

Tending Your Inner Garden®

Meditation as a Spiritual Practice

When you cultivate stillness in your life, your heart's true desires will begin to sprout. Some people may think of meditation as a structured ritual; in truth, it is time to quiet your mind in whatever way works best for you.

HELPFUL HINTS Begin by setting aside 15 or 20 minutes each day. Find a comfortable place to sit. Turn off the phone and remove any other distractions. Relax. Focus on each part of your body. Let your feet relax. Your ankles. Your calves. Your thighs. You get the idea. Work your way all the way to the top. Feel your jaw go slack. Your eyes droop. Your forehead release tension.

Direct your mind to a word, an image or a feeling. Some people select a simple word like "peace," "love" or "one." Or imagine a babbling brook or a feeling of warmth. Empty your mind of thoughts. Don't be surprised if they keep returning. "Am I doing this correctly?" "Did I pay the mortgage?" "What was that noise?" Don't be disappointed. The mind takes a while to quiet. When the thoughts arise, simply acknowledge them and let them go. Pretend they are leaves you release down that babbling brook. Watch them go by without judgment.

Note the stillness within you. That stillness IS you, the essence of who you are, the spirit that makes you unique. Observe your breath, inhaling, exhaling. Do this without any expectations or goals in mind other than to experience yourself as a living human being with an inner world that belongs only to you.

If images or insights arise that seem powerful and intense, note them later in your journal. They hold clues to what you really desire in life.

REASONS FOR STILLNESS Regular meditation will build a strong inner core. You will know that whatever happens to you, you can go to this quiet place and find peace. As you gather experience in quieting the mind, you can do this anywhere—waiting in line at the grocery store, taking a walk, doing the dishes.

