

How to Use Meditation to Strengthen Your Willpower

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To the uninitiated, meditation appears to be a relatively easy activity. Most people think it appears boring, but easy. Meditation is anything but. Meditation can be more mentally challenging than taking a cold shower, strenuous exercise, or sitting through an all-day meeting at work.

The urges that cause you to want to overeat, lash out in anger, gossip, or procrastinate are the same types of urges you must learn to overcome to meditate successfully. The urge to quit is great. Your brain tries to rationalize that sitting there is a waste of time.

If you can meditate successfully, you can do just about anything. Most importantly, you learn how your mind works and how it tries to trick you into doing silly things.

Build your willpower through the practice of meditation:

1. Start with just 15 minutes per day. It's quite simple. Just sit in a comfortable position. A firm, straight-back chair is a good option. Leaning back in a recliner can work well, too. Just be certain you can be comfortable enough to remain motionless, but not fall asleep. Sitting on the floor in the corner of the room is another popular option.

- Use a timer so you don't have to peek at the clock.

2. Focus on your breath. Close your eyes. Inhale and exhale. Count each exhalation until you reach 10, and then start over. The whole point is to only focus on your breath. Feel the air passing in and out of you. Just keep your

attention on the breath. Notice the breath, but don't think about it.

- Be aware of your breath, but don't have any internal dialog about it. Don't judge it. Just notice it.

3. Your mind will wander. It's highly unlikely you'll even count to five before a thought intrudes on your meditation. It might be about your boss, the itch on your neck, or wondering if you need to do laundry. That's how poor your ability to focus is.

- **When your mind wanders, just bring it back to your breath.**

4. Notice what happens. Notice how your mind wanders very quickly. You'll probably find that you can't reach 10 breaths even once without an interfering thought. Also notice your self-talk. You'll try to convince yourself that this meditation thing is a big waste of time.

- Just keep doing your best until the timer alerts you that the session is completed.
- When the urge to quit hits you, just relax and return to your breath. This is one of the most useful skills you can develop. You can use it anytime you have the urge to do something you know you shouldn't, like eat a donut or call your ex late on Saturday night.

5. Add 10 minutes each week. Fifteen minutes isn't easy. Twenty-five is even more challenging. Imagine what an hour is like. As your tolerance for sitting and focusing grows, keep adding time. Build up to at least an hour of continuous meditation.

6. **Try to maintain the same feeling throughout the day.** At the end of a meditation session, you feel pretty good. It's the only break your brain gets each day. Try to maintain that feeling as long as possible. When you get stuck in traffic, or are annoyed by a coworker, focus on your breath.

Your ability to concentrate, regardless of the distractions around you, can be built through meditation. **Meditation teaches you how to overcome your learned urges and tendencies.** Your ability to focus can be developed. Meditation is a wonderful tool for building will, discipline, and strength of character. It's also 100% free!