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## Crossed-leg position



This position is more accessible than the two previous ones. Each foot is placed below the opposite knee. This means that the knees are no longer in contact with the ground.

In this position, be sure to take the time to position your legs and feet. Otherwise, you may experience pain in your feet, ankles, or knees. Make sure to distribute your weight equally among all the points where your body comes in contact with the ground.

As in the earlier positions, remember to keep your back nice and straight, without arching your lower back.

## Hand position

There are hundreds of hand positions, but the following positions are the most common ones.



Palms upward



in a circle over the abdomen



resting on the knees

They are conducive to meditation because they allow for proper positioning of the shoulders, while encouraging good posture and a feeling of stability and centeredness.

## Getting started

The goal of this first stage is to introduce you to the principal forms of meditation by giving you an overview of the various basic meditation techniques.

For these first two weeks, the program will consist of 5 meditation sessions per week, for a total of 10.

You will be doing one meditation session per day, leaving you two days in the week with no meditation. It's up to you to decide which two days they will be. We suggest that you work out your schedule at the beginning of the week, to write it down in your progression guide, and to do everything you can to stick to it.

Make sure to have a small CD player with you for your sessions. Then just follow the instructions in the guide about what track to use. Don't think about the time, and concentrate exclusively on your meditation.

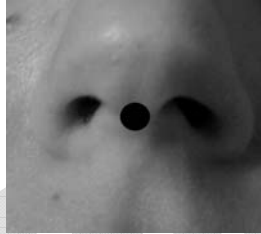
Before starting your first session, make sure to have with you:

- The meditation guide
- The EasySteps Meditation CDs
- Ideally, some ointment to help open your breathing passages, e.g. Vicks, Tiger Balm, or others (available in drugstores)
- If necessary, your meditation mat and/or cushion

## 1st session (25 minutes)

### 1) Get settled into your meditation position

2) **Apply a bit of ointment** under your nose, between your nostrils (a tiny dot is enough), at the exact point indicated on the image below.



### 3) Read the following instructions carefully:

#### a) Enter the meditation mindset (10 minutes)

Take a few deep breaths and take the time to go through each step slowly and calmly.

Step 1: become conscious of your environment

Step 2: become conscious of your body

Step 3: become conscious of your breathing

Step 4: become conscious of simply being present

#### b) Meditation: **Vipassana** (15 minutes)

Focus precisely on the sensation of the air passing under your nose.

Imagine that what you are feeling is like the blade of a saw (the air) moving across a log (the rounded point under your nose), and concentrate exclusively on the sensation at that point. Do not follow the flow of air into your nose. Stay focused exclusively on the point of contact between the air and the spot where you applied the ointment. Just as when you are sawing a plank of wood, you focus on the place where the blade is cutting into the wood, and not on the blade itself.

Notice how the sensation is stronger when you are breathing in or breathing out. Conversely, between each breath, the air stops moving and the sensation becomes fainter, almost imperceptible. This is the moment when it is easiest to lose your concentration. Focus your attention precisely on this point, even if you don't feel anything in particular.

After a few minutes, your mind is sure to start wandering, and you will let yourself get carried away by your thoughts: "I'm not sure if I'm doing it right, I mustn't forget to feed the cat before I leave, my back hurts, etc."

As soon as you notice that this is happening, bring your attention back to the sensation of the air under your nose. Don't blame yourself, don't get angry with yourself. Simply bring your attention back, gently but firmly, to the spot underneath your nose.

**At the beginning of your practice, the key to making progress is not so much to stay focused on the sensation as it is to learn to keep on tirelessly bringing your attention back to the sensation of air under your nose. By repeating this action ten times, or a hundred times, over the course of each session, your mind will learn to control itself, little by little.**

So keep doing this as often as necessary with your breath, as soon as you realize that your mind has wandered. Whatever you do, don't tense up. Become aware... and tirelessly bring back your attention, without judging yourself or letting your emotions take over.

At the sound of the gong, slowly open your eyes, take 2-3 deep breaths, and remain seated that way for another minute or two in awareness of your body.

**4) Start TRACK 1 of DISC 1 and let the CD guide you.**

## Developing your practice

Progress, personal fulfillment, and inner transformation are the fruit of regular practice. We have repeated this a number of times in this method, and it's such an important point that we will keep on repeating it. The goal of this second stage, then, is to help you to develop your practice.

In the first stage, you learned the basic techniques and were able to start familiarizing yourself with meditation. It has now become more of a concrete reality for you, as little by little you come to understand exactly what it consists of. This section presents a recap of the meditation techniques used in stage 1. Here you will find the main instructions for each technique, along with a few additional points.

In this second stage, you will learn how to orient your meditation to achieve the goals you have set for yourself. You will start by determining what objectives you are pursuing by practicing meditation, and you will learn to plan your sessions with the help of your progression guide, which will now become your primary resource for your future meditation sessions.

Finally, you will also find solutions in this section to the problems that you've most likely already encountered in your practice, or that you will encounter before long. Don't hesitate to read and re-read these suggestions; they will be very useful in helping you to progress.

## Relaxing meditation

### Objective

If your goals in meditating are oriented more towards **relaxation and relieving tension**, you should emphasize this technique in your meditation sessions. It will bring you a deep and lasting sense of well-being.

This meditation technique is drawn from the Yoga tradition. It represents a very powerful tool to free yourself from tension— both muscle tension and mental tension. It provides a deep sense of well-being and relaxation throughout your entire body.

It is particularly useful for those who have trouble calming their minds during their meditation sessions, and who struggle to escape from the whirlwind of their thoughts.

On the other hand, this technique will prove difficult for those who have to fight against drowsiness, because the relaxation and well-being it provides can also trigger a powerful urge to nod off to sleep. Here again, the goal is to find a happy medium between deep relaxation and intense concentration.

### Instructions

Concentrate on the sensations of your body.

Start with the top of your head at first. What do you feel? Nothing at all? If you keep concentrating on it for a little while, you will surely notice some slight sensation; you may even start to feel a little itch.

Next move down to the level of your neck and shoulders, and with each exhalation, relax your muscles a little bit more. For this technique, you can force your breathing slightly so that it is deeper than usual.

Next move down to your back, and relax each vertebra. Be careful, though: your spinal column must remain perfectly straight and aligned.

Don't allow it to slouch. It should remain straight on its own, without any help from your muscles.

Play around a bit to find that balance between total relaxation of your muscles and a perfectly straight position of the spine. Imagine that your spinal column is a stack of bricks placed one on top of the other, maintaining perfect balance without any particular effort.

Finish by exploring your lower back and the base of your spine, your abdominal muscles, pelvis, legs, and finally your feet, and always repeat the same process: with each exhalation, relax each muscle a little bit more, as if that part of your body were being pulled to the ground by a stronger force of gravity.

It is important to keep concentrating on each part of your body for long enough to relax it thoroughly. Skimming quickly through this exercise in a few minutes would be of no use at all. Take your time.

At the end of this exercise, visualize your body as a whole, perfectly symmetrical and relaxed. Imagine yourself sitting in the middle of a white desert, with nothing around you, and become a mountain, perfectly immobile and majestic. Imagine yourself as part of the earth: an immense rock just sitting there, immobile, surrounded by an aura of absolute serenity and well-being.

Next, imagine that there are rays of pure white light shining out all around you from every pore of your skin. Illuminate everything around you.

It's as though you had always been there, and would always remain there. The notion of time barely seems to matter. You are, quite simply, right there where you are.

# Setting your goals

In music, you might set yourself a goal of learning to play Beethoven's "Für Elise" in six months; in sports, you might aim to be able to run five kilometers in thirty minutes within three months.

What's different than in many other disciplines, though, is that in meditation, the results are more difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, there are two aspects that will help to ensure efficient and rapid progress.

## 1) Regular practice

If you meditate consistently and diligently, following the instructions given for each technique, you can be absolutely sure that you'll make progress. Even if you sometimes have the feeling that you're no longer getting anywhere, the way to keep progressing is just to sit back down on your meditation mat the next day— and the next day, and the next. And then you'll realize one fine day that your life is indeed changing, little by little. Your best indication of this will be the reactions of the people around you; they are the ones who will be the mirror of your progress.

You'll start to hear comments like "You seem a lot more relaxed lately", or, when you find an original solution to some problem, "Hey, yeah, I never would have thought of that— how did you come up with that?" Even if you don't realize it yourself, others will see it.

## 2) A clear direction

As in most disciplines— music, sports, the arts, and so on— we progress more efficiently and feel more motivated when we have a clearly-defined objective, so that we know where we are going and how far along we are in our progression.

It is also important to determine the factors that are the most important for you, and that led you to start meditating in the first place. By emphasizing certain techniques more than others, you will start to see concrete results more quickly.

These, then, are the two points that we will stress in the pages that follow. We invite you to open your progression guide now, and to keep your meditation and progression guides open together for the stages ahead.

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## Meditation in daily life

The ultimate goal of meditation is, of course, to achieve well-being and happiness throughout your life— not only when you are sitting on your meditation pillow.

As you finish with the first two stages of this method, you are surely feeling the benefits of meditation quite naturally already in your day-to-day life.

We will now start to accelerate your inner transformation, and integrate meditation even more fully into your life, with the help of “mini-meditation” techniques that you can practice throughout the day.

These little exercises, which you will be able to practice anywhere, will allow you to maintain, throughout your day, the calm and insightful state of mind that you experience during meditation sessions.

This third stage is a bit different from the previous two in that you have already done a lot of meditation practice over the past few months. You are therefore able to manage your progression by yourself now.

The fact that you’ve come this far shows that you have a strong enough desire to progress, and that you have probably become aware of the positive effects that meditation can bring to your life. Therefore, we will not be reviewing the meditation techniques themselves here, since you have now been able to experience them for yourself. All that you need is practice.

This third stage, then, will be particularly concerned with techniques that will allow you to extend the positive effects of meditation into your daily life.

You can rely on your progression guide to support you as you move forward, to help keep you motivated, and to track your progress through everything you will learn in the coming weeks.

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