tips of the fingers of each hand touch.

Now, concentrate on breathing deep into your abdominal area. Feel the finger tips of each hand separating as you breathe in. Note that your shoulders are not rising up. That only happens when you do your shallow, unhelpful, breathing which makes you feel more and more distressed.

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Hold that deep breath for the count of five. Think only 'c a l m i n g'.

Breathe slowly out, whilst thinking 'c a l m i n g'. Alternatively, you can count 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8.

### When to practise diaphragmatic breathing

When you're first learning and re-learning how to breathe deeply, I suggest that you practise the calming breath about **ten times each day**. Build it into your normal routine in some way. For instance if you do a lot of work at the computer, build the Calming Breath practice into your little break time – you do remember to get up every twenty minutes for a stretch, don't you? It will develop your deep breathing to a point where it is automatic. Deep breathing will optimise the benefits of your physical stretches. I think that's called win/win.

If you do other work – as a tradesperson, a parent with a couple of small children, a police officer, a lecturer or a doctor – regardless of the sort of work you do, try to make sure that you build the routine of practising this deep, replenishing breathing into your normal day.

### How to fit in ten practice Calming Breaths each day

If you could practise as soon as you feed the children their breakfast, or immediately on arrival at the workplace; then at morning break, lunch time and afternoon break, and before setting out to pick up the older child from school or before leaving work to head for home.

That's five times a day without any extra effort.

Add in once before leaving for work, once when arriving home, and once at bedtime and you have almost done the ten times a day. I am certain that when you work out a routine that suits you, it will be very easy to methodically and relentlessly practise each and every day. See it as a great habit to form. And it's one that has so many benefits you will be glad to develop it.

Even when it's second nature to you, it's still important to keep up the practice. The best time to practise is the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night. You should also prime your breathing before you start making physical demands – running a race, swimming, singing, or speaking in public.

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If you do your deep, diaphragmatic breathing the last thing before bed, it will be very relaxing. You'll notice in less than a week that you're sleeping better. That way, you'll waken more rested and refreshed, with more energy and vitality for your life.

**Breathing deeply and properly is something you can easily relearn.**

One of the immediate benefits is that it is automatically calming. In fact:

**It is impossible to feel anxiety and panic while you are breathing deeply and well.**

Other books you've read, or lectures you've heard, tell you that you should use deep breathing when you feel anxiety coming on. Or when you're in the middle of a panic attack.

That's fine. You should do that.

However, what I am saying here is quite different.

**I'm saying that from now on, you will consciously build deep breathing into your life. It'll be a tool that you can use to knock anxiety on the head when it appears inappropriately.**

**The much more important point I want to make is this: the more your body breathes well and properly, the less chance anxiety has of even getting to it.**

When you really commit yourself to breathing properly, you will automatically have a way of life that makes it difficult for feelings of anxiety to happen. With proper deep, diaphragmatic breathing, you will be automatically more relaxed all the time. That happens whether you set out to be more relaxed or not. That's what deep breathing does. Automatically.

Now that you're on the path to re-programming your mind, each and every day for the next six weeks you will be practising genuinely deep breathing.

Enjoy.