What is meditation?

There are many types of meditation. The one definition that fits almost all types is... “Consciously directing your attention to alter your state of consciousness.”

There's no limit to the things you can direct your attention toward... symbols, sounds, colors, breath, uplifting thoughts, spiritual realms, etc. Meditation is simply about attention... where you direct it, and how it alters your consciousness.

What is the purpose of meditation?

Traditionally meditation was (and still is) used for spiritual growth...i.e. becoming more conscious; unfolding our inner Light, Love, & Wisdom; becoming more aware of the guiding Presence in our lives; accelerating our journey home to our True Self... our Spirit.

More recently, meditation has become a valuable tool for finding a peaceful oasis of relaxation and stress relief in a demanding, fast-paced world.

Other uses include:

- Healing
- Emotional cleansing & balancing
- Deepening concentration & insight
- Manifesting change
- Developing intuition
- Unlocking creativity
- Exploring higher realities
- Finding inner guidance

General Guidelines for Meditation

Put your expectations aside, and don't worry about doing it right. There are infinite possibilities and no fixed criterion for determining right meditation. There are, however, a few things to avoid. They are...

1. Trying to force something to happen.
2. Over-analyzing the meditation.
3. Trying to make your mind blank or chase thoughts away.
4. Putting too much emphasis on doing it right.

It's not necessary - or advisable - to meditate on a completely empty stomach. If you're hungry, have a little something to eat before meditating.

Find a quiet, comfortable place to meditate. You can sit in a comfortable chair, on the bed, on the floor... anywhere that's comfortable. It's not necessary to sit cross-legged. Your legs can be in any position that is comfortable. Eliminate as much noise and as many potential distractions as possible. Don't worry about those things that you can not control.

When you sit to meditate, sit comfortably, with your spine reasonably straight. This allows the spiritual energy to flow freely up the spine, which is an important aspect of meditation. Leaning against a chair back, a wall, headboard, etc. is perfectly all right. If, for physical reasons, you can't sit up, lay flat on your back.

Place your hands in any position that is comfortable. If it does not go against your beliefs, call on a "higher source" for assistance in your meditation. Any form is all right. This can be quite helpful, but is not absolutely necessary.

When beginning your meditation practice, the most important thing to remember, is to approach meditation with "relaxed effort," and not to be concerned about doing it correctly, or about what is supposed to happen.

Some Misconceptions about Meditation

**Misconception #1.** Meditation is turning off your thoughts or making your mind a blank.

**Not True.** Inner quietness is experienced in meditation, but not by willfully turning off thoughts. Quieting the mind results naturally from:

- the effectiveness of the method used... and
- an uplifting spiritual energy that is beyond our own efforts.

**Misconception #2.** Meditation is difficult and requires great concentration.

**Not True.** Meditation can be easily learned and practiced. Meditation is only difficult if we become too concerned with doing it correctly or incorrectly. Although staying focused in meditation does become easier with time and practice, it is definitely not a requirement for beginning to meditate. Thinking that we should be good at focusing when first starting out, is essentially putting the cart before the horse.

**Misconception #3.** Meditation is not successful unless we see interesting things in our mind.

**Not True.** Although some meditations are specifically for visualizing, many are not. In those meditations, seeing things may be entertaining, but is not essential. Even visualization does not necessarily require seeing. Some people sense or feel things inwardly, and that's all right.
MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

The following meditation is said to be the meditation taught by Gautama Buddha about 2500 years ago. The primary focus is your breathing. However, the primary goal is maintaining a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting enmeshed in them. This calm, accepting, spacious awareness is your Core Self... your Essence.

Steps of Mindfulness Meditation

1. Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
2. Direct your attention to your breathing. (Count each breath in up to the number 7, if it helps)
3. When thoughts, emotions, physical sensations or external sounds occur, simply accept them, allowing them to come and go without judging or getting involved with them.
4. When you notice that your attention has drifted off and become engaged in thoughts or emotions, simply bring it back to your breathing and continue.
5. Remember... it's ok and natural for thoughts to arise, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.

Benefits of this meditation:
• Maintaining your calm inner awareness, balance & clarity in the midst of any situation.
• A gradual shift to a higher level of consciousness... centered in the peace, joy & freedom of your Spirit.
• Increased insight & clarity... seeing things truly, as they are.
• Stress reduction.

RELAXATION MEDITATION

This remarkably easy and relaxing meditation makes use of a little-known secret about the eyes. Allowing the eyes to rest in a soft downward gaze has an instant, automatic relaxing effect.

Steps of Relaxation Meditation

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed.
2. Allow your eyes to rest comfortably downward, gazing softly, but not focused on anything.
3. Without closing your eyes completely, let your eyelids drop to a level that feels most comfortable.
4. Continue gazing downward... the act of gazing is your primary focus (rather than the area at which you are gazing). You may notice your breathing becoming more rhythmic.
5. It's ok to let your attention drift a bit. If your eyes become very heavy, it's ok to let them close. If you notice you've come out of your relaxed space, simply bring your attention back to your relaxed downward gaze.

COLOR HEALING MEDITATION

We are not just our physical selves. We are multi-dimensional beings, composed of an Inner Spirit, a mental body, an emotional body, a vital body, and a physical body.

The energy of these bodies becomes progressively subtler from physical to spiritual. Illness begins with disharmony in one of these energy bodies. If not harmonized, the dis-ease moves outward, effecting the denser bodies, ultimately manifesting as physical illness.

Total healing requires restoring harmony to all of our bodies. This meditation is designed to cleanse and harmonize your various bodies with the healing energies of color.

Steps of Color Healing Meditation

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed.
2. Visualize a large ball of radiant Golden light a few inches over your head. Visualize that ball of light slowly descending through your crown, filling your entire being with golden light.
3. Imagine yourself absorbing that light as it nourishes, cleanses & heals your whole being - your Spirit and all of your bodies - dissolving all blocked and toxic energies.
4. Repeat this exercise, visualizing a ball of Red light. Continue through the entire spectrum like this, visualizing a ball of Orange light; Yellow light; Green light; Blue light; Indigo light; and Violet light. Go through the spectrum at whatever pace feels appropriate.
5. Take some time to visualize yourself in a state of perfect, radiant health.

Benefits of this meditation:
• Cleansing, balancing, & healing at all levels... Spiritual, Mental, Emotional, Vital, & Physical.
• Develops concentration & visualization abilities.
Gap Meditation

It has been said that it’s the space between the bars that holds the tiger. And it’s the silence between the notes that makes the music. It is out of the silence, or “the gap”, or that space between our thoughts, that everything is created—including our own bliss. The reason for wanting to get into the gap is not so much to give you a sense of peace, which you will, of course, receive, and it’s not so much to make you feel rested, as it will—you will get the equivalent of a night’s sleep by spending a few moments in the gap. And it’s not even to make you feel younger, which of course it will do. The purpose of entering the gap, the space between your thoughts, on a regular basis, is to be able to make conscious contact with God.

The reason that it is so difficult for so many people to enter this gap is because we have so many thoughts going on all day long. It is said that the average person has 60,000 thoughts every single day. The problem is that we have the same 60,000 thoughts each day. Our mind is very noisy. And very seldom in a place of silence. If you could reduce that number of thoughts that you have from 60,000 to 20,000, there would be more gaps. If you could reduce it down to 6,000, there’d be far more gaps. And if you could reduce it to a few hundred, of course there’d be many, many gaps.

What we are looking for here is a time each day that you can reduce the amount of thoughts that you’re having so that the gaps will expand and you can enter them.

The first thing that we need to do is find a way to simply observe what it feels like to be in this gap.

We can begin to get that feeling by using the first ten words of The Lord’s Prayer:

“Our Father Who Art In Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name”

In a quiet space, in whatever posture is most comfortable for you, close your eyes, and put all of you’re attention on the word Our. See it appear on the inner screen of your mind. Focus all of your energy on this word. Now shift your inner attention to the word Father.

See it appear in your mind, and think only of this word.

Now comes the indescribably exquisite part, which each of us experiences in our own way. Make a quick adjustment in your mind, and follow this with an ever-so-slight movement of your head toward the left. Put all of your attention in the space in your mind between the words Our and Father. Stay in this space between these two words for 10 to 15 seconds, and note how it feels to rest your mind on nothing but that space. Picture the gap, and experience the peaceful and nurturing quality of being in it.

You have now initiated the process of entering the gap.

Due to your mind’s habit of focusing on a thought, rather than the gap between your thoughts, you’ll undoubtedly find a thought creeping in. If that happens, immediately, but gently pull your inner attention back to the words Our and Father and ever so slightly move your head to the left and reenter the gap. From then on, use any thought as a clue to go forward, and repeat the technique with the rest of the words of The Lord’s Prayer.

“Through meditation, we can tap in to
An abundance of creative energy that resides within us,
And a more meaningful experience of life,
Which enriches us permanently.”

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer

From the Book : Getting in the Gap, Making conscious contact with God through meditation.