

## Quieting Your Mind for Meditation

We all live very busy lives, trying to balance work, home and fun. There are tasks at work to complete, appointments to schedule, appointments to keep, people to call, tasks at home, partners to catch up with and love, our own health to care for, friends and family to see and care for, etc. Add children and pets and there are entirely new lists of additional things to do. With the extensive to do lists that come with our lives, we also have very busy minds.

Meditation helps us take a break from all the busyness and stress that can accompany life, even when everything we are doing brings us joy.

Meditation allows us to put aside all the “stuff” and take a break. This is done by clearing your mind of all the things you are currently keeping track of and focusing on something that would be helpful to you at that moment. For example, if you are coming home from work and want to transition from work to home before you meet up with your spouse/partner or kids, you may pull over a few miles away from where you will see them and meditate for a few minutes. If you are anxious about presenting at a business meeting, you may meditate for a few minutes before going in. If you are having a lot of feelings about a negative interaction with a loved one or about a positive event you are awaiting with great anticipation, you may meditate a bit to calm yourself down before taking the next necessary step. In each of these scenarios, you will be able to move forward with a clearer mind and a calmer center.

### CLEARING YOUR MIND

For most people, the hardest part of meditation is quieting or clearing their minds. Here are a few tricks to help you with this:

1. Once you have decided how you will meditate (see handout on the Physical Approach to Meditation) begin by intentionally putting aside all that has been occupying your mind. Many find this difficult but it is possible.
2. Because it is hard to keep your mind from going back to all that you have been thinking about, many find it helpful to focus their mind on a neutral, positive, calming, and/or comforting thought. This may be one word or an entire phrase that is repeated for the duration of your meditation. For example, some focus their mind on the word “peace” and try to spread a peaceful feeling throughout their body. Some may focus on a reassuring phrase before doing something they are nervous about, such as “you have prepared well and know what you will say.” Some focus on a prayer, poem or saying that is helpful to them. Whatever you choose to focus on, make sure it will be helpful and positive for your current mood and/or situation.
3. If you find yourself leaving your meditation and reverting back to your busy mind, don’t give up! This is very common so you have not failed at meditating. Simply notice what you are doing and begin again.