

# Meditation

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Barriers and Obstacles

# Doubts

- It's too easy or too hard
- It is a religion
- I will have to give up the things I like
- It is like being hypnotized
- It is a way of escaping reality
- It is shutting out the world
- You have to go to a monastery
- It's weird
- You need a teacher
- There is a right way and a wrong way
- It cuts you off from the rest of your life



# It's too easy or too hard

- It is easy
  - Watching breath is easy
  - Maintaining focus for a long time is more difficult
  - How has 15min. been?
- It is difficult
  - Our minds will wander a lot at the beginning
  - Our minds can be like a little child when it gets bored
    - It wants to go off and do what it wants to do
  - Always **gently** bring our minds back to where we want them
    - And we should accept our minds for what they are
    - The more we practice the better our focus will be

# It is a religion

- Meditation is not a religion – it is a practice
- All religions have their own form of meditation or contemplation
- We don't need a religion to meditate
  - An atheist can get the full the physical, mental and emotional advantages from meditation
  - An atheist can also feel a connection with other people and the universe



# I will have to give up the things I like

- Meat
  - Alcohol
  - Red pepper or jalapeno peppers
  - Cigarettes
  - K<sub>1</sub>
  - Coffee
  - TV
  - Horror movies
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- We don't have to give anything up.
  - We may discover that we want some of them less than before.

# It is like being hypnotized

- Hypnosis is being deep in a trance – not in control of our minds
  - In meditation we are absolutely aware of our minds and what they are doing.
- If we feel we are in a trance or have no sense of anything, watch that state. Observe it and let it pass.
- Do not try to find that feeling again.
- If we feel a special state of mind, that is fine
- If we do not, that is fine too. We are not trying to create a state of mind.



# It is a way of escaping reality

- Meditation is the opposite of escaping reality
- When we meditate we are trying to penetrate deeply into reality – we are trying to perceive reality
- And, as we develop our focus, as we sharpen our minds, we will do better in all other parts of our lives
- We will also be happier

# It is shutting out the world

- It is helpful to have a quiet place but we are not shutting out the world
- We are focusing on the present moment inside ourselves and in our environment
- We accept the world we are in right now
- With practice, we can meditate anywhere
- I have found that sometimes my focus is better on a very windy day or a day that there is environmental “white noise”



# You have to go to a monastery

- You don't have to go to a monastery or high up a mountain
- It is more difficult to develop meditation practices in the middle of a busy city, but the rewards are greater
  - We can learn more

# It's weird

- It is weird. It is strange.
- How many of your friends are meditating?
- Do you think it is a good thing or a bad thing?
- Why don't your friends do it?
  
- Thomas Keating in *The Heart of the World* asks....
- Have you ever had a few moments of transcendence?
- Have you ever experienced a few moments of interior silence?  
What was it like?
  
- He believes that “the repeated experience of interior silence is a need that everyone has in order to be fully human.”
- He says, “it is normal to be contemplative, it just needs to be cultivated.”



# You need a teacher

- Having a teacher is good....
  - Having a community to meditate with is good too....
  - It is not a requirement.
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- When you need a teacher one will appear.
  - Hello!!!!

# There is a right way and a wrong way

- There is no ONE right way to meditate
  - There are many ways and they are all good
- The best way to meditate is the way that feels good or right for you.
- If someone tells you that their way is the only way to meditate, be very skeptical, dubious, doubtful



# It cuts you off from the rest of your life

- Meditation is a practice that we do to train our minds.
- We will use our trained minds in our daily lives.
- It is a problem if we cut the meditating us from our every day us.
- As we practice, we should carry our meditative minds into our every day activities.
  - Being fully awake and aware when:
    - Brushing our teeth
    - Washing the dishes
    - Eating
    - Listening and talking to our friends



# Ptifalls

1. Spiritual materialism
  1. Collecting spiritual experiences or knowledge to feel better about ourselves or to make ourselves look more important
2. Stink of Zen
  1. Pride in and bragging about our accomplishments
3. Rush for results
  1. Meditation, like English, takes a lifetime of practice.
4. Spiritual window-shopping
  1. When you try something new, give it time really try to live it
5. Spiritual highs
  1. Any different state of mind or spirit can be a distraction if we are looking for them or expecting them
6. Nothing is real
  1. We still have our daily lives to live. Homework, laundry, jobs
7. Everything is destiny or fate
  1. What we experience now may be a result of past actions, but the but we must focus on accepting NOW, the past no longer exists
8. Seeking miracles
  1. Trying to fly, or walk on water.... It's not worth the time.
9. Looking for signs and secrets
  1. Trying to find the secret meaning of things, or find signs is a distraction to what is actually happening right now



# Avoiding Pitfalls

- Follow your heart
  1. Sit quietly
  2. Allow any subject of concern or behavior to surface
  3. Ask your heart, “What is the truth?”
  4. Wait for the mental “click” (or “aha moment”) when you reach the truth.
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Follow the middle way
- The final authority is YOU