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[Asperger's Syndrome- meditation for kids](#)

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This meditation was described to me originally by [Ven. Dhammadipa](#), a monk who held a retreat at BBAC earlier this year.

Why Asperger's Kids Should Meditate

The development of controlled focus by children who are within the autism spectrum, specifically Asperger's Syndrome, is always a matter of great concern to parents. Without the ability to direct their focus and concentration where they have need of it, our kids are effectively disabled. In adult life, we need to be able to remember to pay bills and remember instructions from employers. Without the ability to self-regulate this is extremely difficult. As a mother with a son who falls within the spectrum of Asperger's Syndrome, it's a subject I have given a great deal of thought and research. He is also approaching his teen years, which are difficult for everyone. I don't want him to lose his originality, either, and it is a tough line to walk.

My concern is not whether he'll go to college or become President, but whether (once married) he will make his wife

miserable with his lack of empathy. I wonder whether anyone will hire him, even at minimum wage, if he can't stay on task. It's not that he's not capable of working or listening, but that he doesn't start unless constantly and continually prompted to do so. This is a serious handicap.

I meditate myself and have long thought that training the mind in methods of concentration would help him immensely. At first I thought that sitting still would be the biggest problem, but once we started doing it together I discovered that the abstract nature of the instructions were a far more serious barrier.

It should be noted that in this case of using meditation for a specific therapy, it should be practiced as a family ideally or at least with one parent. Making a kid with this syndrome sit still for extended periods of time by himself will do little for concentration and will probably increase frustration with the practice. To them, it would be like mild torture.

If You Don't Meditate Yourself

If you are not a meditator yourself, I recommend practicing meditation yourself for at least a month to understand how it works, preferably without discussing it with the child. By doing it first yourself and lending an air of mystery to it by not explaining what you are doing often (as with my son) inspires the child to ask questions. By allowing him to participate in a "grownup" activity, it also lent an air of importance and gravity to the activity that helped with the act of sitting. Take some deep relaxing breaths as you settle with a smile on your face- maybe a little exaggerated- within view of where the child is to arouse his curiosity. Remember- don't answer any questions. At most, say

something like “I’ll tell you when you’re a little older,” or “You’re not quite ready for this yet.” If you are a teacher, allowing them to see you practicing in this way briefly every day before you teach it to them has the same effect- to inspire curiosity.

There are many meditations, but I recommend beginning with the “concentration meditation”. It is by far the simplest to understand. Start small- ten minutes or so daily, and do it at a time of day when you are least tired and have some privacy. Simply rest your attention on the breath “touch point”- wherever you most feel your breath. For some it is the tip of the nose or the inside of the nostril or the upper lip, etc. Any time your mind wanders, let go of that thought without getting involved with it and come back to the touch point. That’s all there is to it to start.

The Meditation

Color is the main focus in this meditation. It was recommended to me that you paint a large circle on a paper or a wall. Use white, yellow, black, or red paint, preferably oils or watercolor. Red indicates beauty, yellow is energy, black is relaxation, white is peace. Use pure colors, red like a shiny bright apple, yellow like the sun, black or dark midnight blue, or pure white. No mixed colors, let them be bright and clear. The outside of the circle should be white or black for contrast, and the outer rim should be smooth and uniform, and brush strokes should be as invisible as possible to that one is not distracted by imperfections. I wondered for a moment if I couldn't get a printed circle, but it would feel different than one you made yourself. In a pinch, though, I’m sure a circle cut out or printed will do, if you don’t have time or money to do it the other way.

Hang it on the wall and assume meditation posture or sit on a chair in front of it- not too far to be able to easily observe other things, not too close to be uncomfortable- just close enough to have one's vision mostly dominated by it. Gaze into the middle of the circle for a few minutes and then close your eyes. Try and bring up as clearly as you can the circle. As your concentration improves, the color will appear in your mind more and more brilliant, eventually (with the red) appearing like a sparkling ruby alive with light. This also helps to increase the desire to practice because it is so incredibly beautiful. It does take time for this phenomenon to develop, but I have seen it firsthand. Don't tell the kids this, though- they will think they are doing something wrong if they don't see it immediately. Allow it to arise on its own, and congratulate them if they see it. It can come startlingly clear, very suddenly, into focus. The first time I saw it, I gasped.

Communication on what, exactly, I wanted him to do in his mind was a bit of a problem. Every child is different, but this is what worked with my son. I got him to picture a cartoon character with his imagination, doing something silly. Saying "make it appear in your mind" only confused him. Make sure you use language the child can already understand, as new terms and concepts are going to get in the way of the meditation. Then, I told him to replace that picture in his imagination with the circle, and to just work on bringing that object clearly into his mind, make that red as bright as possible. Don't use imagery the child usually obsesses about, like trains in many cases, because they will likely stay on that image instead of the meditation object (color circle).

Start for one minute and add a minute or two a week, no more, even if they ask for more time (my son did). Use a timer. Allow the child earn the extra time with compliance. After the first few weeks, they look forward to the time meditating as the most relaxing time of the day. Some results in more skillfully directed focus should be apparent, if you are doing it correctly, in a few weeks. This is not a replacement for speech therapy or occupational therapy, just an extra tool that will hopefully make it easier for your child to gain control of his or her mind, and skillfully use their most valuable tool.

Consistency is key! Make the time to do it every day (or night) or the child will see it as a game instead as a serious mental training. This can't be equated with the "Quiet Game" that my parents used to play with me on long car trips. Allow the child to slowly realize that he is responsible for his own mind- no one can train it for him. This is, without a doubt, the best medicine.