

BASIC BREATH MEDITATION

1.

Sit in a comfortable position.
See options on the following page.

2.

Keep your eyes slightly open,
your gaze resting on the ground several feet in front of you.

3.

Become aware of your breathing.
Breathe through your nose, easily and naturally.
Do not intentionally force your breath.

4.

Beginning at the top of your head and progressing
down to your feet, check in with your body.
Register areas of tightness, pressure or discomfort.
Take a moment to breathe into each area
and actively relax areas of discomfort to the extent you are able.
After the exhale, direct your attention back to the breath.

5.

In order to sustain your focus, at the bottom of the exhale,
mentally utter a single word or count from 1 to 10.
For example, breathe IN, OUT, "ONE", IN, OUT, "TWO",
or breathe IN, OUT "REST" etc.

6.

Meditate for at least 5 minutes daily.
As you are comfortable, lengthen how long you sit.
Even one minute of quiet sitting is beneficial.
Practice sitting for longer periods of time.
Try sitting for 20 ~ 30 minutes, even up to 1 hour.

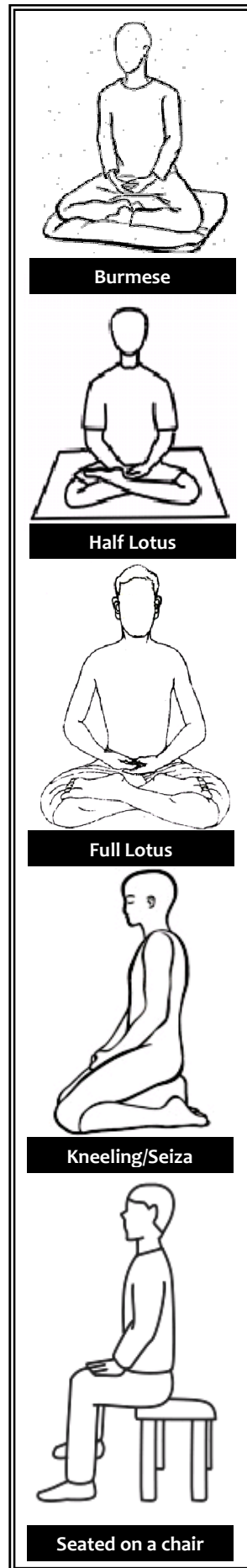
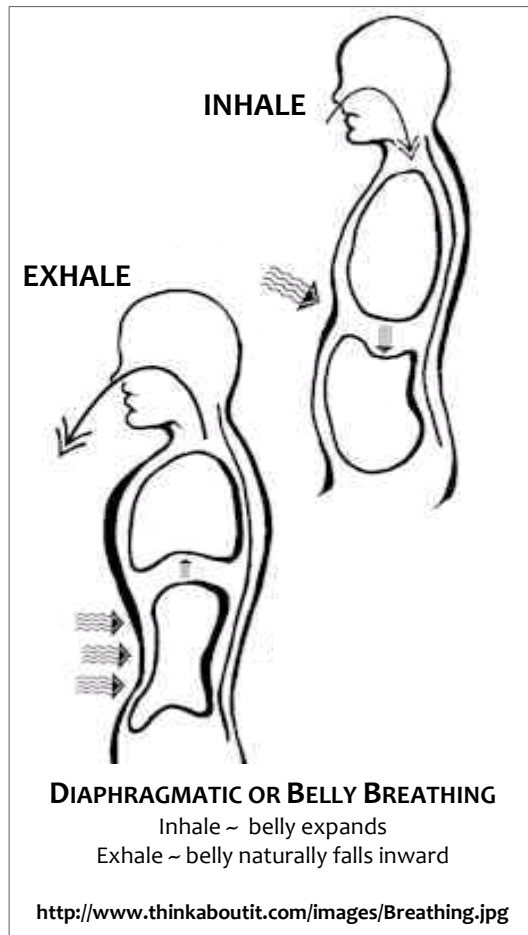
Do not worry about measuring the success of your meditation.
When distracting thoughts occur, which they will,
simply begin with a new breath.

There is a lengthy list detailing the benefits of meditation pages 3-5



If seated in a chair, sit forward on the edge of the chair with a sense of length in your spine. Allow your hands to rest in a comfortable position (on your knees or in your lap).

If you are seated on the floor you can sit with your legs crossed in *Burmese* (feet one in front of the other), half or full lotus position. If kneeling, perch on a low bench or cushions to alleviate pressure on your knees. In all floor seated positions, it is optimal for your knees to be firmly rooted on the ground, your hips elevated higher than your knees. This allows for your posture to be stable and prevents strain on your low back. Regardless of how you are sitting, feel your lower body rooted and firm, your chest open, your upper body light.



Sitting posture images
<http://www.chikung-unlimited.com/Meditation-Positions.html>



Some of the benefits of meditation are well researched and documented. Others are more *ethereal*. I include the list below for your own assessment. While I cannot testify to the validity of each *benefit*, I have had a daily meditation practice for over a dozen years. I continue to perceive benefit in a variety of ways. I keep sitting.

PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFITS

1. Lowers oxygen consumption
2. Decreases respiratory rate
3. Increases blood flow and slows the heart rate
4. Increases exercise tolerance
5. Leads to a deeper level of physical relaxation
6. Lowers blood pressure
7. Reduces anxiety attacks by lowering the levels of blood lactate
8. Decreases muscle tension
9. Helps reduce inflammation (beneficial for allergies, arthritis etc.)
10. Reduces pre-menstrual syndrome symptoms
11. Helps in post-operative healing
12. Enhances the immune system
13. Reduces viral activity
14. Enhances energy, strength and vigor
15. Helps with weight loss
16. Reduces free radicals and related tissue damage
17. Increases skin resistance
18. Lowers cholesterol levels, lowers risk of cardiovascular disease
19. Improves respiratory air flow resulting in easier breathing
20. Decreases the aging process
21. Raises level of DHEA (Dehydroepiandrosterone)
22. Prevents, slows or controls pain of chronic diseases
23. Decreases perspiration
24. Beneficial for headaches & migraines
25. Increases orderliness of brain functioning
26. Reduced need for medical care
27. Conserves energy
28. Increases interest in sports & activities
29. Relieves asthma
30. Improves performance in athletic events
31. Normalizes ideal weight
32. Harmonizes the endocrine system
33. Relaxes the nervous system (by stimulating parasympathetic nervous activation)
34. Produces lasting beneficial changes in brain electrical activity
35. Beneficial for infertility. Stress interferes with critical hormone release for ovulatory regulation and decreases blood flow to the uterus.



PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS

36. Builds self-confidence
37. Increases serotonin levels which influence mood and behavior
38. Alleviates fear and phobia
39. Assists in influencing thought patterns
40. Helps with focus & concentration
41. Increases creativity
42. Increases brain wave coherence
43. Improves learning ability and memory
44. Increases feelings of vitality and rejuvenation
45. Increases emotional stability (offers a sense of stability in the midst of intense emotion)
46. Can improve relationships (*through all previously mentioned reasons*)
47. Slows the rate of the mind aging
48. Increased awareness assists in modifying difficult behavior patterns
49. Cultivates (or provides more space for) intuition
50. Increases productivity
51. Improved relations at home & at work (*through all previously mentioned reasons*)
52. Allows one to see the larger picture in a given situation
53. Facilitates not getting overly caught up in petty issues
54. Increases ability to solve complex problems
55. Reduces road rage
56. Develops will power
57. Enhances communication between the two brain hemispheres
58. Enables more rapid and effective response to stressful event
59. Increases overall motor performance
60. Stimulates intellectual development (*through all previously mentioned reasons*)
61. Increases job satisfaction (*through all previously mentioned reasons*)
62. Increases the capacity for intimate contact with loved ones
63. Decreases mental illness
64. Increases more sociable behavior
65. Decreases aggression
66. Assists in addictive processes (*quitting smoking, alcoholism etc*)
67. Reduces need and dependency on drugs, pills & pharmaceuticals
68. Decreases need for sleep to recover from sleep deprivation
69. Require less time to fall asleep, assists insomnia (*see River Rock meditation*)
70. Increases sense of responsibility for one's life and choices
71. Decreases restless thinking
72. Decreases worry
73. Assists in managing worry when it arises
74. Increases listening skills and empathy
75. Assists in perception and judgment
76. Increases tolerance
77. Cultivates composure to act in considered & constructive ways
78. Supports development of a stable, balanced personality
79. Develops emotional maturity



SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

80. Helps keep things in perspective
81. Provides peace of mind, happiness
82. Clarifies purpose in life
83. Increases self-actualization
84. Increases compassion
85. Cultivates wisdom
86. Supports deeper understanding of self and others
87. Supports integration of body, mind, and spirit
88. Supports spiritual relaxation
89. Increased acceptance of oneself
90. Cultivates forgiveness
91. Can shift attitude toward life
92. Cultivates a deeper sense of relationship to *God/oneness/all*
93. Supports attaining *enlightenment/oneness*
94. Greater inner-directedness
95. Creates a widening, deepening capacity for love
96. Decreases 'me' centered consciousness
97. Supports consciousness beyond ego
98. Supports inner sense of *assurance or knowingness*
99. Cultivates acceptance of the inevitable difficulties in life
100. Supports ability to live in the present moment

edited version of the list found at

<http://www.inedmotivation.com/blog/2008/05/100-benefits-of-meditation/>

