

Different Meditations

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Meditation with subject

In this type of meditation, focus with closed eyes on the subject of your choice and tune out all other thoughts. You are in a quiet and deep state of contemplation. Your thought is dwelling in your head.

This is the easiest and most common form of meditation. There are many different subjects you can focus on:

- Listen to slow soft music with a pair of headphones. Concentrate and try to comprehend the music and its lyrics. Feel yourself as part of the music. Nothing in your surroundings matter. Relax and enjoy the art. Your meditation releases your physical and mental stress.
- Surrender to your faith or to your philosophical belief. In your mind you are prostrated in front of the One, the Path or the Tao. Concentrate and sincerely pray to the subject you are dedicated or think deeply into a particular teaching. Purify your heart. Be humble. No other thoughts can interfere with you. With your placid heart, establish your communication. Be closer to your faith.
- Think about someone. Someone who you love the most or who is very important in your life. Someone who is apart from you a long distance away. Or, a person who you had known a long time ago and you still care for. Or someone who has already passed away. Replay in your mind the time you shared together; refresh your memory. Try to remember the details of the person who is no longer with you. Never let those memories fade away. Be positive. No sadness, regret, penance; no fantasy and no mirage. Your meditation makes your heart fill up with love. Create a bridge to the person you lost contact with or is no longer with you.
- Focus on a project that you are working on or a problem you are trying to solve. Clear your mind and converge to the issue. You will not allow other thoughts to disturb your thinking. Look into the issue from different angles during your meditation. Think logically. Be calm. No frustration. Try to approach a solution.

When you are pondering on your subject, do not let other thoughts or environmental disturbances affect you. When you feel that your meditation session should end tell yourself that it is time to exit. Gradually depart from the contemplation mode.

Meditation with subject is a process of deep thinking and relaxation. It relieves stress and may produce positive results for your health. But since its focus is fixed in your head or mind and has nothing to do with the stimulation of your internal Chi, the vital energy, this form of meditation does not involve the Chi's flow to different parts of your body.

Passive meditation

With the guidance of certain music or tranquil instructions, gradually slide yourself into a hypnotic meditation state.

Unlike the previous form of meditation, the practitioner of passive meditation lacks self-control. His/her mind is always laced with the person who is in control of the session, influenced by pre-programmed music, preaching or instructions. Conditioned by this kind of procedure, the only way the practitioner can achieve mediation is by depending on someone else. This kind of meditation is a kind of hypnosis, a pseudo-meditation.

Meditation with empty mind

There are many styles of meditation focusing on the empty mind. Traditional Chinese Meditation, which the author has been practicing, is one of them. This type of meditation is more complicated than the type that focuses on a fixed subject. Some of these forms of meditation are influenced by Taoist or Buddhist teachings, or by other religions and philosophies. Some practices are more tied to Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Contrary to the normal breathing that is used during subject-oriented meditation reverse breathing is used in empty-minded meditation. Gradually master reverse breathing during this meditation. Learn the ways that physical breathing interacts with the mind and the Chi's movement. When you move to a higher level of meditation, ankle breathing and body breathing will take place.

A very basic knowledge of acupuncture points and channels or meridians, which is part of Chinese Traditional Medicine, should be obtained before starting. In this kind of meditation, a different focusing area (Dan Tian) is used for concentration depending on your skill level.

(For more information on Dan Tian see "Dan Tian and Channels" on this web site: <http://hsvtaichi.com/DanTianAndChannels.pdf> or *Chinese Traditional Meditation, Calm and Moving*, Author House. <http://www.authorhouse.com>)

Empty your mind while inhaling; focus on Dan Tian while exhaling. You will learn how to build up the strength of your internal Chi and to perform different meditation routines. You will also learn the skill to stimulate the Chi's movement, uniting your postnatal and congenital Chi into the One and therefore improving your health condition.

At the beginning it is very difficult to maintain an empty mind state. Many techniques can be used to unburden the mind. Meditation with a subject, which was mentioned earlier, is often used as a "warm up" stage before switching to the empty mind meditation.

There are various body positions for different meditation skill levels and styles. Do not create your own. Follow the teaching. There are things that you should pay attention to and things that you should not do.

During meditation, as your skills advance and when the trance condition is reached, different sensations and visuals may come to you. This is normal. There are ways to cope with them. Keep calm and do not panic or become overjoyed. It is very important that no expectations are set before practicing or learning.

Fasting is part of meditation practice. It occurs as your mind practice is elevated to certain levels and should not be artificially forced. Your body knows when you need to fast and will let you know. Learn the ways to safely maintain and enjoy the fasting period. It is a self-cleansing and purification process.

Meditation with Tai Chi

Tai Chi is a type of slow moving martial arts. Some people call it an inner martial arts, as with the Ba Gua, Xing Yi and other styles of martial arts. In addition to fulfilling its martial arts functions, the inner martial arts emphasizes combining the practice of the inner Chi and philosophical beliefs, as well as the harmony between the moving and the calm to achieve better health.

Different styles of Tai Chi have their own martial arts "flavor" and routines. Each routine consists of many postures and moving elements that all have their own martial arts meanings and applications. Tai Chi has its own way of playing. Slowing down a fast moving martial arts cannot be called Tai Chi. Likewise, practicing a meaningless combination of slow movements cannot be called Tai Chi. Each posture's martial arts background has to be understood, then your play can be alive.

To meditate with Tai Chi, which will eventually become a major part of your Tai Chi practice, is different than Calm Meditation when your body is in a fixed position (sitting or lying down) and not moving. Play the Tai Chi movements in the way they are supposed to be played. Have firm and stable stands and footwork. Understand which of them should be solid or empty. Your waist, arms and hands are always relaxed. Release tense and stiff muscles; follow your mind. Every strike or defense function originates from your feet and legs but is commanded by your waist (Dan Tian). Upper body actions are always synchronized with lower body movements. Execute the correct way of weight shifting and position turning. Your physical movement is always in harmony with the intent in your mind. Movement and calm constantly transfer to each other.

Your focus neither dwells in your head nor is set at the Dan Tian area. Your attention constantly follows from your posture movement with their martial arts intention. You focus on your "Target Zone" or "Strike Radius" and never stare at any single point of your "opponent." Different from fast styles of martial arts, Tai Chi tailors your movements into a graceful, rhythmical and powerful play, like the music performed by a skillful violinist or a flowing river. Fluid Tai Chi movements with an empty mind let your Chi sink into your Dan Tian, stimulating it to all of its channels inside your body. You are in a dynamic meditation. These physical and mental exercises improve your health condition. Tai Chi play functions as a self-healing process.

*In holding your soul and embracing Oneness,
Can you be undivided?
In focusing your energy and reaching relaxation,
Can you yield as an infant?
In clearing your mind,
Can you be without imperfections?*

---Tao Den Jing, Lao Zi

Meditation has its long history across many cultures. It has been known for its power in martial arts, self-healing, religion, philosophy, divination, self-awareness and self-enlightenment. There is no short cut in your practice. With a qualified teacher, not necessarily a piece of certification paper, it takes long years of practice, dedication and patience. But the reward is priceless.

Visit hsvtaichi.com for more information about the author and his Tai Chi class.