

MEDITATION

Research has shown meditation to be a very effective way to reduce stress and promote recovery from illness. There are four kinds of meditation:

- *Concentration-based meditation* involves focusing your mind on a particular word, phrase, or image.
- *Mindfulness meditation* requires you to pay attention to a particular aspect of your experience, such as your breathing.
- *Insight-oriented meditation* invites you to ponder philosophical questions that are relevant to the way you live your life.
- *Guided meditation*, also called visualization or guided imagery, involves following a specific script or set of instructions, like imagining yourself going for a walk on a beach.

Concentration-based meditation is one of the first kinds of meditation to try because it helps train you to focus your mind and ignore distracting thoughts. It also is something that you can do independently without a guide or leader. *Concentration-based meditation* has four parts:

1. Quiet environment

2. Relaxed and comfortable posture

3. Anchor word, phrase, or image (You need to select a word, phrase, or image that you will keep in your mind during the meditation. You may choose a word like “Relax” or “Peace,” or you may select a phrase, such as part of a prayer. Alternatively, you might choose an image, such as visualizing a soothing color. Regardless of what you select, you will use it to anchor your mind during the meditation by repeating the word or phrase silently in your mind or focusing on the anchor image. In choosing an anchor, the only requirement is that it should be emotionally neutral for you. So, for example, you would not pick a word like “Exam” or “Death.”)

4. Passive attitude towards distracting thoughts (During the meditation, your mind will wander away from your anchor. You will find yourself being distracted by other thoughts. When this happens, simply think “Oh, well” and return to your anchor word, phrase, or image. Do not judge or criticize yourself for being distracted. Simply redirect your attention to your original anchor.)



CONCENTRATION-BASED MEDITATION GUIDE

- 1. Select an appropriate anchor word, phrase, or image.**
- 2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.**
- 3. Close your eyes.**
- 4. Take three deep, relaxing breaths.** As you inhale, feel your stomach and your rib cage expand. When you exhale, feel yourself relaxing into your posture and connecting to the floor, ground, and earth beneath you.
- 5. Gently bring your anchor word, phrase, or image to mind.** Silently repeat your anchor word or phrase. If you are using an image, focus on the color or scene.
- 6. Maintain a passive, nonjudgmental attitude towards distracting thoughts.** When you discover that your mind has wandered, simply think “Oh, well” and return to your anchor.
- 7. Continue for 10 – 20 minutes.**

In order to realize the long-term physiological benefits of meditation, it is suggested that you meditate once or twice daily. Of course, meditation can be used on an “as needed” basis to reduce stress and nervousness. However, such use might not produce long-lasting benefits to your overall health.

