



the urban retreat 2013

establishing a daily meditation practice

These are a few practical pointers for how to set up a daily meditation practice – how to create the conditions in which you are more likely to be able to meditate every day and engage with it more successfully.

what is the best time of day to meditate?

Like most “skills” meditation works through practice, through learning and accumulating experience day by day. Regularity and consistency is the key. Twenty minutes practice each day is much better than an-hour-and-a-half every Sunday. Try and find a time in your day that you can create the space and time for the practice. Often people find the start of the day is best – before the day has “kicked off” and one's mind is being pulled around by various demands and distractions. Or the end of the day can be good if you are not too tired, and your meditation can have a flavour of letting the day go and preparing for the next one. It is best, if possible, not to meditate too soon after busyness or frenetic mental activity – it'll just be carrying on inside your head! Have time for the mind to slow down. But there aren't any rules about what time is best; it needs to be a time that is practically possible for you.

don't worry too much if you miss a day!

Sometimes people miss a day and then think “I've blown it now” and don't meditate for the rest of the week! I don't know what the psychology behind this is. Perhaps it is a kind of perfectionism that thinks: “If it is not perfect, it is not worth it and I might as well give up”. But practice will never be perfect. Just do what you can. If you miss a

day or two, come back the next day. Often you'll be surprised by how you can pick up the threads and carry on.

avoid being distracted and disrupted

Before you meditate, switch *on* the answer-phone and switch *off* your mobile phone! Do what you can to ensure you won't be distracted or disrupted. If you live with others, explain to them what you are doing and why it is important to you. Ask them not to disturb you, even if the phone rings and it is for you. Sometimes parents take it in turns to meditate while the other looks after the kids. This time to meditate is important, not selfish or indulgent.

create a special place to meditate

By “special place” I don't necessarily mean a wooden cabin near where a mountain stream runs by some beautiful pine trees. It may be more modest than that! But is there somewhere in your home where you can create a space for meditation? Maybe you have got a summerhouse or attic that you can use, or perhaps it is a corner of your bedroom or a space in the office. Some candles, or flowers, or a picture can give some focus and make the place special in a way that creates a more meditative atmosphere.

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