

Being not satisfied with the objective life, human beings dive deep into their subjective Self with the help of Spiritual science to transcend the limitations of the Relative World around them and enjoy the eternal bliss of the Self. This attainment is possible through deep meditation. What are the ways to better meditation ? This is an important question which has been attempted to answer in a practical manner.

1. MINIMIZE INTERRUPTIONS

Take the phone off the hook, let your friends and family know that during this time you don't wish to be interrupted; close the door, close your eyes and for the time being leave the ordinary world behind. This has tremendous psychological impact. If, while meditating, one part of your mind is listening for the doorbell, or is ready to jump up if the phone rings, or to come out if someone wants to talk, it will be very difficult to concentrate. Give yourself completely to the task at hand, letting the people around you know that it is important to you. They will learn to respect it too. Establish right away that during that period of time you do not wish to be disturbed, making whatever arrangements are necessary (childcare trade-trade offs, phone message arrangements etc.) and you will feel freer and happier in your meditation.

2. MEDITATE AT THE SAME TIME OF DAY

Experienced meditators find that if they always meditate at, say, 6am and 5:30 pm, when that time of day occurs they naturally want to meditate. Optimum times are usually considered sometime around sunrise and again sometime around twilight before beginning the day and after ending the day (before the evening meal).

If one sincerely desires to explore meditation it is important to establish a habit of regular meditation. Twice daily, in the morning to tune in and charge up to start the day, and in the evening to establish a rhythm and harmony in our life. This twice a day meditation ties us in with the world's daily rhythms. It is important to maintain this regularity. Even if there is a "emergency" (like being late for work), take 5-10 minutes to meditate.

People beginning meditation frequently report having difficulty finding the time to meditate. Writing out your daily schedule and then "brain-storming" (figuring out possibilities and listing as many as you can) all sorts of different ways to make time may help to get over this hump. Experienced meditators frequently report a considerably reduced need for sleep (due to the deep state of physiological rest during meditation) and so may gain as much as 1-3 hours of usable time.

We should not forget that life is very meaningful. We have an aim in life. When we do not know our aim or goal in life, we are unable to get Ananda. Rich or poor big or small, educated or uneducated, most people today are suffering physically, mentally or spiritually. Why? Because they are aimless in their lives. When people try to find happiness in limited physical wealth, they do not satisfy the human mind. And what is this unlimited wealth?

3. TWICE A DAY INVARIABLY

This is the key to success in meditation. If one sincerely desires to explore the heights and depths of meditation, it is important to establish a habit of never missing your practices. Meditation can be likened to a beautiful chain-each day we add delicate links; the overall effect is a strong and useful instrument. But if we miss a meditation we create a situation of a "missing link". In order to make the mind strong, try never to miss. Be uncompromising. Even in emergency, it is

possible to do your meditation for five to ten minutes if you resolve always to do it. Though difficult at first, in the long run it becomes like brushing one's teeth or eating-some-thing one just does without thinking.

4. MEDITATE IN THE SAME PLACE

Try to arrange a corner or even a small room for your meditation place. Keep it clean and fresh and try to do your meditation there all the time. You will find that place becoming very meaningful for you. When you go to that spot your mind will naturally want to meditate. Of course you can meditate anywhere-in an office or a car, on the bus, outside-but it helps, especially in the beginning to have a quiet and special place.

5. ON A LIGHT STOMACH

After eating, the energies of the body are directed toward the digestive processes at the expense of the mental processes (we have all noticed the sluggishness that follows a heavy meal). Because meditation requires alertness, concentration, mental energy and "awakeness", it is helpful stomach. If you are really famished, take a glass of juice or milk or eat lightly. If your body is really hungry, your meditation may be distracted.

6. IN A COMFORTABLE, ERECT POSTURE

When meditation proceeds properly, there is a tremendous flow of energy upwards through the spinal column. Slumping or slouching impedes this energy or slouching impedes this energy flow, impairs breathing, and diminished mental alertness. So it is important to sit as straight as possible. A firm surface is very helpful. Gentle stretches or warm-ups can help to prepare the body for meditation. Some people find that putting a small pillow underneath their seats alleviates pressure on the knees and induces better posture by elevating the spinal column. It is important to be comfortable so that your mind is free to concentrate on the meditation process. If sitting on a rug, cushion or folded blanket is not comfortable, you may want to meditate sitting in a chair. With twice daily practice of good sitting posture and some stretches and warm-ups to loosen the muscles, most people are amazed to discover how relaxed and flexible their bodies can become in just a few weeks time.

7. ASSOCIATE WITH SPIRITUAL PEOPLE

One of the greatest supports through the ups and downs of your spiritual growth is time spent with others who are treading the path of meditation. Weekly group meditation are a must for the serious meditator. Ananda Marga retreats and seminars are held all around the world. Half-day, week-end and week-long seminars and retreats offer meditators a chance to immerse themselves in their spiritual practices and learn more about the philosophy of yoga. Chances are there are ones happening in your area.

8. READ SPIRITUALLY UPLIFTING BOOKS

The intellect, which has to keep quiet during meditation, also needs scope for growth and development. Therefore, it is recommended that one set aside some time each day for reading spiritually uplifting books. After meditation is a good time to take a few minutes for this, as the mind is clear and calm and more easily absorbs ideas.

9. TALK TO A MEDITATION TEACHER

Teachers of meditation (acharyas) travel through your area regularly. They can answer questions about meditation and teach you a personal meditation technique. Local members of Ananda Marga can tell you when acharyas are expected and what kind of activities are planned (textures, group meditations, etc.) while they are visiting.

Acharyas are highly trained women and men who are dedicated to the task of serving humanity. Their job is to teach meditation and spiritual practices to any one who sincerely desires to learn. Many problems or difficulties you may be having can be easily solved with the help of an acharya. So never miss the opportunity for a consultation with a teacher. Ask your class instructor or the person co-ordinating the acharya's visit to sign you up for a consultation. They can tell you what to expect so that you can utilize your consultation to the fullest.

10. BE PERSISTENT

Many people experience a sense of discouragement or frustration when the results of their first few meditations do not measure up to their expectations or hopes. They may feel that it is their own fault, and even give up the practice with a sense of failure or inferiority. Everyone who has meditated has had to deal with this in some way. It is a great help to know that others are also having similar experiences, and to understand what is actually taking place during this time. Especially in the beginning, the mind may seem uncontrolled. A great Yogi, Ramakrishna, once said: "The mind is like a drunken monkey stung by a scorpion." You may find when you sit down to meditate that many thoughts arise in your mind; you set your mantra going and then drift off to something else. Sounds and noises from without may sidetrack your internal concentration and your body may become restless. At times like this, one can easily get discouraged and think nothing is happening. However, many of the benefits of meditation come from deep within the mind and do not show themselves immediately. By constantly bringing your mind back to the mantra, you are building up your capacity to hold your mind steady in the future.

We are not qualified to say whether we had a "good" meditation or a "bad" one. People in our culture tend to be judgemental about their meditation and become discouraged when they don't achieve instant results. But in a sense, EVERY meditation is a good meditation-it's the "twice a day invariably" pattern that counts. Only by practice can we achieve a peaceful and blissful meditation-through persistent, regular practice.

Another puzzling experience for the new meditator is that the mind may appear to become even more unsteady after commencing meditation. More thoughts than usual may come to mind. This is often taken to mean that the process is being done incorrectly. However, just the opposite is true. One of the functions of the mantra is to work internally on our minds by clearing out all the distortions and impressions which our past experiences have registered on our subconscious mind. Thus, the repetition of the mantra sometimes acts to revive memories and thoughts of what has gone before. It is like cleaning house; in the middle of the process the house may look messier than when you started, but by persevering and not giving up in the middle you are much better off. The same is true for the mind; as one continues to meditate, it gets clearer and clearer.

How long does it take? It's hard to say exactly, but most people feel it takes five to nine months to get established in meditation. At first the results may be more apparent to your friends than you. When you began to grow in adolescence you probably did not notice a few extra inches in height until someone told you; you were too close to the growth to see it happen. Continue to meditate and the people around you will notice the changes, and finally, so will you.