

How to Stick to Meditation: Two-Pager

My goal here is to give you everything you need to stick to meditation for the rest of your life (on 1 page).

This isn't as ambitious as it sounds – there are a handful of rules to follow to make any behavior a lasting habit. If you read this and – here's the trick – ACTUALLY DO what's recommend RIGHT NOW. Then you'll have the foundation to become a lifelong meditator.

We'll cover what is meditation, why you should do it, and how to stick to it.

What is meditation?

Meditation is the practice of coming back to your direct experience.

This is what all forms have in common – sometimes you follow your breathing, sometimes you feel your body (yoga), sometimes you focus on walking, etc.

The essential mechanism is training your awareness – cultivating your capacity to be aware of your direct experience.

People think you're not supposed to think while you meditate – you have to quiet your mind. That's silly! The mind is a thinking machine. Your job is to observe your thoughts. And come back to awareness – rather than getting lost in the thought stream.

Every time you come back to your awareness of the present moment – that's the meditation. You should view meditation as one continuous process of distraction and coming back.

Why meditate?

When you train your awareness you expand your capacity to experience your life.

You heighten your sensory experience. And you come to see that you are not your thoughts and emotions. Thoughts and emotions are not reality.

This little bit of insight is very important.

By not identifying with these things you transcend them. You are beyond the ups and downs and the push and pull of emotions. Of course you still experience them. But you are not dominated by them.

Can you see how training to more fully experience your life is important?

Your life is the meditation!

It's not about sitting on a cushion for 15 minutes. It's about coming back to your life. In the same way you get lost in your imagination and fantasy and miss out on your breathing – the same happens with your life. "Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans" as the saying goes.

Do you want to spend your life remembering the past or planning the future? Or do you want to live your life?

This is real meditation practice.

How do you make meditation a habit?

Follow these rules. And if I tell you to do something here, DO it.

You must schedule your formal meditation practice first thing in the morning. Schedule it – means make an appointment with yourself. You wouldn't miss a date with your friend or a meeting with your boss. So don't miss this appointment with your life.

It is important that it's first thing in the morning. If you schedule it later, the demands of the day will crowd it out. Also, morning practice primes your trajectory for a better day.

You should start with 10 minutes. If you try to do longer it will be too hard. The key to maintaining motivation is momentum. And the key to momentum is making the game easy to win.

You will go to this appointment with your life **every day**. Zen teacher Suzuki Roshi said – even if the sun were to rise from the west, the practitioner has only one way. Your meditation practice should be the unchanging anchor of your life. Just sit every day and watch what happens.

***Write down or schedule in your calendar a 10 minute meditation appointment during your morning routine. Commit to doing it every day.**

Now you will want to build in a tracking system and reward for your meditation habit. Try having coffee or breakfast or a hot shower or some other little reward right after your meditation. This will build positive psychological conditioning. You also need a way to measure accountability. I recommend a daily checklist or a physical tracker (eg marbles in a jar) that you mark complete every time you show up for your meditation.

***Write or type. What is your reward? What is your tracking system? Create your tracking system now** (I recommend a printed out calendar or spreadsheet left somewhere visible).

Create a space. The human mind tends to assign mental accounts to various settings. This is why it's easier to workout once you arrive at the gym or study at the library than it is doing either in your living room. You should purchase a cushion, chair, or other set up and create a dedicated meditation spot.

***Purchase your supplies and write out your plan for your meditation space now.**

Finally you will **need encouragement**. This comes from the support and wisdom of others. You should purchase a book on mindfulness – it can be Buddhist or secular or whatever you like. (My book on How to Stick to Meditation is a good place to start). And you should join a group that bolsters accountability. This can be an online sangha, meditation group, or course. (You can find more resources from me in this email or at sticktomeditation.com).

I encourage you to get my full book or follow me @jacksonkerchis for more content on mindfulness, contemplative practice, and the study of happiness.

You now have all the tools you need. They say 80% of success in life is showing up. **Well 100% of success in meditation is showing up.** Just show up and day after day you won't notice much difference. But in a few months your awareness will transform you.

And remember, your life is the meditation.