

Freeing the Human Spirit

...through meditation and yoga.

Meditation and Yoga Practice Guide

Remember to wear loose, comfortable clothing for your practice.



Centring: Lie down on your yoga mat, blanket or mattress with your arms by your side, palms facing up. Or sit in one of the seated positions above (or whatever seated position you can sit in comfortably for a while) with a firm cushion under your bottom to raise your hips above your knees. Begin by drawing your focus inwards and bringing your attention to your breath. As you breathe in, feel the belly rise and the lungs expand. And as you breathe out feel the belly fall and the lungs empty. When you feel calm and relaxed you may begin the yoga postures below.

Yoga Postures:



1) Knee Hug



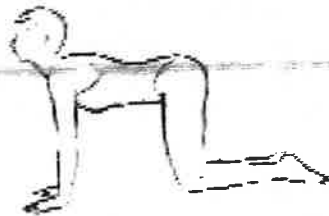
2) Simple Floor Twist



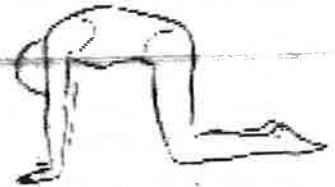
3) Half Bridge



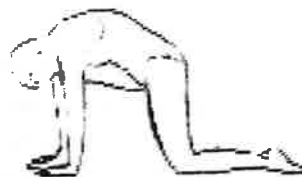
4) Little Boat



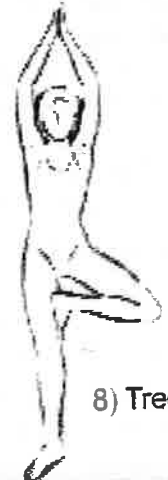
5) Moving Cow/Cat



6) Downward Facing Dog



7) Bent Knee Lunge



8) Tree

Meditation: Sit comfortably as in the "centring" above and breathe naturally through your nose, again watching the inhalations and exhalations. Sit tall, tuck your chin in slightly, and keep your eyes slightly open, resting on a spot on the floor about a metre from your nose. Place the back of your left hand in the palm of your right and keeping them open, touch the thumbs together to form an oval and turn them in slightly towards your body. Count each in-breath and out-breath up to ten. The first in-breath is 1, the first out-breath is 2, the second in-breath is 3, the second out-breath is 4, and so on. Once you have reached 10, go back to 1 and repeat counting.

Gradually you will realize that you are one with your breathing. Just sit and be the breathing. To "be the breath" is what we try to throughout the meditation, but since it is so subtle, it is sometimes difficult to maintain. Even long time sitters need to return to the counting now and then.

This sitting is called **Shikantaza** – just putting the breath gently in the nose and be-ing the breath... Like a drop of water entering the ocean, that is Shikantaza, the meditation supreme.

The best time for sitting is early in the day after some yoga practice. Beginners start with about 10 minutes and then gradually increase a few minutes at a time until the maximum 25 minutes is reached. If you'd like to sit another 25 minute be sure to do a 5-minute walking meditation before starting your second sit. To do this, stand and join your hands together by fisting your right hand and placing your left hand's open palm over your fist in front of your chest. Keeping your eyes cast down, walk slowly within the space available, continuing with your breath counting. Let your leg muscles and tendons flex gently and return blood flow to normal. This takes about 5 minutes.

You may want to try an **8-week program of Meditation like this:**

- Weeks 1 & 2: Count each in-breath and each out-breath as above
- Weeks 3 & 4: Just count the in-breaths to 10 and watch the out-breaths
- Weeks 5 & 6: Watch the in-breaths and count the out-breaths to 10
- Weeks 7 & 8: Don't count. Become one with each in-breath and out-breath.

Yoga silences the body. Meditation silences the mind.

Freeing the Human Spirit helps prisoners turn their lives around by using their cells as places of spiritual practice. The practice of yoga helps you become steady, calm, quiet and comfortable. Doing yoga improves your health and helps your body fight disease. Meditation helps us discover who we really are. We learn to feel better about ourselves and the world we live in. To help you with your practice we recommend the following books:

Becoming Free Through Meditation and Yoga

can be obtained by sending a written request to:
Freeing the Human Spirit
P.O. Box 65142
358 Danforth Ave.
Toronto, ON M4K 3Z2

We're All Doing Time

can be obtained by sending a written request to:
Human Kindness Foundation
P.O.Box 61619
Durham, NC U.S.A. 27715

Write to Us! Please write to us at Freeing The Human Spirit and let us know how your practice is going. Whether you are going through a particularly bleak time, if there is cause for celebration or if you are experiencing bereavement or loss, we can help you in our role as companion and guide by writing back to you, offering you suggestions and techniques we know intimately and experience in our own practice every day. Letters, artwork and poems are all appreciated and may be published in our quarterly newsletter as a positive way for you to help others doing their inner work.
