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Meditation Help – Mantra Meditation

by Tom Renfro

in [Meditation help](#)

The Basic Principles – Mantra Meditation

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Tips, insights, cautionary tales and other *meditation help* for beginners, the practices.

The definition of the Sanskrit term Mantra has been variously translated as ‘mental device’ or ‘mind protection’ is a combination of two Sanskrit words: *man* – which means mind; and *tra or trai* – which means instrument or vehicle. *Tra or trai* is also translated as ‘to protect or free from the bondage of the phenomenal world’. So a mantra can be thought of as a mind instrument or vehicle of the mind.

1. The basic principles for Primordial Sound Mantra meditation, Transcendental Meditation or any mantra meditation based in the Vedic or yogic tradition begins by sitting comfortably with the eyes closed.

In the mindfulness mantra tradition (such as the So Hum mantra, which follows the breath), the eyes are open or partially open, looking ahead and down at a forty-five degree angle.

2. Silently repeating the mantra, this is ‘thought’ in a gentle and effortless way. It is not a clear pronunciation but a repletion that will begin to ‘drift’ away after a time while the

rhythm, speed and clarity will change as a natural part of the process.

3. Mantra meditation is not about concentration or effort, it's a process of letting go.

4. Mantras are in general a sound without a meaning, like the sound of a bell or the rush of a waterfall; a sound that contains no meaning to capture our attention and start a train of thoughts, the mantra is the object of our attention.

Cautionary tale: There are a number of experiences that can draw your attention away from your mantra. You will notice your awareness drifting to a thought in your mind, a sound in the environment or a sensation in your body. Most often you will find your attention focusing on normal, everyday thoughts. When you notice this, you have become present and aware, gently return to repeating the mantra.

There are other distractions to be aware of mental, visual images like colors, mental pictures or lights, when they arise, treat them as any other thought, release them and return to the mantra.

The Basic Principles – Experiences During Meditation

In the Primordial Sound Meditation program, we teach that there are just three types of experiences that you can have during meditation. While we may experience these in various combinations, still the experience will fall into one of these three categories; falling asleep, having thoughts and Slipping into the gap or becoming fully present in the moment.

1. Falling asleep. Meditation is a state of restful alertness. Falling asleep during meditation can be caused by a number of factors. Often it's due to being slightly over tired and a clear indication that you need some extra rest. If it happens on a continuing basis, then you are fatigued and need to address its source, for example, lack of enough sleep, sick, working too hard, pregnant or under too much stress.

The *Paradox* is if you are under too much stress meditation is the best way to elevate it; therefore, falling asleep during meditation may necessarily become part of the meditation until the stress subsides.

2. *Having thoughts.* The mind is constantly creating thoughts (it's estimated that we have between 60,000 and 80,000 thoughts a day). In the same way that your heart beats and your eyes see your mind creates thoughts, this is its function.

The *Paradox* is that the more you 'try' to stop thinking the more resistance you create and the harder it will be to quiet the mind, so it's always best not to resist, allow them to arise and then let them go.

Mantra Meditation is used to keep the mind occupied, interrupting the normal thought process with a sound that has no meaning, a sound that doesn't distract the mind, allowing it to settle down.

3. *Slipping into the gap or becoming fully present in the moment.* You will slip into the silent place between your thoughts. When this happens, you will experience a moment of pure awareness, in which you will either be turned deeply inward or you will become fully present without judgment. We only become aware of it *after* it has happened, because while it is happening we are the experience, afterwards it is the memory, the thought of the experience.

4. *Letting go of expectations* during meditation. Having expectations or looking for experiences in meditation keeps your awareness at the level of thoughts preventing you from slipping into the silence. Meditation is a natural process not a program to be 'accomplished' with 'goals' that can be reached, so whatever happens during the meditation is part of the meditation.

5. *Disturbances in the environment.* It is easier for beginning meditators to practice in a quiet environment where there is less likely hood of disruption. When there is a disruption, and your attention is drawn away, continue your meditation by gently return to your mantra. As you continue to meditate, consider the disturbances as part of the meditation.

Cautionary tale: Remember to take a few minutes after you stopped repeating your mantra and have finished your meditation. Remain sitting with your eyes closed for a short period then begin slow, gentle stretches before you come back to activity.

- ***Remember that these 'meditation help' tips are only guidelines; they are not written in stone, are primarily concerned with the practical aspects of your meditation practice and are met to be adapted to fit your schedule and lifestyle.***



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