

What is Meditation?

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In its simplest description, meditation can be described as a process of quieting your mind so that you can come in contact with the peace and quiet that is available to you inside, underneath everyday thinking and mind chatter. This peace and quiet is always there and meditation helps us find it.

A metaphor often used to describe meditation is the ocean. You can think of your habitual everyday thoughts like the waves and your greater consciousness like the ocean. When you meditate it is as if the waves are experiencing the ocean. Here you can experience yourself in a different way and have the opportunity to connect with a sense of peace and the underlying truth of who you really are.

Meditation is primarily an experience – you can talk about it, but to really get it, to really understand it, you have to practice it. Because once you practice meditation you are led to a place inside where you experience something other than your everyday thoughts. This is why, when you open your eyes after meditation, it is very common for everything to look fresh and new, at least for a moment or two.

The Yoga sutras, which are the seminal text of yoga tell us the following “Yogas chitta vritti narodha” which means *Yoga is the cessation of thought waves*. This is not to say that you stop thinking or become unconscious, it means that the mind chatter stops and you connect with something deeper inside.

And then the sutras go on to say: “Tada drastuh swarupe’ vasthanam” which translates to: *Then the seer abides in their own true consciousness* - in their own true nature.

This is important to know because ultimately this is where meditation takes you – into peace and your own true nature.

The word meditation itself, is derived from two Latin words: meditari which means to think, to dwell upon, to exercise the mind, and mederi, to heal. Its Sanskrit derivation 'medha' means wisdom.

A common method of meditation involves a mantra or point of focus. It is interesting to note that the word mantra, means to protect, as in protect the mind.

As you might imagine there are many benefits that come from meditating including:

- Enhanced creativity
- Reduced symptoms of stress - life becomes a little easier – we don't sweat the small stuff so much
- Lowered respiratory rate
- Blood flow is increased and the heart rate slows
- Leads to a deeper level of relaxation
- Lowered blood pressure
- Reduced anxiety
- Decreased muscle tension (any pain due to tension) and headaches.
- Enhanced self-confidence.
- Helps in chronic diseases like allergies, arthritis, etc. and reduces pain overall.
- Enhanced immune system.
- Connects us to our spirit and the larger whole

To learn more about meditation and experience the many benefits for yourself check out our audio program *Meditation, Finding Peace & Quiet Inside* at www.letsdoyoga.com.

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