



# AcuBalance

Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine



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*“Empty your mind, be formless, be shapeless - like water. Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup, you put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle, you put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”*

## Introduction

- Meditation: The direct experience with one's mind
- Numerous benefits: physiological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual
- If one focuses the mind on any neutral stimulus, the mind will then become cleared of ruminating thought leading to more efficient functions of mind body and spirit
- This is done by the integration of environment, breath, posture, and a chosen form of meditation
- There are 3 core classifications of meditation:
  - Concentrative – focusing the mind on a neutral stimulus such as the breath, a word, or an object (like Transcendental/TM and Zen Meditation)
  - Mindfulness – pioneered by John Kabat-Zinn, involves sitting quietly and letting the mind wander and taking into consideration all the thoughts and sensations your mind perceives; experiencing every moment to its fullest capacity and absorbing all sensory information involved in each moment
  - Guided– focus on the cultivation of a specific intention, such as compassion (Lovingkindness), or doing visualizations with specific intentions (visualizing a happy place). This is similar to guided imagery, autogenics, and self-hypnosis)
  - Somatic – focus is on integrating the body and mind to cultivate physical and mental strength (yoga, tai chi, athletic endurance, martial arts etc)

## Step 1: Creating your environment

- At the foundation of all relaxation is the environment that you are in
- Start with a clean room free of mess and clutter
- Turn off all electronics (except if you want to play soft music in the background)
- Wear comfortable clothing

## Step 2: Breath

- Thoracic (chest) breathing, although habitual, does not utilize maximum lung capacity and thus prevents optimal nourishment received in oxygen absorption
- In order to utilize maximum lung capacity, we must engage in Diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing which originates in the stomach and diaphragm.
- In a standing position, place your hands on your stomach and take a deep breath in through your nose and feel your stomach and diaphragm inflate for four seconds. Hold for seven seconds. Exhale out your nose slowly and steadily for eight seconds (4-7-8)
- Repeat three times and notice the difference in your body and mental state

## Step 3: Posture

- Sit cross legged, back erect and chin in and up (imagine having it pushed in and then having the top of our head pulled up by a string)
- Your head should be directly over your spine
- Your shoulders should be wide and chest expanding out to promote breathing

- Palms up lying comfortable on your thighs or clasped together on your lap
- If this is uncomfortable, start by leaning against a wall for support until you feel comfortable supporting yourself (it is more important that your posture is correct even if you are using external support)
- Laying down, or sitting erect in a chair is also fine – just do what is most comfortable for you 😊

### **Mindfulness Meditation**

- Awareness meditation involves the direct practice of mindfulness and is used primarily to increase focus and vitality in your current environment – the moment of “now”
- Once the subject has attained a satisfactory posture and breath pattern, we will turn our attention to our environment
- Start by thinking about all the external sensations felt by your body, experience each sensation to its fullest potential before you move on
  - Sounds
  - Smells
  - Tastes
  - Feelings
- Now do an internal body scan, starting from your toes and working your way up to your head
  - How does each body part feel? Don't try to change anything, just become aware of it
  - If you wish, note the parts that are tense, and try to relax them
- Now just allow your gaze to focus on the blackboard of your mind (eyes closed) and allow the thoughts to run by you
- With each thought, try to just think about what each thought is saying without allowing yourself to become involved with the thought
- Allow each thought to fly through your mind, noting each thought for as long as you can
- When you feel comfortable, open your eyes and think about how your body feels and your level of awareness.

### **Transcendental Meditation**

- Again, establish posture and take a few deep breaths to relax your body
- Try to release any tension by doing a quick body scan
- First think of a *mantra* which is any word, object, or image that induces neutral affect (om is the most popular mantra, but any syllable will work)
  - A common mantra for self-esteem is “I AM” pairing the “I” with the inhale and the “AM” with the exhale without attaching any descriptors to the I AM – but just simply becoming aware of your existence.
- Repeat this word to yourself either in your mind or out loud
- Whenever a thought comes, allow it to come in your field of awareness
- Gently bring your attention back to the *mantra*
- The key is not to “try” to focus on anything, but to allow your mind to be free and detach ourselves from our thoughts, which will relax our mind and reduce the rapid cycle of thoughts

### **Other Types of Meditation**

- Going for a mindful walk
- Focusing on the breath/breath counting (see breathwork exercises)
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (see handout)**