

# 7 Hacks For A Deeper Meditation

When it's time for your sitting session, you can simply sit down and start. That's what I was doing in the first few years of my practice. Or you can take a couple of minutes to center and "prepare" yourself – and your meditation session will be more pleasant, quiet, and deep.

I took me a long time to learn these hacks, and I wish I had known them before. That's why I decided to write about them, so you can shortcut your learning curve.

The first three hacks are part of the preparation process and can take from two to 20 minutes – it's entirely up to you. You don't need to go through all these elements, but I found that each of them is helpful.

The fourth and fifth hack are attitudes that you can develop during practice that will aid your concentration. And the last two ones is about what you do after your practice.

At the bottom of this page you will find a button to download the **free PDF** with these 7 hacks.

## BEFORE

### (1) Calm Your Body And Breath

Our mind, body and breath are interconnected. So relaxing the body and calming the breath will naturally calm the mind as well. The parasympathetic nervous system gets activated, and as a result the stress response will be down-regulated. That is why, in the system of Yoga practice, one works with postures (*asanas*) and breathing regulation (*pranayama*).

## Short version

Once you sit on your cushion/chair, take three to five full breaths – breathing in through the nose, and out through the mouth. Make them as *long, even,* and *deep* as possible.

- Breathing in, center yourself in the present moment
- Breathing out, consciously relax all the muscles in your body, letting go of all tension

## Long version:

Take 5-10 minutes to do the following [9 Yoga Asanas](#), so you can relax and lighten up the body.

Then, for five minutes, do the following breathing exercise:

- Breathe in for 4 seconds, through the nose
- Breathe out for 8 seconds, through the nose

Instead of 4-8 seconds, you can go for 3-6, or 5-10, 6-12, etc. The important thing is that we are aiming for the exhalation to be longer than the inhalation (ideally double). That may be hard in the beginning, so you grow into it as you go.

Breathing should be soft, even, and as soundless as possible. Do not force yourself – it should be comfortable. So adjust your count according to your capacity.

For a more in-depth resource on relaxation of body and breath as a support for meditation, see [this article](#).

## (2) Gladden The Mind

Our brain is deeply wired to avoid pain, and seek pleasure. So if you can generate some stable feelings of safety and contentment, right before your meditation, you are sending a message to your brain that all is well, and it need not be restless.

When our mind is *joyful and content*, it is naturally more quiet, introverted, and together. So after relaxing your body and mind, I advise you to gladden the mind by doing one of these:

- Remember something that you are grateful for
- Remember the joy of meditation (if you have already experienced that)
- If you believe in God, doing a short prayer before meditation can help set a mood of attention, sacredness and centeredness

Also, if you have practiced loving-kindness meditation before, you know you have the capacity to kindle feelings of love and compassion in your heart, and that doing that brings in joy. So you can remember these feelings, or generate them inside yourself, for a couple of minutes before meditation.

To explore more this fact, I recommend listening to episode [149 of Buddhist Geeks](#), on “neurodharma”.

Also, for increasing the feeling of safety, allocate a safe and quiet place for your meditation and remove anything that may interrupt your practice such as your mobile, pets, etc. Inform those that may need your attention to be respectful of the space and the time you are allocating for your practice and not to create any abrupt noise or move in and out of the room. If you cannot find such a place, alternatively you can use earplugs or headphones to cover your ears.

### **(3) Affirm Your Intention**

Taking a few moments to just focus your intention before practice can do wonders for your meditation.

You can do this by saying to yourself, with **intention and presence**, something like this:

*“For the next X minutes I will only focus on my meditation. There is nothing else for me to do and nothing else for me to think about during this time. Mind, please don’t disturb me. I will start concentrating now.”*

Determination and will power are very important. As Swami Rama says, “I can do it. I will do it. I am going to do it.” This is an essential key to [deepen your meditation](#).

If you feel you don't have good determination or will power, don't worry. By practicing setting up your intention in this way, you slowly start developing these muscles.

## **DURING**

### **(4) Don't Suffer The Distractions**

During your meditation practice, it is important never to criticize yourself, or feel bad about getting distracted with thoughts. These types of thoughts are harmful and not in line with the spirit of good meditation.

Learn to be gentle with yourself during your practice. For decades you have trained your mind to be distracted; so it will take some time to train it to be focused. Be patient and kind with yourself.

### **(5) Delight in Concentration**

There will be moments when your mind is more focused on the meditation object. When this happens, it's important to delight in it. Enjoy how quiet, stable and unified the mind gets.

Mind's most fundamental habit is to seek pleasure/well-being and shun pain/suffering. By teaching the mind to appreciate the joy of concentration, it starts working more towards increasing that, by facilitating more focus.

According to the Buddha, joy (*piti*) and happiness (*sukha*) are two of the five factors of meditative absorption (*jhana*). The more you learn to open up and enjoy your meditation, the less reasons there are for the mind to get restless thinking of other things.

## AFTER

### (6) Gentle Transition

When the bell rings, get out of your meditation gently, not hurriedly. Keep the mind in the same state, gently move your fingers and neck, and then open your eyes. This transition helps you bring more of the “meditation feeling” into your daily life.

### (7) Keep a Journal

I highly encourage you to then take some notes about how your practice went. This helps you solidify the [meditation habit](#). It also develops a greater understanding of the workings of the mind, and the mechanics of meditation.

A simple entry could answer these three questions:

- How long did I sit?
- How do I feel now?
- How was my mind during meditation?

For the third question, you can note things like how many times you got distracted, what types of thoughts or feelings were you experiencing, and for how long you could keep focused.

# CONCLUSION

By integrating these 7 elements in your routine, your meditation can be deeper, more enjoyable and more transformative. Here's a summary:

- **Before meditation**
  - Relax your body and breath, to calm down and center yourself;
  - Gladden the mind with gratitude or other positive feelings;
  - Have strong intention in your mind
- **During meditation**
  - Don't feel bad about getting distracted
  - Find delight in the moments of concentration
- **After meditation**
  - Move out of meditation gently
  - Take notes in your journal

Meditate on!

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