

MEDITATION MADE EASY

Experienced teacher Agnes offers gentle, encouraging ways to begin to relax our tense bodies and quieten our racing minds

Meditation has been used by cultures around the world for thousands of years.

What is meditation, you may ask? It can be described as being a specific state of awareness and consciousness. It is also about stilling the mind and focusing on one thing instead of many things. It is about focusing inwardly, not being distracted by external events and situations.

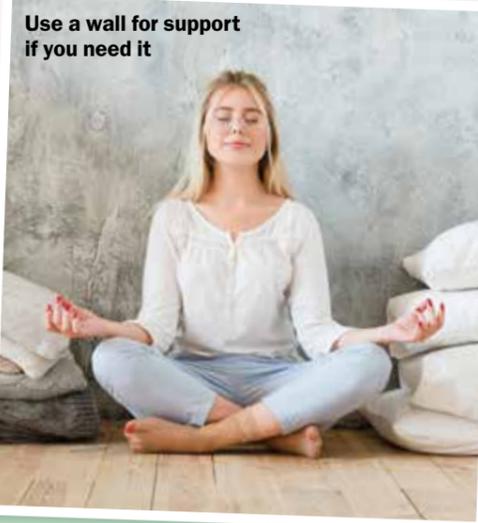
When we are fully awake and active our brain is in a beta brain wave state and when we are sleeping this changes

to delta brainwaves. In meditation, the aim is to go into alpha brain waves, which is the mid state of conscious calmness. When a person is in a deep meditative state, the brain waves change into theta and sometimes even gamma waves.

Like all new things, it can take practice to learn meditation, but there are lots of ways to do it. So don't be put off, and don't be scared to try different methods until you find something that suits you. Meditation is anything you want it to be!



Agnes T McCluskey is a teacher, intuitive, speaker and therapist. She runs energy and healing courses across the UK and Ireland. See www.colourenergytherapies.co.uk



Use a wall for support if you need it

Agnes' Expert Tips

It is best to try to find your own routine for meditation, either early in the morning when you get up or at night before going to bed.

We all lead busy lives these days and all have our own daily routines, so it is up to you to decide when, where and how! A regular practice can really help, but even if you only meditate occasionally, it will still have beneficial relaxing effects.

Start slowly and build up the time you meditate.

You don't need to be able to sit in the full lotus position to meditate effectively. Instead you can meditate sitting on a chair, using a meditation

Set a relaxing mood with candles or music



cushion or stool or sitting cross-legged. Try to keep your back straight. You may want to lean against a wall or something to help support you if you are sitting on the floor.

You can lie down if you want to, but you may fall asleep. This is not the same as meditating!

Find a place where you feel warm, comfortable and safe and ensure you are not going to be disturbed by anyone. Make sure phones, TVs, computers etc are switched off.

Prepare physically by wearing loose, comfortable clothing. You may want to have a blanket and some water nearby too.

Try to keep your back straight, but still relaxed so you are not tensing up muscles.

Use some suitable background music if you feel this will help you to relax. You may want to do something like lighting a candle, burning incense or using one of your favourite crystals.

If unwanted thoughts come

into your head, just try to let them go. The more you meditate, the easier it will be to still your mind. It's normal to think about other things when you first try meditating, so don't give up.

You may like to have a journal next to you so you can note down any insights, thoughts or feelings you may experience. Do this at the end of the session.

Make sure you are grounded at the end of the session. Imagine roots going down into the earth, or imagine yourself wearing red boots – it works! Have a drink of water and a snack if you still do not feel grounded.

Above all, practice makes perfect so try to meditate regularly, relax, and enjoy it!

The Many Benefits

- ◆ Reduces emotional tension
- ◆ Reduces muscle tension
- ◆ Reduces stress
- ◆ Promotes relaxation and calmness
- ◆ Improves sleep



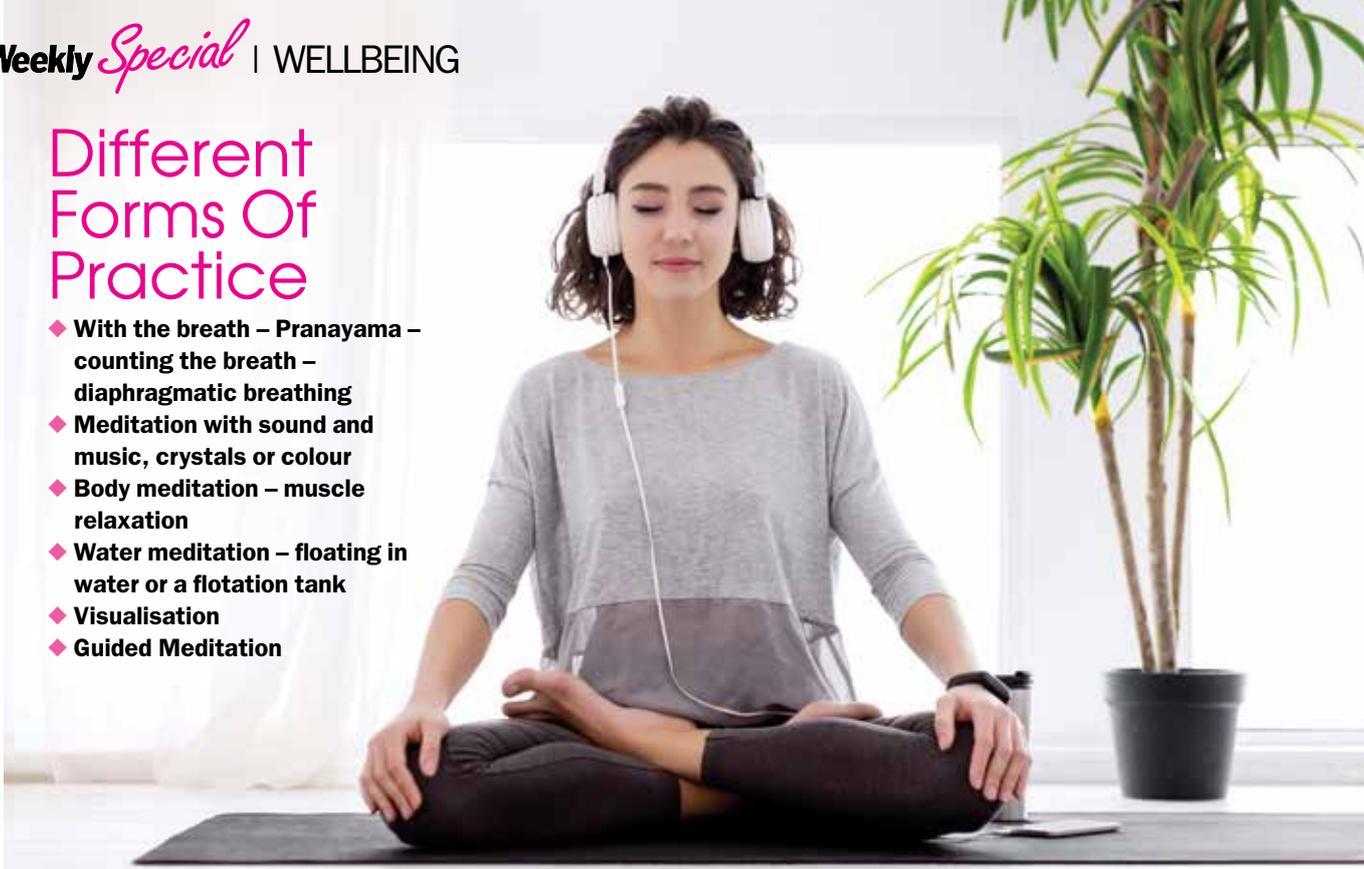
You may sleep more soundly

- ◆ Promotes deeper and slower breathing
- ◆ Enables more oxygen to be carried in the blood stream
- ◆ Improves circulation
- ◆ Slows the heart rate
- ◆ Lowers blood pressure
- ◆ Relieves headaches
- ◆ Improves concentration
- ◆ Improves self-awareness
- ◆ Improves energy levels
- ◆ Increases self esteem →



Different Forms Of Practice

- ◆ With the breath – Pranayama – counting the breath – diaphragmatic breathing
- ◆ Meditation with sound and music, crystals or colour
- ◆ Body meditation – muscle relaxation
- ◆ Water meditation – floating in water or a flotation tank
- ◆ Visualisation
- ◆ Guided Meditation



Here are some examples to help you get started!

Meditation with the Breath

This uses the breath as a focus for our attention and is a good basic technique to try when beginning to meditate. It is also great for relieving stress and anxiety.

Sit comfortably and close or half-close your eyes. Start to focus on the breath as it enters and leaves the body. What we are going to do is to start to count or mark each breath. This is done silently, in the mind.

We breathe in, breathe out and slip in a “1”. Breathe in, breathe out and slip in a “2”. Do this until you get to “10”, then mark the next breath with a “1” and repeat the count to “10”.

If your mind gets caught up with thoughts, or you lose track don't worry, just start again at 1.

We introduce a slight change at this stage. We are going to slip the numbers in before we take the in breath, rather than after the out breath.

What you are doing is almost anticipating the breath as it first enters your nostrils. Mark this with a “1”. Breathe in, breathe out. Count “2” just as your next in breath starts; breathe in, breathe out, and so on to “10”. Your breaths will vary and this is fine; let your breathing follow its own rhythm.

We can now drop the counting completely and instead we focus on the rhythm of the breath as it enters our body, filling our lungs before leaving again.

Observe and focus on the breath as it comes and goes. Just let your awareness flow with the breath, returning to it whenever thoughts arise.



Let your awareness flow with your breath

Body Meditation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One of the most obvious things to focus on when developing your practice is your body, but it can be difficult to tune into our physical self, as we take it so much for granted and get caught up in our mental world.

This meditation involves you systematically tensing and then relaxing the different muscle groups in the body. It will help raise awareness of what is going on in your body so you can counteract any tension. As your body relaxes, so will your mind.

You can combine this with deep breathing. This may take a bit of time to get used to, but keep practising as it is very beneficial.

- ◆ Sit comfortably wearing loose clothing.
- ◆ Take a few minutes to relax by focusing on your breathing in slow, deep breaths.
- ◆ When you are relaxed and ready to start, move your attention to your right foot. Take a moment to focus on how it feels.
- ◆ Slowly tense the muscles in your right foot, squeezing as tightly as you can. Hold for a count of five then relax your

right foot. Imagine the tension flowing away and your foot becoming loose and limp.

- ◆ Focus on your breath, breathing slowly and deeply.
- ◆ When you're ready, move your attention to your left foot and follow the same sequence, tensing and then relaxing the muscles and being aware of any tension slipping away in that area.

- ◆ Move slowly up your body, contracting and relaxing the muscle groups as you go.
- ◆ The suggested sequence is: Right foot – Left foot – Right calf – Left calf – Right thigh – Left thigh – Hips – Buttocks – Stomach – Chest – Back – Right arm – Right hand – Left arm – Left hand – Neck – Shoulders – Face.

There are many ways of meditating and this is just an introduction to some basic practices. I'd encourage you to explore meditation as part of your ongoing self-development and to help your own health and wellbeing.

There are many books and classes available that can help if you have a specific interest. Good luck and enjoy! 