

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES TO MEDITATION

Like learning any new skill, the cultivation of mindfulness through meditation requires time and practice. Unfortunately, people often become discouraged when they try to implement a program of meditation. Common obstacles to meditation include the following:

- Failure to schedule a consistent time and place for meditation
- Feelings of discouragement when relaxation & mindfulness do not come quickly
- Failure to prioritize meditation as an important activity
- Inability to find a suitable place
- Thinking you are too tired, too stressed, or too busy



In order to overcome such obstacles, it is necessary to (1) determine the reason(s) underlying your desire to meditate, (2) devise a plan for meditation, and (3) cultivate commitment to follow through with your plan. First, you should consider why you want to start meditating. Is it to reduce stress? Improve concentration or mindfulness? Devote time to helping yourself? Try a centuries-old relaxation technique with innumerable health benefits? It does not matter what specific reason(s) you have. However, it will be important to recall the reason(s) when you find your motivation waning.

A second way to overcome obstacles to meditation is to develop a concrete plan. As stated by popular author Bill Phillips in his book, *Body for Life*, “if you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.” Accordingly, devise a specific schedule for meditation that includes the following elements: **hour of day, place, kind of meditation, duration & frequency of sessions, meditation accompaniments (e.g., music, meditate with friend, etc.), and length of your program (e.g., 1 week or 1 month).**

Finally, you will need to commit yourself to following your meditation schedule, regardless of your mood, the weather, the TV listings, etc. Remember your rationale for meditation. Establish a reward for the completion of your meditation program. Also, know that the meditation itself will become rewarding and self-reinforcing over time.

A couple tips:

- Most people find it helpful to have some verbal guidance through the use of a CD, mp3 download, or attendance at a group meditation session.
- Generally speaking, it is easier to meditate in the morning, before your mind really starts going.
- Enlist the help of your friend or partner and meditate together. If you're a parent with a baby or small child, you might want to “take turns” meditating while your partner cares for your child, and vice versa.