



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Quick Fixes #9

Meditate As You Like

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Meditate on whatever you choose, Patanjali tells us. This means you get benefit from meditation, no matter the time of day, the length of your meditation, where you meditate and what type of meditation you are doing. What freedom! You get to choose!

yatha-abhimata dhyanaad vaa. — Yoga Sutras 1.39

Or meditate on whatever you like

[when your mind is distracted or disturbed].

Most people are meditating on their unhappiness, all day, every day. This is not what the ancient sage recommends. You don't really like your unhappiness, so you're not meditating on what you like. Your mind returns again and again to your pains and problems. You may even include who is to blame and what they should be doing to make you happy. My Guru called this "heron meditation." The heron stands in a few inches of water, gazing into the pond for extended periods of time, but he's not becoming enlightened. The most he gets is a few fish.

Similarly, you've already proven that meditation on worldly situations doesn't bring you any closer to enlightenment. What does Patanjali really mean when he says you can meditate on whatever you choose? The key Sanskrit word is abhimata, which means liked, dear, agreeable and favorite, but it also means approved, accepted, honored and respected. In other words, don't meditate on things you dislike, dishonor or don't respect.

Meditate on something that uplifts you. Meditate on something that quiets your mind. Yoga recommends you actively intervene with your mind, steering it into something that brings it to stillness. Peace and joy arise from within when your mind stops blocking them.

This is not Patanjali's only sutra on meditation. His entire text is about meditation, including how to prepare as well as the inner stages that open up as you explore within. He warns that you can get stuck in your mind as well as in the swirling energies within. I have seen a few yogis do this, always the DIY yogis — those who think they can get enlightened by themselves. You don't do car repairs by yourself. You don't do dentistry by yourself. Most people don't even sleep and eat alone, so what makes you think you can get enlightened by yourself?

The problem the sage is trying to help you solve is that your mind is disturbed. Earlier in the text, he defined this as being when you're distracted from your inherent Divinity, called Self (with a capital-S). We've seen many of his yogic interventions in the preceding months' articles. Here he's recommending that you simply meditate any time that you're disturbed or distracted.

Yet, when you do some preparation before your meditation, you'll have a better inner experience. That's the reason for all the yoga poses and breathing practices, as well as studying the ancient teachings and cultivating a yogic lifestyle. Three of Patanjali's four chapters focus on helping you deepen and expand your inner experience. This sutra is in the first chapter, in a section where he's trying to help you simply calm down. In other words, this sutra isn't about deep and profound mystical experiences. This is about maintaining inner equanimity in the midst of your very real life.

This quick fix is, when life throws you off-center, meditate for one minute. Don't expect to have a great mystical experience, though it's always possible. At the end of your meditation, notice if you feel better. If not, merely do it a little longer, maybe five minutes. You'll be less disturbed, less distracted from the inner source that gives you the inner answers. You'll be more centered, more present, more alive, and more able to face whatever is going on.

Research studies have proven this so many times that it's not being researched any more. Now they're trying to figure out how it works. The answer is simple. Your inherent nature is bliss and Consciousness, so when you stop chasing things in the world, you experience who you already are. Even a little bit of it works. It's a panacea; it works for everything.

Nonetheless, the type of meditation you choose does make a difference. The time of day and the length of time that you meditate also make a difference. The frequency of your meditations factor into the benefit you get. A pianist who practices daily is able to sit down and informally tinkle the ivories. In the same way, when you meditate regularly, your one-minute meditation gives you more. A brain wired for pain is incredibly different than a brain wired for Consciousness. Neuroplasticity explains how meditation rewires your brain. Unfortunately, if you meditate only one or five minutes daily, your focus on pain continues to shape your brain 23 hours and 55 minutes a day. For a worthwhile upgrade, you have to meditate more.

Your meditation posture makes a difference. When you sit up, the uplifting energy of meditation goes up your spine. Lying down, you get horizontal energy, which induces sleep. Sleep is beneficial, but not uplifting. Meditating at noon doesn't work well either. Your mind is especially active midday, a biological reality that fuels your productivity during daylight hours. The sweet spot is found in the two hours preceding the sun's peek over the horizon. Sunset can work too, though you'll be sliding into unconsciousness instead of getting the inner arising that comes with the sunrise. You don't even have to open your eyes to feel it. A surge of energy comes up your spine when the sun comes up. Bliss!

What you meditate on does matter. Patanjali recommends you meditate on something you like. It makes you more interested in meditating. Yet he chronicles many things to meditate on, especially in Chapter 3, Sutras 25-35. They become increasingly subtle and powerful as the meditator becomes more skilled:

- Characteristics of different animals
- Subtle sense perceptions
- The sun
- The moon
- The North Star
- Your navel
- The hollow of your throat
- Your bronchial tubes
- The light under the crown of your head
- The inner impulse of Consciousness arising within
- Your heart (the essence of your being - your own Self)

In *Svaroopā*[®] Vidya meditation, you meditate on the heart. This is not meditating on your emotions; you already do too much of that. I teach you to meditate on your own Self, the heart or essence of your Beingness. It would be a daunting, even impossible task, except for Grace. Described in Sanskrit, "gurukrpa" means the Guru's gift of Grace, the revelation of your own inherent Divinity.

Many other meditation systems have you begin with body and breath, excellent kindergarten techniques. They open the doorway for more advanced techniques, like Patanjali's list above. It takes 12-20 years to work through the preparatory steps, getting ready to meditate on your own Self.

In *Svaroopā*[®] Vidya, you begin meditating on the Self in your first class or satsang (group meditation). This is possible due to the meditative energy flowing through the generations of masters in our tradition. You are gifted the experience of your own Self, a blessing that is catalyzed by your repeating the mantra during your meditation.

Even more powerful is the mystical inner awakening for which Muktananda was well known. I received Maha Shaktipat Diksha from him, the inner initiation providing the opportunity to get enlightened in one lifetime. This gift of Grace fueled my own inner process and gives me the ability to serve and support you in the same way.

Still, you are the one who must do it. You can meditate at any time, for any amount of time, in any physical position and using any methodology. Your one-minute or five-minute meditation will make a difference in how you feel. More meditation will make more of a difference. Different types of meditation have different effects. You get to choose what you like. Just do it.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "QUICK FIXES"

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