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Additional Material:
Introduction to Meditation



Legend

Information/ Descriptions: This type of text represents general explanations, descriptions etc. of concepts and ideas.

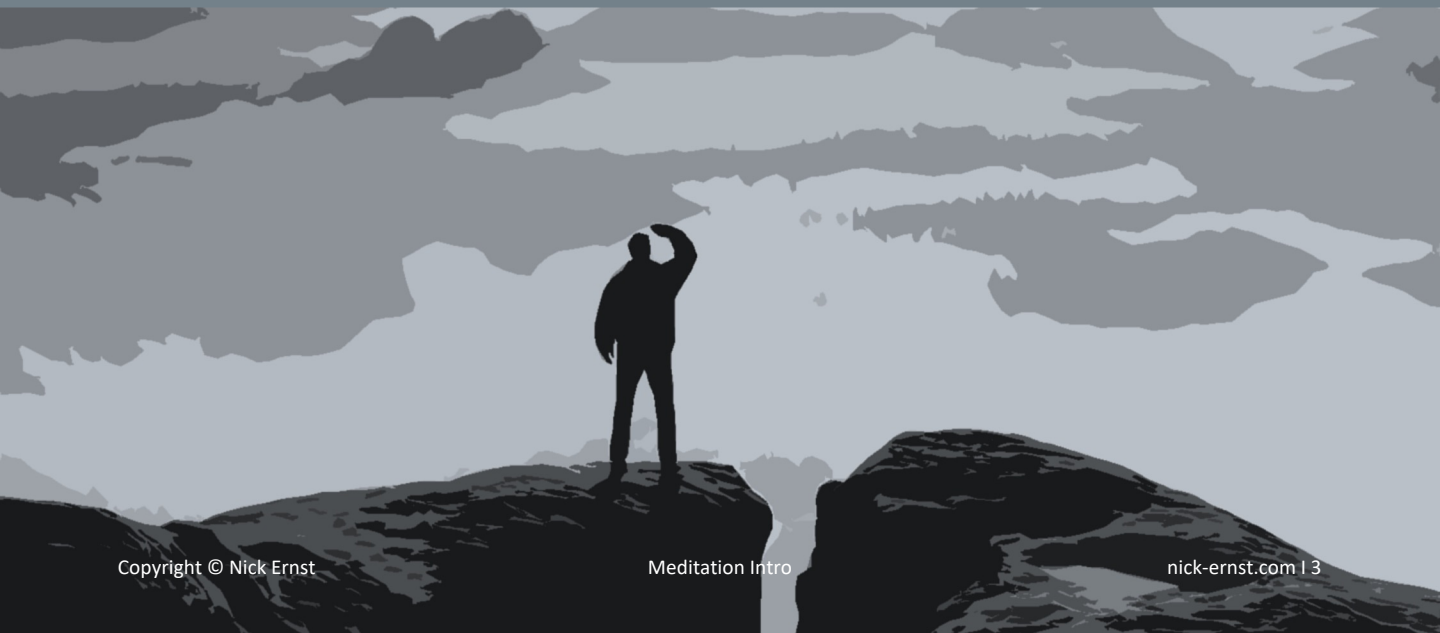
About this workbook

By working on this workbook, you will...

- get a first glimpse of what meditation is and how it can be very beneficial for our personal as well as professional lives
- understand common misconceptions and how to avoid falling for them
- try out selected “beginner” meditations

Who is this workbook for?

- Anyone who is open to discover something new that can be of high benefit for our everyday lives
- Anyone who did meditation before but found that they are “not good at it” or “did not really get it” or just want to get a new perspective on their own practice



What actually is meditation?

When people start meditating, they often ask, “What really is meditation? There are so many different styles and explanations.” I like to explain it using the Tibetan word for meditation, *gom*, which means “to become familiar.” But familiar with what? With our own mind, with our emotions – what’s inside.

At its heart, meditation is about awareness. Awareness is simply the ability to notice what is happening in the present moment—whether it’s a thought, an emotion, or a sensation in the body. Think of it this way: take a moment, breathe deeply, and touch your thumb and index finger together. The sensation of that touch? That’s awareness. Meditation helps us strengthen this ability to notice and become familiar with what’s going on inside us.

A common misconception is that meditation is about stopping thoughts or being completely still and peaceful. It’s not. Meditation is simply about being aware of what’s happening right now. This includes noticing what’s inside without trying to change or judge it. For example, when your mind wanders (and it will), the practice is to gently bring your attention back to the present moment. That’s meditation.

Why is this so important? Because our mind creates the world we experience. Our senses perceive events, but it’s the mind that interprets, labels, and judges them. A rainy day, for example, is just a rainy day—but our mind might label it “bad.” A loud noise is just a sound, but we might judge it as “disturbing.” These habits of the mind often lead to unnecessary stress and suffering. Meditation helps us see these patterns clearly and become less entangled by them.

Our emotions work in a similar way. We naturally seek out pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant ones. But running from negative feelings doesn’t make them disappear. In fact, avoiding/suppressing them often creates more problems. Acting on emotions impulsively—like anger—can also cause harm. Meditation gives us space to observe our emotions without being overwhelmed or controlled by them.

By practicing meditation, we get familiar with our thoughts and emotions, learning to watch them without getting swept away. This awareness is the foundation for resilience, clarity, and a more balanced life. And even when we get distracted (which happens to everyone), the moment we notice and bring ourselves back to the present, we are meditating. It’s the simplest and hardest thing at the same time—but it’s also one of the most transformative.

Developing three lifelong skills with meditation (1/2)

Meditation is not just about sitting still or calming the mind; it's a practical way to develop three lifelong skills that can transform how we experience life and navigate its challenges. These three skills – Awareness, Love & Compassion, and Wisdom—are interconnected and form a powerful foundation for inner growth and resilience. Let's take a closer look at each of them.

1st skill - Awareness: The Gateway to Change

The first skill is awareness. It's about learning to be present in the moment and paying attention to what is happening inside of you—your thoughts, emotions, and sensations. Without awareness, change is impossible. Think about it: how can you transform a habit, behavior, or reaction if you're not aware of it in the first place? Awareness helps us understand ourselves more deeply. For example, if you feel stressed, awareness allows you to notice how that stress shows up in your body in your mind. This clarity gives you the power to respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively. Through meditation, we cultivate this ability to be present, creating a space for positive change to emerge.

2nd skill - Love & Compassion: The Strength in kindness and acceptance

The second skill is love and compassion. This isn't just about being kind to others—it starts with being kind to yourself. Often, we are our own harshest critics, judging our thoughts, emotions, or mistakes. Meditation teaches us to soften this inner dialogue and find acceptance for ourselves, even when we fall short of our expectations. It's about being okay with not being okay sometimes. Love and compassion help us let go of feelings like self-hatred, embarrassment, or self-pity. Instead of getting stuck in these emotions, we learn to forgive ourselves and move forward. This skill also deepens our connection to others. By cultivating compassion for those around us, we reduce loneliness and foster a sense of belonging. Life becomes lighter when we treat ourselves & others with kindness and are more accepting of the circumstances, we find ourselves in.

Developing three lifelong skills with meditation (2/2)

3rd skill - Wisdom: Seeing life clearly and in a curious way

The third skill is wisdom. Wisdom helps us see the world as it truly is. It's about being curious and understanding some key truths about life: everything is interconnected, everything is impermanent, and life cannot be other than what it is right now. For instance, think about how we often get attached to things—like a new pair of shoes or a perfect moment. But those shoes will eventually wear out, and the moment will pass. Recognizing this impermanence allows us to appreciate life without clinging to it. Wisdom also helps us see how our own thoughts and emotions shape our reality. By understanding these patterns, we can let go of destructive habits and approach life with curiosity and wonder.

These Skills Are Already Within You

Here's the surprising truth: these three lifelong skills—awareness, love & compassion, and wisdom—are not something you need to create or acquire. They are already part of who you are. Think of them as innate qualities, like having a powerful tool that you haven't fully recognized yet.



Imagine you own the world's most precise watch, but you've never realized it's a watch – you think it's just a bracelet. Because of this, you struggle with being on time, missing opportunities, and feeling lost. But once someone shows you how to use it, everything changes. You begin to understand its purpose, practice using it, and eventually rely on it to navigate your day with confidence. Meditation works the same way. These skills—awareness, love & compassion, and wisdom—are like that hidden watch. They've always been with you, but you may not have noticed them or understood how to use them. Through meditation (and a meditation teacher), you can uncover these natural abilities, practice them, and apply them to your life. And just like the watch helps you navigate time, these skills can help you navigate challenges, emotions, and relationships with greater ease and clarity.

Meditation exercise

This week, practice ~5 minutes each day based on the following instructions. If you feel inspired and have the time to practice longer than 5 minutes, I encourage you to do so (but do not force yourself to meditate longer than feels right to you):

- Take a few moments to check your posture, and state on your motivation to practice, e.g., “May I practice to develop awareness which will help me to find clarity, resilience and happiness within myself, and bring positive change into the world.”.
- Next, relax your mind and remain present. Don’t try to focus on anything in particular or control your mind, yet do not get lost in thoughts either. Leave all the sense doors open, without trying to block any aspect of experience.
- To support this open meditation, you can focus on your breath, any sounds around you, something that you see or the sensation of gently holding your index finger and thumb together. Whatever you choose, let this be a support to not get lost / a reminder to come back to the present moment.
- When you get lost in thoughts – accept it – actually, it’s great because once you realize you got lost, you have brought back awareness to the present moment (and therefore trained yourself to be aware). See this “coming back” to the present moment as a great achievement.
- To conclude your practice, dedicate your practice to the happiness of all beings, thinking “May the positive traits I’ve cultivated in this practice not only support my own well-being but also ripple out to benefit all beings, bringing greater strength, harmony and kindness into the world”.

Note: Getting lost for 4 minutes and 59 seconds and then realize that you got lost for the entire session is also considered a win!



Advice & Misconceptions about meditation (1/2)

In the following you find key pieces of advice I've received during meditation talks, classes, and retreats. Note: This is not an exhaustive guide—it's based on my personal experience and what I found most helpful (and hope may benefit you too).

- Do not force yourself to sit in any specific kind of posture (e.g., lotus) if that causes much pain and distracts you from your practice. We are not in a monastery here (and even if you were, you may see old monks sitting on a chair given that their knees have already given up). The most important thing is to keep your spine straight which can be achieved in different ways (chair, lying down etc.). Additional comment: The idea of forcing yourself through the pain has nothing to do with meditation (though pain can be a reminder to be aware see below).
- Try to meditate with your eyes open. You do not want to disconnect from life around you. You want to be present with what is happening around it but not engage in it. As described on the exercise on the previous page, we can use our surroundings to be “awareness reminders” and use them as support.
- You do not need to search for a calm, lonely place to meditate (though helpful in the beginning of your meditation path). You can meditate anywhere. A place with a lot of distraction offers a chance to practice awareness without getting lost in the distractions around you. Everyone can be calm and at peace when there is nothing to disturb you (e.g., monastery), but it is the challenge to remain undisturbed despite the turbulences (in this way meditation has a direct, positive impact on your daily life).
- Meditation is not about shutting down your thoughts emotions etc. it is a process where you get familiar with what is happening inside of you. Additional comment: Even if you would be able to shut down thinking, the fact that you think that there is no thought present is a thought itself.

Advice & Misconceptions about meditation (2/2)

- Meditation is also not about zoning out of reality and experience some blissful /mind-blowing moments (though they can happen due to the changes in brain during meditation). It is about learning about yourself and your mind and in the end to learn how to “have a good day on a good day and have a good day on a bad day”. Imagine you can shut down everything in meditation and experience bliss and then get up from your cushion and the next moment someone disturbs you, you totally lose it and scream at the person. What impact does meditation then have for you and the people around you?
- No meditation is the best meditation. There is no goal or any specific thing that you need to do or achieve when you meditate. If you want to achieve something or have expectations of how meditation should go, you always judge what you are doing therefore not being able to be just aware of what is happening. Additional comment: The skill to accept whatever happens in meditation and not label it as good or bad also can have tremendous impact on your daily life in the form of reduced judgement and higher awareness.
- Choose the time of your practice wisely – it is not a competition about how long you can meditate. Meditation should be something you look forward to and not something that you force yourself into. If you think you can meditate 10 minutes do 7 or 8 and see how it goes. Even very short windows of meditation (once you become better) can be extremely helpful.

Powerful quotes about meditation

- *“The expectations you bring to meditation practice are often the greatest obstacles you will encounter.”*
- *“The only difference between meditation and the ordinary, everyday process of thinking, feeling, and sensation is the application of the simple, bare awareness that occurs when you allow your mind to rest simply as it is—without chasing after thoughts or becoming distracted by feelings or sensations.”*
- *“While formal practice can help us to develop direct experience of wisdom, and compassion, such experiences are meaningless unless we can bring them to bear on every aspect of our daily lives. For it’s in facing the challenges of daily life that we can really measure our development of calmness, insight, and compassion.”*
- *“Don’t worry. Your mind isn’t getting worse. Actually, what’s happening is that you’re simply becoming more aware of activity that has been going on all the time without your noticing it.”*
- *“You don’t have to block whatever thoughts, emotions, or sensations arise, but neither do you have to follow them. Just rest in the open present, simply allowing whatever happens to occur.”*
- *“If you use the objects of distraction (e.g., sound, smell, sight) as a support for non-distraction, in other words, for awareness, everything becomes a support for meditation.”*
- *“The mind is always active, always generating thoughts, just as the ocean constantly generates waves. We can’t stop our thoughts any more than we can stop waves in the ocean. Resting the mind in its natural state is very different from trying to stop thoughts altogether.”*
- *“If we were to become aware of our habitual thoughts, perceptions, and sensations, rather than being carried away by them, their power over us would begin to fade.”*
- *“Every sentient being confronts obstacles. Yet negativity comes from attitudes, preconceptions, and resistance, not the obstacles themselves.”*