

# Meditation can be an easy route to relaxation

By Mandy Kendall

Gone are the days when it was thought that in order to meditate you had to spend hours crossed legged on a hill somewhere in the middle of nowhere focusing on trying to relax.

Studies have shown that even just a few minutes of concentrating on something (pretty much anything that isn't stressing you out at that moment) can positively change your brain, increase your energy and reduce the physiological and damaging effects of stress on the body. So much so that meditation is being likened to going to the gym for your brain. Research is also suggesting that meditation can help reduce blood pressure and improve cellular health.

Meditation is like exercise. There is something for everyone and I highly recommend trying a few techniques to find one that fits you. There are no rules. You can sit, stand or lie down. You can have your eyes open or closed. You can say things in your head or out loud. You can listen to a guided meditation, be on your own or take a class ... whatever works for you.



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Like getting physically fit, meditation takes practice. It can

be frustrating at first but is ultimately worth every minute.

So, here are a few *Qwik-e* (quick and easy) meditation tips:

## **Visualizing**

**Your thoughts** – In this technique you do focus on the thoughts that crowd your mind. However, you visualize them as words or images drifting by on individual clouds. You don't judge them (or yourself) or rationalize them. You just let them drift on as you watch the next cloud float by. The intention here is to be an objective observer and not get emotionally involved.

**Fire** – For this one you can either sit in front of an actual fire or imagine you are. Then you imagine you are throwing whatever worries, or pieces of emotional baggage you want to get rid of into the fire and watch them disappear in smoke.

**Laughter** – Spending five to 10 minutes imagining humorous things that make you smile, or, even better, laugh out loud, can do wonders for your state of mind.

**Your happy place** – Imagine you are in a wonderfully serene place. Maybe it's somewhere you've been before or it could be a place you have made up in your imagination. Spend some time imagining how it feels, smells and sounds. If you visit this place in your mind often enough it can be an extremely good antidote to stressful situations, or even a great way to help yourself drift off to sleep.

## **Focusing**

**Candlelight** – Try focusing on a flame for as long as possible without letting any thoughts come into your mind. This definitely takes practice, but when a thought does drift or come barging into your head, just acknowledge it and then imagine it drifting away on a cloud without paying it any further attention.

**Working through a maze** – By totally distracting yourself with

a mundane task like navigating your way through a maze, you may find that your subconscious is able to reveal the solution to another problem you have been facing.

## **Breathing**

**Counting breathes** – This is a very simple way of focusing on something and helping preventing unwanted thoughts from entering your head. Just simply count each breath as it comes and goes. Imagine each number as you count, changing size and color and pattern with each number to really focus your thoughts.

**Accepting and releasing** – This is by far one of my favorite techniques. It's quick and easy and can be very effective at diffusing those tense moments when your emotional temperature starts rising and you need to let off some steam. The basic version is to simply breathe in thinking about accepting (maybe the situation you are in, anything or nothing ... whatever works for you) then as you breathe out just think about releasing (maybe the way you're feeling about the situation or anything at all). After a few breaths you should feel the stress pressure dropping. You can do this anywhere and no-one will be any the wiser. The more you do this the more you may find that seemingly unrelated thoughts pop into your head when thinking about accepting and releasing. However you might find that these thoughts may be at the root cause of the stress you are feeling.

Until next time.

*Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at [connect@healthconnective.com](mailto:connect@healthconnective.com) or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a*

*time.*