



# Meditation For Beginners – The Ultimate Guide For Building A Meditation Habit

Do you wish to start meditating? Perhaps you have tried to start, but simply can't find the discipline or time to start. If that is your case, you came to the right place. This is a meditation guide for beginners, to help you build a **meditation habit**.

This post is for those that are not yet hyper-motivated or hyper-disciplined, but know that meditation is beneficial, and need a bit of help from habit building science to start meditating.

These principles are designed to make creating a meditation habit as easy as it can be. It will guide you to create triggers, setup small tweaks in your lifestyle (to facilitate practice and remove obstacles), and also increase your motivation. What you will learn in this post will also be useful for creating any other types of habit in your life.

Download the worksheets here: <http://bit.ly/1NwvZQ1>. This is the public version of the document, and is read only. For you to edit you need to either download it, or copy it to your Google Drive. [This](#) is how to download it.

*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." – Aristotle<sup>1</sup>*

## Seven Steps to Starting a Meditation Habit

In building a new habit, motivation is not everything, but it is definitely important.

How to Build a  
**Meditation Habit**  
Beginner's Guide

**1** Discover Your True Values



**2** Link Meditation to Values



**3** Commit to a Time & Place



**4** Use a Trigger & a Reward



**5** Be Accountable to someone



**6** Have the Right Attitude



**7** Hang Out with Meditators



**Live & Dare**  
master your MIND • master your LIFE

The best way to develop motivation is to first understand what are your true values – goals, desires, aspirations – in life, and then to link the meditation practice with your values. By “values” I don’t mean personal qualities like “honesty” and “integrity” – I mean those activities & goals that most consume your soul. It is what you are hungry for.

## STEP 1: Discover your true values



Your values in life are those things that you love to think about, read about, talk about, and learn about. Go through the following questions to come up with your top 5 values.

- How do you spend most of your time (apart from work)?
- Where do you spend your money most?
- What area in your life are you most reliable, disciplined and focused?
- What do you most think about, desire, and dream about?
- What do you love to learn, read about, and explore?
- What inspires you the most?
- Fast forward your life 10 years and look back. You are proud of achieving one thing. What is that?

Your values in life change by time, and so will your motivation to practice. So you might need to go through this process again after one or two years.

You can use the worksheet at the bottom of the post to fill this up. Read more about value discovery [here](#).

**Action:** List the five values that are most important in your life.

## STEP 2: Link meditation to your values



Now that you went through this soul-searching exercise, you have a better idea of what is truly important for you. We naturally feel motivated and joyful to do the things that help us live/achieve our values. So you need to discover how meditation will serve each one of your values.

The task is to write 5 ways that meditation practice will help each one of your values. Let's go through four examples of values: "Career", "Parenting", "Artistic Expression", and "Spirituality".

### Career

- Meditation will give me the power of focus and concentration to improve my performance at work
- Meditation will help me develop clarity in making the best decisions at every turn in my career
- Meditation will give me the emotional balance to go through hard moments in my job (like redundancy, conflicts, etc.)
- Meditation will improve my listening and relating skills, allowing me to be a better leader
- Meditation will be a tool for replenishing my energies after a long day of work

### Parenting

- Meditation will prevent me from snapping at my children without any reason
- Meditation will help me set a good example of character for my child
- Meditation will help me understand and better connect with my child, being truly present for him/her
- Meditation will keep me sane when everything goes wrong
- Meditation will give me knowledge about my biases, preventing me to force my children to go through things that aren't for them

## Artistic Expression

- Meditation will give me more clarity over my own emotions and how to express them
- Meditation will improve my creativity
- Meditation will allow me to discover my unique voice and deeper drives in my art
- Meditation will allow me to connect to higher states of consciousness, and bring that energy into my art
- Meditation will open my eyes to appreciate art in newer ways

## Spirituality

- Meditation will help me see reality as it is, in a deeper level
- Meditation will help me have a better control over my emotions and instincts, to live a spiritual life
- Meditation will strengthen my self-awareness, which is the base of all virtues and transformations
- Meditation will allow me to be who I am, truly
- Meditation will free me from bondage to negative mental states

That's the idea. Give some time to develop this. It may seem like a needless exercise, but this is actually hard wiring, in your brain, the importance of meditation. It is making it an essential tool for powerful drives that are already there.

The clearer you know how meditation links to your values, the easier it is to stick to the habit and prevent self-sabotage for your reptilian brain.

On the other hand, do understand that these benefits come by time, little by little.

Once you are done, have a break and really let sink in the importance of meditation for you.

**Action:** For each of your top five values, make a list of five reasons stating why meditation will help you fulfill that value.

To create a habit that sticks, you need to make it really easy for you to follow. It needs to fit well in your daily routine.

### STEP 3: Commit to a time, place, and practice



The need to constantly make decisions about our daily activities and routine wears away our will-power. This makes creating any habit a forceful and frustrating endeavor. It doesn't need to be like that.

So, for the habit to meditate, we want to have four very clear definitions. They are:

- **Time** of practice
- **Length** of the session
- **Place** of practice
- **Tools** to be used ([cushion or chair](#), guided or unguided)

Practicing meditation at the same place and time, every day, makes it easier for it to become part of your life. After a couple of weeks, when its time to meditate, your body and mind “already know” and is naturally moving towards that activity. The familiar setting of time and place also helps your mind to be in the right state for the practice.

The most critical of these four elements is the **time of practice**. I strongly suggest the mornings, for [several reasons](#), but whatever makes sense for you is ok.

Be sure that your commitment is *precise and specific*. For instance, “*I’ll meditate for 15 minutes every morning at 6am, and on weekends at 8am*” is pretty solid. There is no place for doubt here – you have made your decision once, and you don’t need to think about it anymore. You can set an alarm clock on your phone, and when it rings, you get the cushion and sit. Nothing to decide. Set and forget.

If, instead, you make a vague commitment – such as “*I’ll meditate a little bit every night after dinner*” – you are setting yourself up for failure. After dinner the thought may come “should I meditate now or answer my emails first?” If you decide to answer your emails... boom, you’re gone! After you are done with this task you may be too tired to practice, or may again postpone it in favor of another task. Better to free your mind from all these inner conflicts, and make a very clear commitment to yourself.

For the **session length**, don't be too ambitious in the beginning. Take baby steps; start smaller than what you are capable of doing. This is very important. Start with something you cannot fail, and slowly increase as weeks go by and as your interest grows. You can even start with two minutes a day, and increase one minute every other day. Read more about it [here](#).

The smaller you start with, the easier it will be for you to keep up with it and never regress. If building habits is not easy for you, then it's better start with 2~3 minutes per day, even if you *can* do 20 minutes. In the beginning, simply building the habit is what you are focusing on.

Decide also the **place for your practice**. Will it be in your bedroom, living room, or garden? Is that place going to be available for you, without distraction, at the time of your practice? If you need to speak to anyone about your new habit (to let them know you won't be available at that time, and need some silence), now is the time to do it.

Finally, as to **tools**, make sure the meditation instructions are clear for you, and that you have a cushion or chair prepared for the practice. If you will be doing guided meditation, make sure you have already downloaded the app or tracks, and have them ready to go.

To decide between a chair and a cushion, read [this guide](#).

If you don't know *how to meditate*, pick one type of meditation from [this article](#), according to your goals and likings.

**Action:** (1) Decide when, where and how you will meditate; (2) Speak to people you live with to make sure there will be no disturbance during your practice.

## STEP 4: Setup a trigger and a reward



At this point, it is pretty clear for you why you want to start meditation. You are motivated to do it and also have decided when, where and how to practice. You know how meditation will fit into your routine, and there is no more need to re-think or re-decide this.

So what you need to do now is to set up **triggers**, to make sure you don't forget to do it. What to use as a trigger depends on you. You can get pretty creative with this. Here are some suggestions:

- Setup an alarm clock on your phone five minutes before your meditation time.
- Before going to sleep, put out your meditation cushion or chair next to your bed, so you see it when you wake up.
- Paste some sticky notes on your bathroom mirror, so that after you brush your teeth you get reminded to practice. In this case, brushing your teeth is what we call an *anchor habit*.

Basically, you can design your environment in a way that helps you get reminded of your habit. Some call this *priming*.

The second element is the **reward**. We do things that feel good, or that give us something we value. So one way is to learn to appreciate the reward of meditation itself – how relaxed, refreshed, and calm your body feels after the practice. This is an *intrinsic reward*. You can also use journaling as a tool to help you appreciate meditation more, and feel good about sticking to it. For instance, you can take note of how you see meditation actually helping you to fulfil your values, and the insights you are discovering.

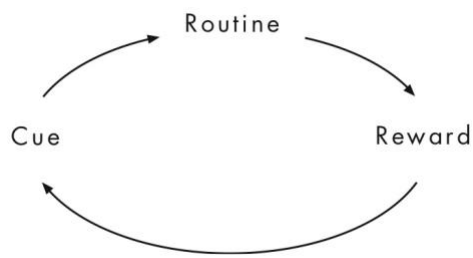
If you can go with the intrinsic reward, that's ideal. If not, try attaching a *extrinsic reward*, such as "I'll have a bite of chocolate after each time I meditate".

You can also connect bigger rewards to **milestones** in your practice, such as 10 days, 30 days, 3 months, 6 months. For example: "After 30 days of daily meditation, I'll give myself X [Insert here object of desire]." Get creative!

Setting up triggers and rewards is very important, both for reminding our brain of the habit, as well as for motivating it to continue doing it. According to behavior specialist [BJ Fogg](#), and other researchers, a habit is made of three elements: cue, routine, reward.

- Alarm rings (cue) —> sit to meditate (routine) —> feel good (reward)
- When brushing my teeth, I see the note (cue) —> sit to meditate (routine) —> go have my favourite coffee (reward)





So choose the **triggers** and **rewards** that make sense to you. Meditating every day will then be easier. Once you do it daily for a while, it becomes second nature and you may find that you barely need any trigger or external reward anymore.

**Action:** Choose and implement one or two triggers to remind you of your routine, and a reward for the practice.

## STEP 5: Be accountable



Accountability is a power tool to keep you committed to your habits. It is the use of peer pressure to your advantage. We want to look good in the eyes of others, and we want to report success, not failure. So if we tell people that we are starting a habit, and we know they will check on us after a few days (“How is your meditation going?”), we are more likely to stick to it. Public accountability can give us the needed push to build or change our habits.

Here are a few ways to bring accountability:

- Announce on your social media that you are starting to meditate everyday.
- Share your decision to meditate with your partner or a friend; if they are starting to meditate at the same time, even better.
- Hire a meditation coach/teacher.

Some people even use the power of negative people in their life, to drive their success. For instance, by announcing, to a person that puts you own or disbelieves your capacity, that you are starting to meditate. Wanting to prove them wrong can be a strong drive. This is definitely not the best type of motivation to practice, so I wouldn't necessarily advise this approach, as it can backfire. But I recognize that for some people it might be the only thing that works – so I'll leave it here. Personally, I started my practice with the wrong type of motivation; as the practice ripened, it transformed the motivation behind it as well.

These are ways to put your word and self-image in the line. Some people also find that putting in money makes the drive even stronger. You can do this by:

- Hiring an accountability coach (as mentioned).
- Making a bet with a friend (“At the end of the month, if I haven't meditated everyday, I'll pay you 100 USD”).
- Using an [anti-charity](#).

Finally, keeping daily a journal of your practice, where you log your sessions and experiences, is another way to hold yourself accountable. The app I mentioned above also allows you to keep a log of your efforts, take notes, and visualize your progress.

**Action:** Find a way to have public accountability in your practice, via friends, social media, or apps like Coach.me.

## STEP 6: Have the right attitude



The easiest way to develop a habit – once you have the above structure in place – is to make it non-negotiable. “No matter what, I will meditate every morning before starting my day”. The *no matter what* part is the key.

*“99% is a bitch; 100% is a breeze”. – Jack Canfield*

Our mind is not always our greatest friend. If you think that perhaps under some “special circumstances” it's ok to skip, your mind will question everyday if today is not one of those

“special circumstances”. You will need to go through this questioning and decision-making situation very often – it will be a waste of energy, attention, and will-power. Don’t go down that rabbit hole.

If you need to be at the airport at 6am tomorrow morning, this may mean that you do only 5 minutes of meditation, or that you will go to sleep at 10pm tonight. Be flexible with everything else, except your commitment.

**Action:** Commit to a “never zero” approach. Success is your only option, 100% of the time.

## STEP 7: Hang out with meditators (optional)



People we spend time with have a deep influence on our mental states and habits (see item 5 of [this post](#)). The same goes for things we read and watch.

So, having friends that meditate, reading books/blogs about meditation, watching YouTube videos and movies that feature meditation – all this helps in building up your motivation and clarity about the practice. Similarly with joining a meditation center (Buddhist sangha, yoga class, etc.) or participating in retreats.

This step is not absolutely needed, but it can be indeed helpful – especially if you wish to go deeper into meditation.

**Action:** Join a meditation center or Meetup; make friends with people who are meditating.

## Dealing with Obstacles

The principles above are all you need, in terms of strategies, to build the habit of meditating every day.

However, once you start, obstacles will come. I don’t have the space to go in-depth about all of them here, but I will briefly speak about the main difficulties you may meet.

To help recognize and deal with obstacles, check out also these two posts:

- [7 hacks for a deep meditation](#)
- [9 meditation mistakes that prevent your practice from unfolding](#)

## Obstacle 1: Getting involved in other things



What happens if you are supposed to meditate at 7am, and at 6:50 you decide to just “quickly check my email” or browse social media? One click leads to another and, the next thing you know, you have been on your smartphone for the last 40 minutes, are now late to work, and will have to “skip meditation today”.

Some activities – especially consuming media on your smartphone, tablet, PC or TV – suck you into a black hole, with no determined end. It’s better to avoid doing them before your meditation time. Even if you do have the discipline to stop it when you want, it is still not advisable. Checking email, social media or news before your meditation will just fill your mind with thoughts. Your meditation will thus be less enjoyable and deep, making it harder for you to get that reward that you seek.

Remove the temptation. Set a clear rule for yourself of no internet until you finish your meditation. You can set your phone on airplane mode when you go to sleep, and put it back to normal after meditation ends. This will help.

## Obstacle 2: Meditation is not going well



If your meditation itself is not going well, don’t let that stop you. Continue doing your practice to the best of your ability. Especially in the beginning, the focus is completely on just building the habit, not so much on the “quality” of your meditation experience. Sitting = success.

You can also search for more information about your practice, experiment with another [type of meditation](#), or talk with more experienced practitioners.

If you experience problems such as falling asleep, itchiness in your body, uneasy breathing patterns, check out [these answers](#).

Also make sure that your belly is not full when you go meditate. If you had a large meal, wait a couple of hours before practicing. The experience is better when your body is light and calm, and your mind is sober.

### Obstacle 3: Negative feelings, self-sabotage, self-criticism



Become aware of your negative self-talk. What excuses do you make for not practicing, or for questioning your commitment?

Get to know the self-sabotage techniques that you typically use. Make a list of the rationalizations you find yourself making, and write some answers to them. For

example:

- *"I woke up late today, no time to practice..."* → "Am I going to skip practice every time I wake up late? Don't I have even 2 minutes to practice?"
- *"Today I feel sick..."* → "But I'm still breathing! Let me sit for a couple of minutes and be mindful of my breath at least."
- *"I'm too agitated/stressed/angry now to meditate!"* → "That is exactly when I need to meditate the most! Let me sit, quiet my mind, and move beyond this disturbance."
- *"I just need to have a quick look at..."* → "Cool, I'll have a look at that, but *after* I meditate."
- *"I have been sitting every day. It won't hurt to skip just today..."* → "What will prevent you from thinking the same tomorrow? Thinking like this is the beginning of failure. Let me keep firm in my commitment, because I know its good for me."
- *"I'm not sure if I can do this."* → "Why not? I've been doing it so far. Just continue, day after day, and these doubts will disappear."
- *"I'm feeling bored with my practice."* → "Meditation is not supposed to be exciting. Feelings of boredom may come, and I can sit through them. Just like with any thought or feeling, I just notice them and bring my attention back to my meditation. This boredom cannot prevent me from practicing!"
- *"I'm not good at this."* → "This is not a competition. I'm just doing what I know is good for me."

The type of disempowering thoughts that come up varies from person to person, but you can get the idea. Having "positive self-talk" prepared beforehand can help. You have the power to ignore these thoughts and stubbornly keep to your commitment.



### Obstacle 4: Things are changing in my life

Can you foresee any trips, big projects, or other potential disruptions that may make it harder for you to keep up with your habit? What are things that might pop in and keep you from

accomplishing this goal? What can you do to anticipate and prepare for them?

For example, whenever I travel, my portable meditation cushion is always guaranteed to be in the suitcase.

If your decision to stick to the practice is strong (that's why we went through steps 1 and 2), your habit will survive changes to your schedule and life circumstances.

## Obstacle 5: Feeling unmotivated



It's absolutely normal that our motivation swings. When this happens, and the swing down is strong, re-read your values list and the reasons why meditation serves what is truly important for you. Or read some [meditation quotes](#)!

I write a little more about motivation swings [here](#).

## Obstacle 6: Expectations



Expectation is the antithesis of meditation. If you learn to do meditation for meditation's sake, its wonderful benefits will come to you in time (not in one week though). Think of meditation like taking a shower, or sleeping. It's simply something you need to do every day.

There are some results from meditation that are immediate. You immediately feel better, more at ease, after most practice sessions.

Other results come in a few months – actually research shows that with daily meditation, even after 8 weeks you already have some noticeable [results](#). And some deeper results may come as years pass by.

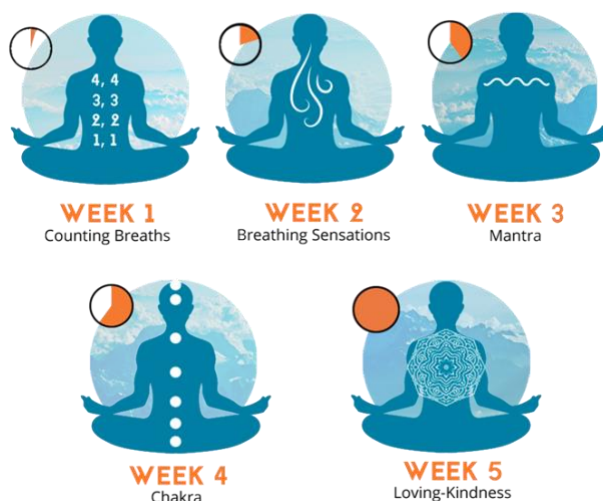
In any case, don't get attached to expectations. This is one of the main reasons why people quit.

## Final Words

It's time to start! You now need to take a concrete step. Either go through these exercises now, or set a date in your calendar to do it. It's important to go through these exercises on paper/online. Don't just go through it in your head. Research says that goals written down are much more likely to be achieved.

I've read that an action becomes automatic after it is performed for 66 days in a row; other's suggest that is it after 21 days or 40 days. In any case, it's clear that the effort for keeping up the practice, *no matter what*, is especially important in the beginning. Each time you sit to practice, it's a small success, and you are strengthening those neuropathways in your brain.

If what you are looking for is a step-by-step online program that integrates all these principles and more, check out my [course](#):



*[If you are already part of my mailing list, don't worry, no duplicate messages will ever be sent.]*

Once the habit to meditate gets integrated in your routine, it's time to start expanding upon your practice, and integrate mini mindfulness moments in your life. For more about this, have a look at [this answer](#) or this [podcast episode](#).

I'm on a [mission](#) to inspire a million people to meditate. Please help me by **sharing** this post.



# Your Next Steps

Meditation is a wonderful practice that improves your well-being, sharpens your mind, and opens many doors. It allows you to *master you mind*, and thus *master your life*.

Meditation can help you transform yourself. It is a powerful path for overcoming anxiety, stress, and mental noise. It empowers you to be **calm**, **centered**, and **focused**.

But for that to happen, we need the **Three Pillars of Meditation**:



How are your three pillars going?

Figuring out and practicing these three pillars on your own can be very hard. It requires dedication, time, effort, self-discipline and patience.

But it doesn't need to be that hard. You don't need to do this all on your own.

Over the past several years I've helped *thousands* of people start, deepen and integrate a meditation practice. And I have created an online program that helps you build those three pillars gradually, with the support of a community. Check it out: [Limitless Life](http://liveanddare.com/meditation-for-beginners/).

