

Slide 1: Soul2Soul Educare Presents: Meditation – Why? & How?

Slide 2: What is meditation? Did you know that meditation is derived from the Latin root which means “to heal”.

Slide 3: Everyday we go through the struggles of life with all its emotional distresses. We deal with pride, anger, greed, attachment, lust, jealousy. These wound our minds causing scars.

Slide 4: According to Vedanta, there are 5 layered sheaths which comprise the human build, and each sheath fills the next outer sheath completely. The first and outer-most sheath is the physical body known as the annamaya kosha, or food sheath. The second sheath is the pranamaya kosha, or vital air sheath. The third sheath is the manamaya kosha, or mind sheath. The fourth sheath is the vijnanamaya kosha or intellect sheath. The final and fifth sheath is the anandamaya kosha or bliss sheath. Within this final sheath is the atma or the Self, our timeless and eternal soul.

The physical body, as the first sheath, is designed to enable you to interface with the physical world using the 5 sensory objects assigned to the human build. Without those facilities of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, the physical universe is not directly perceptible. In time we all pass on from the physical body, and when we do, the mind follows with us. The mind is the third of our 5 sheaths and... it works as a lens altering the outward expression of our true inner self. Eventually we must endeavor to unravel the misguided threads of the mind so that our true nature... may become... clearly... cleanly... expressed... in the physical world. Meditation is one method which can be used to cleanse the mind.

Slide 5: When our mind is scarred, our body gets scarred, and blocks our Higher Self or our Soul from working its wonders on us. Thus our mind and body need to be healed. Silence is the great healer. This is where meditation comes in handy. In the waters of silence, we must take a dip everyday to wash away the wounds, scars, hurts of day to day life.

Slide 6: As long as we are in this world, we continue to make karmas. Even while walking and breathing, we are inadvertently killing life forms. This creates bad karma. Somebody asked in the vegetarianism workshop that when you eat vegetables, you are also killing life. This is true. Again this is where meditation is useful. Meditation helps you to dissolve bad karmas. Hence all these little karmas you make everyday, while breathing, walking, eating vegetables are negated through meditation.

Slide 7: Meditation can help all people of all walks of life:

1. A businessman meditates late in the morning after 15 mins in his office – it clears the cobwebs that have accumulated and gives him a fresh perspective on how to deal with business problems
2. A stay at home mom meditates for 20 mins after her husband and children leave – she no longer feels harassed by the daily chores of getting dinner and the family organized for another day.
3. A factory worker meditates on the subway going home from work – helps her unwind she says.
4. A student meditates between classes – he feels more attentive in class and even attributes to better grades to it.

Slide 8: Before you embark on this great adventure of meditation, you must remember that it is important to keep your exterior life clean and free from blemish and disorder in order for your interior life to flourish. This means that what you think and feel, read and hear, do and speak must be beneficial because it will echo in your minds, in the hours of silence.

Slide 9: In the Upanishads, it is said meditation is an interior pilgrimage in which layer after layer of unreality is torn away. We the pilgrims have to proceed by negation, “neti, neti” not this not this! You have to start peeling away all the exterior plays of Maya – illusory world like peeling away the layers of an onion. As these become more and more unreal, unimportant to you, you can then delve deeper and deeper into the Real World, the World of God. You can ultimately make the discovery that you are not bound by space and time. You are one with all life, all creation. You are God.

Slide 10: Scientific reasons why Meditation is beneficial:

Through meditation, humans have an innate reflex that is almost the mirror image of the fight or flight response. Instead of mobilizing our bodies for outward activity, this system mobilizes our bodies resources for inward activity. These include:

- a. reduced heart rate,
- b. reduced blood pressure
- c. reduced sweating,
- d. increased functioning of the gastrointestinal tract,
- e. Relaxation of muscles
- f. increased oxygen and blood to the brain.

Slide 11: The electrical activity in the brain changes from the low amplitude, rapid frequency beta waves to a slower higher amplitude rhythmic alpha and theta waves which is scientifically called the relaxation response.

Slide 12: Scientists studying meditators have found that when the meditator reaches a state of deep awareness, the 2 hemispheres of the brain (which ordinarily generate brain waves of different frequencies) become synchronized.

Slide 13: What does this mean;

1. it creates a feeling of oneness with everything.
2. Your intuition opens up,
3. and you end up opening your brain up to more knowledge and absorption, because now you are starting to use our whole brain rather than just a portion of our brain which most of us use when we flip back and forth between hemispheres.

Slide 14: The benefits of this:

1. it decreases stress-related hormones in your body.
2. it maintains healthy levels in the blood pressure
3. Increased physical and mental health
4. Increased ability to concentrate
5. Increased ability to learn new things

Slide 15: Here are the stages of meditation:

- Stage 1. High beta activity in the left hemisphere of the brain – when your thoughts are outward – all over the place, “what do I have to do today”, you are still trying to maintain control.
- Stage 2. Symmetrical alpha rhythms. Now you are calm, alert with no thoughts and images.
- Stage 3. Alpha blocking. You are in a state of passive awareness. You are alert but deeply relaxed.
- Stage 4. Symmetrical alpha and less-amplitude theta. This is when you enter a state of meditation. You are calm, intensely aware of both inner and outer realities, yet detached from both. This is the state when you have activated the relaxation response which we described earlier.
- Stage 5. Very high amplitude alpha waves, lesser amplitude activity in theta and in beta range. Brain wave activity is synchronous. You are in a state of an awakened mind & lucid awareness. Here’s where you feel feelings of euphoria, heightened mental powers, creativity, the ability to be in the world but not of the world.

Slide 16: The mind is like any other muscle in the body. When you go jogging for the first time, your muscles ache, and your legs refuse to go any further. As you continue jogging for a few months, your legs are willing to take you further and further. The mind is the same, once it is trained, it will allow you to sit in silence for longer and longer. The Upanishads say “The mind alone is the cause of man’s bondage, the mind is, also an instrument of man’s liberation”.

Slide 17: Some people try to use meditation as a form of escapism. They want to run away from this world and its duties. The life of meditation must be blended with the life of work. You must not give up your worldly duties. When you meditate, you withdraw yourself from the world for a short time. Then you must return to your daily work, pouring into it the energy that you have gained through meditation. This kind of work will bring all kinds of blessings to yourself and those around you. When you can apply your meditation to your daily work, then you can attain Godhead.

Slide 18: Before we can embark on a successful meditation we must develop love in our hearts, e.g. when elevator door closes, and someone is running to get the elevator – do you open the door or let it close, the car that is trying to merge at the last moment, do you allow them in or don’t allow (if it was your mom – would you let her go?), There are many times we come across people in social situations, and we distance ourselves from people, this can be an indication that our hearts are closed. The way to open our hearts is through these 5 types of meditation as prescribed by Buddha: Let us try an exercise now to open our hearts:

1. First is the meditation of love, let us now wish for the happiness of all life. First think of your immediate family. May all be happy and full of bliss. Now think of your relatives. May all be happy and full of bliss. Now think of your close friends. May all be happy and full of bliss. Now think of your co-workers or classmates and teachers. May all be happy and full of bliss. Now think of the four legged animals. May all be happy and full of bliss. Now think of the birds. May all be happy and full of bliss., Next think of fish. May all be happy and full of bliss., Now think of all the insects. May all be happy and full of bliss. Now think of all the plants in the plant kingdom. May all be happy and full of bliss.. Now think of those who may have hurt you. May those that for some reason or another are unable to love you; may those that speak for some reason are unable to speak

well of you, may those who may have inadvertently pained you, may all these people be happy and full of bliss.

2. Next is the meditation of compassion. Now let us think of all the beings in distress, vividly imagining their sorrows and anxieties so we can arise within us a deep compassion for those who are suffering.
3. The 3rd meditation is of joy. We will now think of the prosperity of others and rejoice in their successes, our co-workers, our relatives, our neighbors.
4. Next is the meditation on impurity. Here we will think of the consequences of immorality and corruption. On contemplating this we realize how trivial the pleasure of the moment is and how fatal are its consequences.
5. Now we will meditate on serenity. Let us rise above love and hate, above tyranny and oppression, above wealth and want, and accept our own fate with impartial calm and perfect tranquility. Affirming in our minds I am content with all that I have.

Slide 19: Preparation for meditation:

1. Select a silent corner or a room in your house where you may spend some time everyday without being disturbed. Preferably away from the telephone, door well and dimly lit.
2. The best time for meditation, is before sunrise – between 3 am to 6 am. (This is called the Brahma-mahurta). At this time, the atmosphere is calm and serene, the body is fresh and restful, the mind is alert but not over active. However, if you cannot wake up that early, then any other time of day is fine, as long as you will not be disturbed.
3. Meditation should be practiced preferably at the same time and at the same place. This will help form a habit which will automatically put you into a meditative state when the hour approaches. You build up a beautiful radiant energy in the spot where you meditate; hence it is better to always meditate in the same place.
4. If you choose to meditate at other times other than 3 am to 6 am, then you should not meditate at least 2 hours after a meal. The digestive process will hinder your meditation.
5. It is better to wear loose, comfortable clothing. This will help in the relaxation process.
6. Adopt any sitting posture which you may find natural in which you can sit steadily for some length of time without having to move your body. You may sit on the floor (not on the bare floor though), on a cushion, a mat, a rug etc. If you sit on the floor, sit cross legged. You could sit in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor. It is better not to lean against anything be it in a chair or on the floor. The most important things is that your spine and head should be straight, this helps with the alignment of the chakras (the energy centers). This helps the prana (vital energy, qi) to flow freely in your body. Let your palms rest on your knees or you may want to place your hands in the dhyana mudra (**click**). Your arms should fall freely away from your shoulders. Do not strain, be comfortable and relaxed. See that there is no stiffness anywhere. You must not tense your muscles. Relaxation is the key to success in meditation. Once you find your position don't move during the course of the meditation.

Why we say don't move is because the mind and the body are linked very closely together. The thoughts that we experience are very directly expressed through the motion of the body. You may have a thought of an incident that happened recently, and when it happens in meditation, you will begin to notice that your brow may furrow, perhaps your eyes will squint or your back will become

tense. Because of the link that exists in life between the two – the mind and the body, it is also logically understood that if we can control the movement of the body itself, that we ergo control the thoughts that are active in the mind.

Slide 20:

7. If in the course of meditation, you feel cramps or pain or an itch, don't move, instead concentrate on the part of the body that is feeling uncomfortable, and mentally repeat "itch...go away...itch go away..itch go away..." over and over again, and the itch or pain will disappear.
If, however, you find that the pain is intolerable, then you may change position of your body without disturbing the erect position of the body.
8. If you remember, smile, this helps in making the mind happier and more cooperative to meditate.
9. Relax and turn your mind inward or upward. You can place your concentration on one of the 3 centers where you affix the attention of your mind: the heart chakra (**click**) (this is located in the spiritual heart which is in the middle of your chest in line with your physical heart), the ajna chakra (**click**) (this is located between your two eyebrows), also known as the location of the third eye, or the crown chakra (**click**) located on the top of your head. You may actually feel tingling sensations in any one or all three of these areas when you start to meditate. Choose the center where your consciousness easily and naturally settles down. This is like a point where you station your mind during the duration of your meditation.
10. At first, when you sit down to practice silence, you will be bombarded with inside noise. Where your thoughts, things which you least paid attention to during your waking hours, rise out of nowhere and like mosquitoes buzzing in your ear, disturb your peace.
The more you try to brush them aside, the more powerful they become. This is natural. The mind has a habit of wandering. Do not drive the distractions out with anger. Label each distraction as past-present-future-worthy-unworthy-jealousy-envy-hatred-vanity-desire-egoism etc. As you label them, they will slither away and leave you. As they disappear, your attention will return to the meditation.
11. If during the meditation, you see lights, figures, images, or hear sounds, or smell fragrances, observe them in a detached manner. Do not feel elated, do not shut them out. They are signs of the opening of the subtler senses of sight, sound or smell. Experiences by themselves mean nothing. What is important is attaining purity, peace, love, compassion, joy and bliss. What is important is the transformation of one's life.
12. After meditation don't immediately plunge into active work. Be quiet for some time, and gently move out of the world of silence into the world of activity.
13. The peace and purity you experience during the periods of silence in your meditation must be reflected in your day-to-day encounters. Emotions like resentment, anger, arrogance, greed, selfishness, envy, agitation, anxiety must be kept at bay.

Meditation – guidelines:

There are many methods of contemplation (explain what is contemplation and meditation), and these are just some of methods we use. You can use any method you like.

Slide 21:1. God it is true is nameless, but the sages have called Him by many Names. Choose any name that appeals to you, repeat it again and again in your mind. Concentrate on a holy Name, a Word, a Syllable, a Mantra. This must be symbolic of God or Truth. Eg. Om, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna...Om Namo Bhagvate Vasudevaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Satnaam Vahe Guru, Om Mani Padme Hum, Allah Ho Akbar, Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me, Yehovah, Ahura Mazda the list is endless. The one I use is “Om Sri Sai Ramaya Namaha” or “So hum, I am that”. The shorter the mantra the better. Repeat it again and again. Repeat it as if it is music to your ears. Repeat it with great love and longing in your heart. Repeat it with tears in your eyes because you so want to be with the Lord. Repeat it until it gets fixed in your mind and is in the background of your consciousness all the time, even while you are working or sleeping. Give a command to your mind to chant it louder and louder. First let the mind chant as loud as if you are talking to someone by the front door from your kitchen. Then make it as loud as if you are talking to your neighbor across the street from your front porch. Then start chanting it as if you are talking to someone at the other side of the neighborhood. Finally make the mind chant it so loud that even the distant stars can hear. This will take a few months to master, but will make the mind quiet since now you have given it a job.

Abu Said, a Sufi poet in Arabia was told by his teacher, All the prophets of Islam were sent to preach one word. They urged the people to say “Allah”. Those who heard this word by ear alone, let it go by the other ear, but those who heard it with their hearts imprinted it on their souls and repeated it until it penetrated deep within them, and their whole being became the Word. They were made independent of the pronunciation of the Word, they were released from the sound of the letters. They became absorbed in It that they were no more conscious of their own existence.

Slide 22: 2. Concentrate on your breathing. Feel the air come in at the tip of the nostrils as you inhale, and feel the air flow out at the tip of the nostrils as you exhale. You don't need to interfere with your breathing, just observe it. This gives your mind a job to do so it doesn't wander here and there. If your thoughts wander, do not struggle with them, just gently bring your attention back to your breath. As you deepen your meditation, your breath will slow down and become more quiet, and go into an indistinguishable rhythm.

Slide 23: 3. Using the breath, you can guide your chanting. With each inhale, listen to the sound of one part of the Mantra or name you are chanting, and with each exhale, listen to the other part of the mantra. Just like we teach the Sohum technique. With So- you take a breath in and with Hum you exhale. You don't have to say the mantra out loud, but just mentally say the words. If you use the technique of saying an affirmation instead of a mantra, eg. I can achieve anything. With the inhale, you would say I can...and with the exhale you would say achieve anything

Slide 24: 4. You may concentrate on a form or you may not. If you wish to picture a form you can, but there should be no attachment to form, all forms ultimately have to be left behind. Meditate on the form if you feel drawn to it, then go beyond it. Enter into form to meet the Formless One. If you do concentrate on a form, by placing the picture or statue at eye level. Gaze at this form with unmoving eyes, then close your eyes and fix the picture on the place of your concentration which we talked about earlier, the third eye chakra, heart chakra or crown chakra. When the picture fades, open your eyes, gaze at the form again, and repeat the process. With practice, you will be able to visualize the form wherever you go.

Slide 25: 5. Another method is to combine repetition of the name and seeing the form together.

- Slide 26:** **6.** Another method is to think about an incident or story in your Master's life. Think about the Master's patience, love, etc. Think what it would be like to be like your Master. Through concentration on these qualities, you will be able to connect more deeply with your Higher self. Picture yourself sitting at the lotus feet of your Master.
- Slide 27:** **7.** Concentrate on the words of an affirmation that you utter. "Eg I can achieve anything". Let your mind revolve around the words. Enter into the depths of the meaning contained in the words. You are training your mind to make the affirmation a reality.
- Slide 28:** **8.** You can practice the light meditation technique, where you stare at an open flame of a candle, and then you move it to your heart, where you imagine the petals of a lotus opening up one by one, purifying the light with love. Then you take the light to your eyes, ears, etc, and as you take it to each part you say an affirmation "My eyes will see only good", etc....After you finish taking the light to every part of your body, you spread the light, to your family, friends, even people that may have hurt you, then you spread the light to all life forms, you spread it to the Universe, and you end with I and the light are separate, the light is within me, I am the light. If you'd like we can practice this technique now. This meditation technique will fill your heart and mind with loving kindness and help you see the Oneness in all.

- Slide 29:** What you might feel when you embark on regular meditation:
Some people feel:
- Calm and relaxed
 - Ecstatic
 - Pleasure, refreshment, well being
 - Nothing at all

Slide 30: Regardless of what you feel, **There is important transformation happening in your body, mind & spirit**

- Physiological changes – e.g. reduced muscle tension and stress hormones
- Mental changes – e.g. reduced stress and happier demeanor
- Younger looking body and skin
- Better overall health
- You draw yourself closer to your Higher Self

Slide 31: The first step to meditation is learning to relax. Most of the time our bodies are tense, and we don't even know it. Even when we go to sleep, our mind is tense, and so our bodies tense up, hence when we wake up we don't feel fully rested. If you allow too much tension/stress to build up, it shows up as a physical ailment. Sometimes it could just be the flu, or a cough/cold, but sometimes it can turn into something big like a heart attack, high blood pressure, nervous breakdown, migraine, asthma etc – all these are caused by stress.

Now we will try an exercise in relaxation:

1. Sit in a comfortable position so there is no undue muscle tension.
2. Close your eyes
3. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word "ONE", silently to yourself. Eg. Breathe In...Out, ONE In...Out, "ONE". Breathe easily and naturally. The repetition of "ONE" helps break the train of distracting thoughts; attention to the normal rhythm of breathing enhances the repetition.

4. Deeply relax all your muscles beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face – David add here...

Do not worry if you were not successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Adopt a passive “let-it-happen” attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace.

We have a more in depth version of this relaxation technique which also explains meditation in detail. If you would like to purchase it after the workshop you can.

When you first embark on a regular meditation routine, according to the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali, He says that you will encounter 9 antarayas or obstacles which He describes as rocks which obstruct the path of the aspirant. These are our ego’s way of keeping us from evolution.

1. Illness – this is partly due to the fact that when you start meditating this accelerates your karmic cleansing. To overcome this, practice the sohum breathing technique
2. Lethargy – This is when we feel lazy and just feel like lying down or sleeping. To overcome this, avoid overeating, eating tamasic foods – Tamasic foods are those which are stale, colorless, too salty, too sour, too bitter and twice cooked food. Examples of tamasic foods are meat, wine, cigarettes, sodas, and all drugs and medicine.
3. Doubt which creates uncertainty in our mind. A nagging thought that says “is this really that important? Does this really work? To overcome this, keep affirming every morning as soon as you wake up “I am not this, I am that”. This will train your ego to “be quiet and stop raising doubts”
4. Haste which leads to impatience. Let me hurry up and get this done so I can put a check in the box on my list of things to do today. To overcome this, do not look at the clock when you start meditation, and don’t keep thinking about the time. Stop wearing a watch. Make time a trivial component in your life. Because in essence Time is not Real.
5. Fatigue or exhaustion. When you feel tired, your confidence is affected, and your energy feels depleted. To overcome this go to bed early, and get plenty of rest. If you need, take a short nap in the afternoon (if you can afford to). Also during your meditative practices, remember to have controlled breathing.
6. Distraction. This is when you get distracted by worldly pursuits. You might notice that as soon as you have started your meditative practices, you suddenly get invited to a lot more parties, where you are forced to go to bed late etc. Enough of these events, and your routine will be broken, and just like a jogger finds it hard to get back to jogging and does not have the same stamina if he/she has not jogged for a few days, in the same way the meditator will find it hard to get his/her mind back to the practice if you miss a few days. To overcome this, avoid unnecessary social functions, ie if you are serious on pursuing the spiritual path.
7. Arrogance. This is when we become haughty. This is one of the biggest hurdle to overcome. When we think that we know everything. “I meditate everyday” “I am so great” etc...The more we tell people, the more we lose ourselves in ignorance. To overcome this, it is better not to discuss your meditative practices with anyone, unless someone specifically asks you for advice. When you have an experience in your meditation, don’t tell anyone.
8. Stagnance or Inability to proceed – this happens to many aspirants where they have been meditating for months, and nothing is happening, they feel like they are just sitting there. This can become disheartening. We might feel “our goal is too far to reach”. You have to understand that even

though you might not see any tangible results, changes are taking place on a subtle level, that you are unaware of. To overcome this, don't give up – and continue to say “I am not this, I am that” because this is just another mechanism for your ego to say “stop meditating”. The ego doesn't want to die, and will do anything to keep itself alive.

9. This obstacle leads to another even greater obstacle which is Loss of confidence. Now suddenly you might feel that you can neither maintain the position you have reached, nor can you progress any further. As a result, at this point, many aspirants give up, and lose everything they have gained up to this point. To overcome this, keep the company of the good, higher vibration beings, and avoid worldly people, because when you are in the company of Truth, you will be inspired to do more and to keep going.

So once you start, be aware that you might come across hurdles, but jump over each one, and go ever onward, forward and Godward as Dada Jashan would say. You can ask the angels, or if you have a Guru or Master to help you, and their grace will help you overcome all the obstacles.

The Chinese proverb “the journey of a 1000 miles begins with one step”. We may be far away from the goal, but if you've taken a single step in the right direction, you have advanced on the Path. For every single step we take to reach God, he takes 100 steps nearer to us. Within some months of repeated and regular practice, you will arrive at a stage where you will be filled with indescribable joy and happiness. This is called the bliss of concentration. Those who have tasted it, miss it greatly if by chance due to over work or other reasons have to missed their time of silence.

Meditation has so many benefits, it helps with reducing stress, anxiety, improving your health, appearance, emotional stability, but most of all it helps us hear God's voice. That is the difference between meditation and prayer – in prayer we talk to God, God listens, but in Meditation we talk to God, he listens and he responds. Love God and grow in the spirit of bliss everyday.