



## *Establishing a Practice*

### **How do I start a period of meditation practice?**

It's helpful to begin by settling yourself and calling to mind your aspirations and intentions—perhaps to calm and steady yourself, to find balance and kindness, to live more fully aware and present. Let your own sincerity and heart be the energy that guides what unfolds.

### **How long should I sit each day?**

Deciding in advance the duration of your sit can help support your practice. For many, a good time frame is between 15-45 minutes. If you sit each day, you'll gradually experience noticeable benefits (e.g., less reactivity, more calm) and be more inclined to increase your sitting time. If you're just beginning meditation practice, you might want to experiment with the length of time that you meditate. You might choose to meditate for just five minutes once or twice a day and increase the time by five minutes a day until you reach a length of time that you can commit to on a daily basis.

### **Does it matter when I sit?**

Sit every day, even if it's for a short period. Intentionally dedicating this time of quieting is a true gift! Morning is often preferred because it sets the tone for the day, and for some the mind may be calmer than it is later in the day. However, the best time is the time that you can realistically commit to on a regular basis. Some people choose to do two or more short sessions, perhaps one at the beginning and one at the end of the day. It's also helpful to pause whenever you remember during each day. Establish contact with your body and breath, feeling the aliveness that is here. As you pause more and more—the space of a mindful pause will allow you to come home to your heart and awareness. It helps me always to feel the floor/ground under my feet and really feel into them.

### **Do I need a special place to do meditation?**

It's helpful to find a relatively quiet place where you won't be disturbed. It can also be helpful to use the same place each time because the association of that place has the potential to help you to settle into your meditation more quickly. That said, many people meditate on public transportation, in their offices at lunchtime, and in public parks. As part of the “art and science” of meditation, you can creatively experiment with what works for you and use that feedback to decide on an optimal meditation location.

### **Is there a particular posture I should use?**

Similar to finding a meditation place, you can experiment with different postures. One posture is not better than another. Sitting in a chair is fine, as is sitting in a cross-legged posture. The important thing is to respect your body and do your sitting, standing, walking, or lying down meditation in a way that balances relaxation and alertness. That said, here are some helpful tips for sitting posture:

- Sit in a way that allows the spine to be upright and relaxed, following its natural curves.
- Allow the shoulders to relax back and down (remember? Folding your shoulder blades into your back pockets)
- Place the hands on the thighs or in the lap (perhaps resting on a small cushion or towel) and allow the arms to relax.
- Allow the back of the neck to lengthen and the chin to slightly tuck in. Relax the face; allow the brow to be smooth, the eyes, jaw, and even the tongue to soften and relax.