

Mindfulness Meditation Practice

With Janet Doucette

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION HONES THE SKILL OF MINDFULNESS.

Meditation has been called the art of “not-doing.” Focusing one’s attention on a single point of interest, such as one’s breath, a repetitive word, image, or a sensory feeling in the body, cultivates the expansion of conscious awareness. When a thought or distraction surfaces in meditation, one practices returning one’s attention to the single point of focus.

For many practitioners of mindfulness meditation, the experience of breathing and watching the breath is extremely beneficial. By focusing your complete attention on your breath, for even just five minutes, you can become more deeply aware of the directness of your experience. For example you can notice the quality of coolness at your nostrils when you breathe in and warmth when you breathe out. It can be quite relaxing and peaceful.

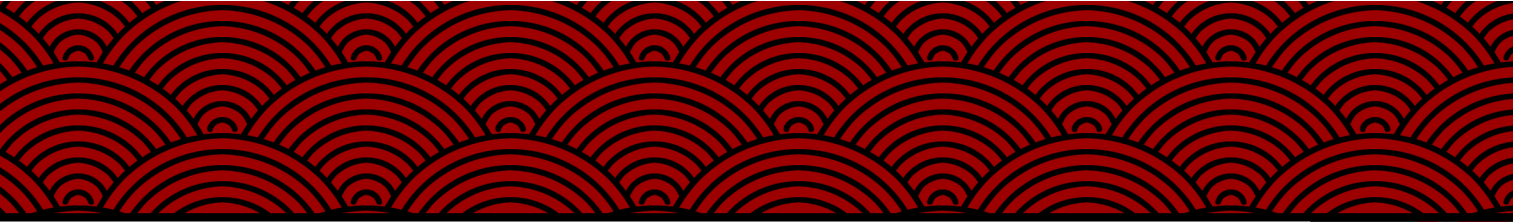
Mindfulness is the practice of being in the present moment. Meditation is the practice of *wisdom and compassion*. Developing a short, easy meditation practice contributes greatly to our health and ability to manifest cooperative relationships. Relaxation and stress reduction are merely its side effects. Meditation is essentially a practice of extending kindness to oneself, thereby enabling compassionate action toward others.



ZHAWENINDIZO is an Ojibwe word, which means, “*she is kind to herself. She has unconditional compassion for herself.*” It is only used in reference to women. Indigenous wisdom teaches it is an act of kindness to take time for oneself.

We begin with THE POSTURE MEDITATION to develop a base for meditation. Bring all your concerns to your meditation cushion. Don’t try to make them go away. They simply won’t. Zen wisdom states, “*There are no obstacles on the path. The obstacles are the path.*” This means “*sitting with your concerns*” becomes the path to alleviating your suffering using skillful means. How we sit in meditation affects how well our minds and bodies settle into calm abiding. This meditation begins with a short instruction on a proper sitting posture and includes a period of silent meditation beginning and ending with the sound of gentle chimes. This meditation allows us to use our concerns in a more mindful and beneficial way.





THE MINDFULNESS MEDITATION is a longer practice in which one cultivates the skill of simply remaining in the present moment. Learning to allow distractions to arise, abide and dissipate on their own is the means for developing non-judgmental awareness. Developing a focus that is neither *“too tight”* nor *“too relaxed”* cultivates mindfulness and insight. As you learn to use the simple belly breathing technique of inhaling to the count of five full seconds and exhaling to the count of five full seconds, you are tapping into a profound wisdom. This is the expertise of your own physiology and the natural compassion instilled in your heart’s very rhythm.

I wish you Zhawenindízo

