

AWAKEN YOUR TRUE NATURE

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Introduction

Meditation is a way to reconnect with that place of deep inner stillness where we recognize *who* and *what* we are as spiritual beings. We can call it consciousness, awareness, spirit, soul, or true nature. The names do not matter. It is the direct experience of this boundless and formless dimension found deep within us that we are after, and meditation is the practice of getting in touch with it and learning how to be in this original state of being, first while sitting, and then eventually all the time.

In actual practice, the process is similar to removing the layers of an onion, except what we are removing in this case are the physical, mental, and emotional layers that mask our true nature. By going within and letting go of everything, we eventually reach a place of deep inner stillness and emptiness.

At first, this inner emptiness may feel like a great big void. But as we move deeper into it, we discover that it is actually full of very liberating qualities; namely, pure consciousness, pure being, and pure joy – *sat-chit-ananda* in the Hindu tradition. When fully awakened as a permanent state of self-realization, these three qualities radiate forth from the formless depths of being, enlightening our bodies, hearts, and minds.

In the mind, self-realization manifests as nondual awareness, which reveals the oneness of everything. This immaculate perception is based on the realization that the same consciousness flowing through all creation gives rise to our own awareness as thinking, feeling, perceiving souls.

In this state of unity consciousness, the human heart opens up to all that is. We are filled with unconditional love for everything in existence, since it is all a manifestation of the same source and substance at the heart of creation.

And finally, our bodies are filled with the contentment and joy of being alive. At the same time, the sense of being bound in a body is transcended by the realization that, ultimately, as formless beings, we exist beyond this world. As a result, we feel that we have a body but that we are more than the body.

This manual contains four lessons on how to meditate. If you practice each one in order, building on and mastering each method before moving onto the next, you will develop a solid foundation for meditating, and learn to access the nondual state of being while sitting. With continued practice, the formless presence of your true nature will begin to shine forth so fully that it never goes away.

Breathing

Morning is an ideal time to meditate, but any time of day will do. When learning any skill, consistency is the key. Focusing on breathing is one of the most natural and effective ways to begin meditating. It helps relax the body, open the heart, and clear the mind. It is also one of the simplest and most direct methods for entering the deepest states of meditation.

The Practice Start by sitting on a chair, a bed, or on the floor. Keep your spine straight. Once you are comfortably seated, close your eyes and allow yourself to relax. Begin breathing with your whole body, the way a baby does. Inhale through your nose, filling the bottom of your lungs first, extending your belly to make room. Continue filling the middle of your lungs, expanding your ribs to open your chest, making sure to fill the upper part of your lungs. Pause at the top of inhaling before exhaling. Then slowly release the air in your lungs by pursing your lips.

After completing the first full breath, take a couple more deep breaths. Then let your breath flow naturally, without controlling it in any way. As your body relaxes, your breathing will become gentler and more rhythmic, until it is almost imperceptible. Just a delicate rising and falling. If your mind begins to wander, return your attention to your breath. If you find that your mind continues to wander, try counting your breath in cycles of ten, starting back at one if you lose count.

Summary Practice this meditation for at least thirty minutes once or twice a day for a few weeks. Conclude each meditation by making a commitment to continue to focus on your breath at certain times throughout the day. In particular, whenever you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or even bored or tired, take a few deep breaths to get centered, and then spend the next few minutes consciously focusing on your breathing while doing whatever else you are doing in the moment. Continuous awareness of breathing creates a solid foundation for meditation practice. When you feel you are ready, move onto the next method.

Remember Entering the deepest states of meditation and learning how to reconnect with your true nature may take a while. It is important to remember that working towards this goal has enormous benefits along the way. You'll become a more relaxed and alert person, and learn to meet life's varied challenges with more wisdom, compassion, and clarity.

Scanning

Another practice that promotes moving even deeper into meditation is scanning. Scanning provides most people with their first experience of entering the formless depths of being during meditation. It involves lying on your back and moving your attention through your whole body, consciously breathing into each area you scan.

The Practice Begin by breathing deeply and evenly. Once you are relaxed, start tuning into your body by bringing your attention to the tips of your toes first. Then slowly move your awareness up through your feet, ankles, shins, knees, thighs, and hips. Next, move into the pelvis and buttocks area, then onto your torso, going through the lower back and abdomen, upper back and chest, and finally the shoulders. From there, jump down to the tips of your fingers of both hands and begin moving up through your wrists, forearms, elbows, and arms until you are back at your shoulders. Finish moving your awareness through your neck and all the regions of your face: your jaw, mouth, nose, cheeks, eyes, ears, and forehead.

As you bring your attention to each part of your body, you may notice various joints or muscles adjusting automatically as tensions relax. Consciously use your breath along the way. Every time you inhale, draw in fresh energy to those parts of your body where you find signs of tension, and every time you exhale, release that tension. When you get to the very top of your head, imagine you have a blowhole like a dolphin, and spend a few minutes breathing through this opening. Then scan your entire body again, moving from the top to the bottom this time.

Summary Once you complete this scanning exercise, you should feel as though your entire body has become less solid and more transparent. Your sense of having a body may even drop away altogether. If so, allow yourself to dwell in the formless awareness of pure being for the remainder of your meditation. Scanning contributes to going beyond the body altogether, which is necessary to reach the deepest states of meditation. Practice this exercise for a few weeks, and then move on to the next method.

Remember It is best to sit up when you meditate, but initially, as a stand-alone practice, scanning is best done while lying on your back. Keep in mind that if you try this practice when you are tired you may fall asleep. Once you become familiar and comfortable with this method, you can incorporate it into your sitting meditation practice. By practicing regularly, you will also begin to feel more at home in your body as you go about your daily life.

Noting

If you have been practicing the previous two methods diligently, you are probably noticing the immense benefits of meditating regularly, and are ready to focus on another important skill: learning how to observe your thoughts in a detached way. Very often, when we sit down to meditate, we end up getting distracted by our thoughts. One of the simplest and most direct ways to still the mind is to use a method called noting.

The Practice The basis of this method is to make a mental note of the kinds of thoughts that pass through your mind. For example, let's say you start thinking about work. Instead of allowing yourself to get carried away by the stream of ideas and images associated with your job, you simply make a mental note of all those thoughts with a label like: *thinking about work*. Similarly, you note other thoughts as they arise with remarks such as *thinking about breakfast*, *hearing a noise outside*, *remembering what happened yesterday*, and so forth. Once you've labeled your thoughts, let them go without judgment. Labeling thoughts makes it much easier to do this. As you become more adept at this practice, you can develop even simpler labels, such as *anxiety*, *sound*, *memory*, or *fantasy*, to make a note of the different types of thoughts that may arise. As you master this method, you'll begin to recognize thoughts as soon as they arise in your mind, labeling and then letting them go quickly and easily without even needing to think about them. If any inspiring thoughts or beneficial insights happen to arise, you can let them go and trust that they will not be forgotten.

Begin by closing your eyes. Take a deep breath, hold it for a moment, and then exhale slowly and evenly through pursed lips. Repeat this two more times. Next, spend a few minutes scanning your body, releasing any and all tensions you notice along the way. Remember to use your breath as an aid. After that, simply watch your mind. If you start to think about something, make a mental note of the thought, then let it go. Repeat this process over and over, noting your thoughts as they arise until they settle down.

Summary The practice of noting helps to still the mind. It also heightens the distinction between thoughts and the part of the mind that observes them. With regular practice, you'll become more aware of this observing aspect, which is called *witnessing*.

Remember As you cultivate the capacity for witnessing, you'll become more accepting of what is without judgment or criticism. Your emotional reactions to the people and events around you will also diminish, replaced by a deep sense of equanimity.

Listening

This final method is based on listening for various subtle inner sounds that can be heard while sitting in meditation. These audible tones are like tuning forks that sonically raise the vibration of your consciousness.

The Practice Close your eyes and take a few minutes to relax your body and still your mind. Then let your eyes roll upwards so that you are gazing at the area inside your forehead. You might experience a slight strain in the muscles around the eyes at first. This is normal. If it is too painful, let your eyes move to a position that feels more natural. Do not try to hear anything at first. Just keep your attention focused in this manner until you are gazing comfortably at the blank screen of your mind. If your attention wanders simply retrieve it and start over again.

Next, listen for any faint sounds inside your head. You may hear humming, whooshing, or ringing sounds. Other descriptions include: the buzzing of bees, chirping crickets, ocean waves crashing, the sound of large crowds of people, drums, and so forth. Focus on whatever sound arises, until you no longer hear it. If another sound arises, tune into it and repeat the process. At a certain point, you should begin to hear a higher-pitched whistling or chiming sound that is pleasing to listen to and that expands the more you pay attention to it. This is the sound of the formless dimension at the heart of creation, and it resounds within every human being. Listening to it activates your higher self and awakens your true nature.

Summary Once you learn to hear this higher-pitched sound, you'll be able to tune into it and awaken your true nature, anywhere, anytime. With continued practice, all three qualities of your true nature – pure consciousness, pure being, and pure joy – will radiate forth from the formless depths of being, enlightening and liberating your body, heart, and mind.

Remember If you have been following along, practicing the methods described in this manual, you should be able to awaken your true nature at will. Without daily practice, however, developing this ability is unlikely. It is up to you to practice.

About the Author



Stephen D'Amico is a contemporary spiritual teacher and the author of two books about enlightenment available **here**. At age 22, he went through a profound spiritual awakening overnight. He spent the next 11 years integrating this transformation while engaged in other work. After this period, at age 33, he began working as a spiritual teacher. Since then people from all walks of life have sought his guidance, and many of them have undergone significant personal and spiritual breakthroughs after spending time with him.

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