

# Instinct Yoga



## An introduction to meditation

I try to make the concept of meditation as simple as possible. For me, meditation is about quieting the mind, getting me to a place of calm - shutting out all the extraneous chatter and noise. Once I have arrived at that place I can think more clearly and I feel that I am in control of my mind rather than my mind being continually distracted by thoughts and ideas. I can be quiet and relaxed there.

### What do you do when you meditate?

Meditation is remarkably simple, although it can take a little practice to get used to it. The basis of meditation is focussing your mind, either on an object, a thought or a phrase. By

focussing on one thing, you shut out everything else – and gradually with that single pointed focus your mind becomes more clear and calm. As I hold this focus, gradually I have a sense of the chatter in my mind becoming quieter and gradually fading away and as the minutes pass, the focus becomes sharper and I become more relaxed and immersed in the meditation.

### **Prerequisites of Meditation**

In order to meditate, it is important to find a quiet place where there are no disturbances and where you can be warm and comfortable. Meditation is possible in a variety of positions, standing, lying, or sitting. It is important to choose a posture that is sustainable, holding the body still and comfortable for several minutes at a time.

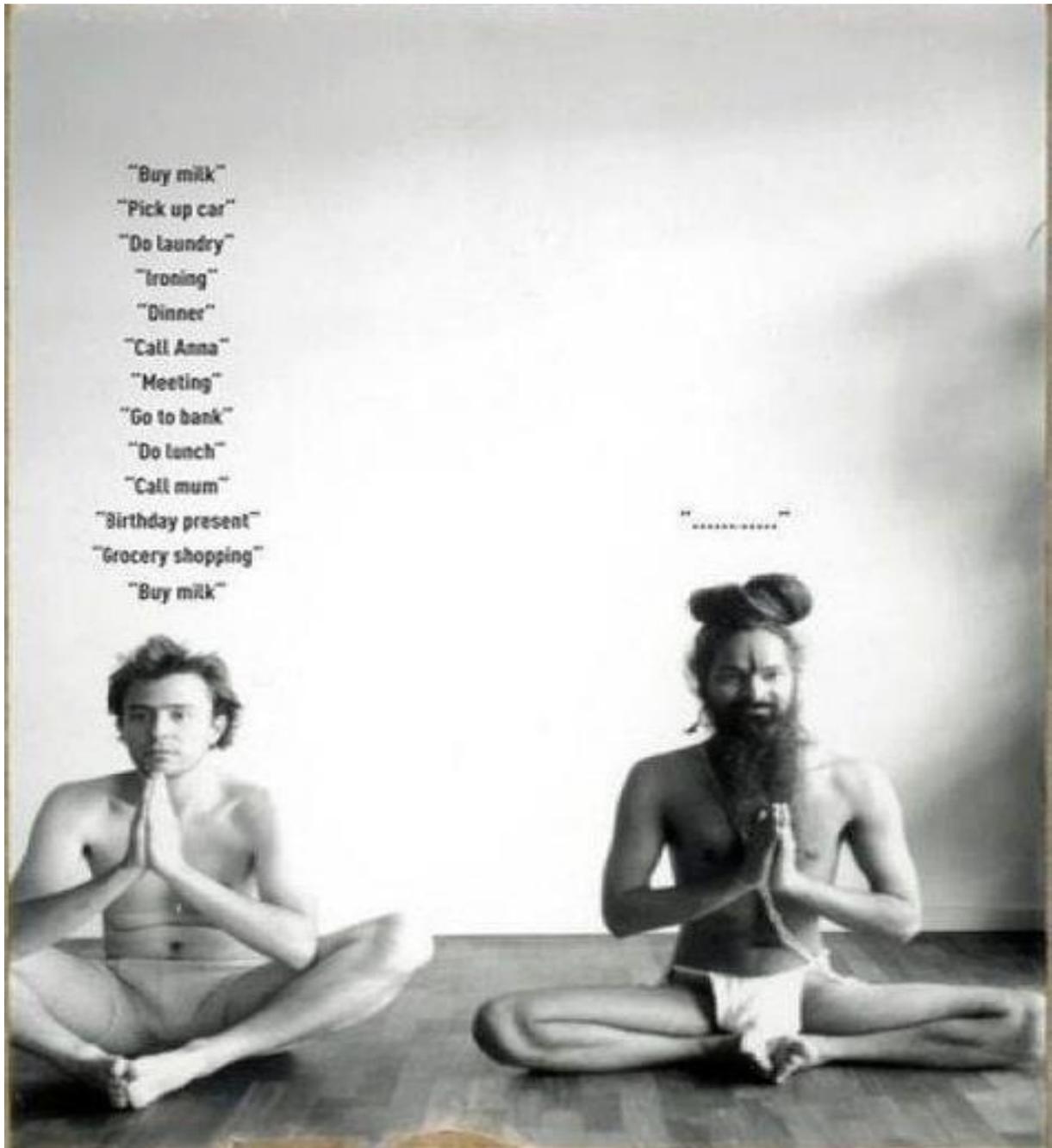
It is important to ensure that there is sufficient time for meditation practice. It helps to build meditation into our daily routines, establishing a regular time and place for meditation. Some people choose to set up a special place in which they can meditate with objects that have a particular meaning for them, upon which they can focus their attention during meditation.

### **How to Meditate – Single Pointed Meditation – Focus on the Breath**

As an introduction to meditation, we'll use the breath as our focus.

- i. Find a comfortable position, preferably with the spine erect in which you'll be comfortable for 10 minutes or so. Rest one hand in the palm of the other, traditionally right hand on top of left.
- ii. Check around the body for tension and let it go, make sure the face is relaxed and you can breathe easily.
- iii. Keep your eyes open – let your eyes focus on a point in front of you, below eye level and let your focus soften.
- iv. Shift your attention to your breath and for a minute or so keep your mind focussed on breathing in and breathing out, watch the breath slowly slowing.
- v. When you are ready, start to count down from 20, counting on each out breath, simply focusing on the counting.
- vi. If your mind wanders, don't worry, just focus back on your counting – don't try to fight off stray thoughts, just acknowledge them and turn your mind back to your counting. If you need to start again, that's fine.
- vii. When you reach 0, just focus back on the breath, or start the counting process over again.

- viii. Check that the body is soft and relaxed – just keep the mind on the breath. Be aware of the continual chatter that takes place in our heads gradually becoming less and the mind becoming gradually clearer.
  
- ix. At the end of the meditation store away a memory of how the meditation has worked for you – hopefully, it has slowed the turmoil of our day-to-day mind, maybe taming the monkey mind a little, maybe stilling the ripples, making everything feel calmer, slower, more focussed.



For me, meditation is a two stage process. The first stage is the one that I've outlined, the process of slowing things down, getting in control of your mind and helping you to relax. It is on this that I really want to focus today. The second phase is all about what you do with your mind when you're in a meditative state. That is for another time.

## **Meditation and the Senses**

Meditation can involve all of our senses

### **i) Sight**

Using the sense of sight in meditation involves physically focusing the eyes and the mind on a visual image and using the concentration on that image as the foundation for the meditation practice. For me, focusing on a candle flame works well, although there are many other alternatives.

### **ii) Sound**

Using sound as a focus for meditation is common in virtually all creeds and religions where meditation of any kind is practiced. There are various approaches to the use of sound, it can involve music, it can involve a concentration on an inner sound and probably the most common approach involves the use of mantra as a focus for meditation.

### **iii) Touch**

A classic meditative technique involves the use of mala beads whilst chanting repetitively. Repetitive chanting is known as Japa. The sense of touch and sound are used together in this form of meditation which involves passing the mala beads through the fingers, whilst chanting or repeating mantra (either out loud or in your head).

### **iv) Breath**

Observation of the breath is an important meditative technique, probably practiced more than any other today, focussing on being aware of the breath entering and leaving the body. Use of the breath in meditation can be more structured by counting breaths in and breaths out and so on. Slowing the breathing and lengthening the out-breath bring the body's parasympathetic nervous system into play, relaxing the body, reducing stress and providing the ideal situation in which to meditate.

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