

## ***3 Tips to Begin Your Meditation Practice***

***By Tara Stiles***

When you begin to meditate, you begin to feel into yourself. You become aware of how you feel physically and emotionally. You start to gain insight into your life and your purpose. Meditation practices focus on the breath. There are so many techniques that involve different things to do with the breath. You can count the breath as it comes and goes, holding the breath at the top and at the bottom; breathe short and fast, long and deep, and vary pace and timing to an infinite number of possibilities. The idea behind all the breath work is to allow you to become more aware of yourself in the present moment. When you take a deep breath, you can feel more than when your breathing is shallow.

Try it now. Wherever you are, close your eyes and take a giant deep breath in through your nose. Hold it at the top for a few moments; then slowly release all the air out through your mouth. Repeat twice more and gently open your eyes.

Cultivating a daily meditation practice removes the stuff that fogs up your access to your best self. Setting up a home meditation practice space is simple. You don't need anything that you don't already have. You can meditate on your couch, sitting up in bed, or even at your desk. However, having a special spot will probably help with familiarity and regularity of your practice.

### **Here are three tips to begin your meditation practice:**

#### **Tip 1: *Don't Worry about Clearing Your Mind.***

It's easy to fall into the belief that the goal of meditation is to have a crystal clear mind so you can see all the secrets of the universe.

Don't worry: plenty of cool experiences are going to happen to you. There is no need to get wrapped up in getting to everything right away. The mind wanders; that's just what it does. Every time your thoughts carry you off on a journey, just bring your attention back to your breath, back to feeling. That's the practice.

The goal is to notice when your mind wanders. When you notice, you have a choice. You can go along for the ride, or you can guide your attention right back inward. You will do this over and over again. Just see things as they happen. Guide your attention back to breathing and feeling. That's your practice. Make the goal the process, not the destination.

#### **Tip 2: *Write It Down.***

If you're anything like me, when you have a light bulb moment, you don't want to forget it. Exciting thoughts and spontaneous ideas will come to you during meditation. No need to get frustrated. Keep a notebook handy for all those mid-meditation, mind-blowing moments. When a genius idea pops into your mind mid-meditation, take a moment and write it down. Now it's

down on paper, and you can come back to it and master plan later. For the next few moments, come right back to your breath.

**Tip 3: *Keep It Regular.***

It only works if you actually do it. Five minutes is better than nothing, and five minutes a day, every day, adds up to a whole lot. Try it out for one week and you'll feel a big difference. First thing in the morning is a great time to set the habit.

You don't even have to leave your bed for this one. Simply sit up, get comfortable, and pay attention to your breath for five minutes. If your thoughts start to take you away from your breath, see if you can guide your attention right back. If your thoughts start to drift again, guide yourself back again. After your five minutes, go about your day as usual and notice if you feel any different.

**Warning: you might start to see yourself differently, with more compassion; and you might start to see more possibilities in your life. You might to start to be happier!**