



Sizzle Reel

Are you ready to...

boost your confidence

increase your happiness

amplify your intuition?

And enjoy

better sleep

greater focus

and creativity?

Join Rodale Organic Life's

21-Day Meditation Challenge

In as little as 1 minute per day

experience the benefits of meditation!

Tap into your potential.

Unleash your energy.

Think with greater clarity.

Calmly tackle whatever comes your way.

In just 21 days

you will change

your mind

and your life.

We don't mean that just figuratively:

Meditation increases gray matter in the pre-frontal cortex.

(Yep, meditation can make your brain bigger.)

Join the challenge

and learn to meditate

in comfort

at home.

Start anew with a practice that will
change
your
life.
Ready to try?
Your transformation begins...now!

PROMO COPY

21-Day Meditation Challenge

Never meditated before? No problem. Our expert teachers are here to help you learn the basics, from how to sit to how to keep your mind focused in silence.

We'll start slow, with just one minute of sitting, breathing, and being present with the experience. Each day, you'll sit a little bit longer until you are able to experience (and enjoy!) a full 21-minute meditation session on your own.

Soon you'll get a glimpse of all that meditation has to offer to mind and body. And you just may find yourself jumping out of bed instead of hitting snooze, humming while you sit in traffic, laughing more, and having the subtle sensation of life being on your side instead of something you have to elbow your way through.

Get ready to change your mind and change your life!

RodaleU Course Promo Copy

The research validating the benefits of meditation keeps rolling in. It tells us that regular practice will actually change the structure of your brain in a way that increases your ability to focus, be less reactive in the face of stress, boost your memory, increase immunity, and even help prevent the cognitive degeneration that happens with age. It also decreases anxiety, can help you manage depression and pain, and may just allow you to get a good night's sleep.

But one of the most important gifts of meditation one that is less quantifiable but is the experience of regular practitioners: A sense of coming home.

Meditation helps you befriend your thoughts and emotions, to feel more confident and at peace with yourself. Through meditation, you will forge an unshakeable alliance with your most trustworthy resource: Yourself.

We'll teach you how to up your space and how to sit for meditation. And we'll guide through

easy-to-follow practices that gradually build to 21 minutes. Throughout, you'll receive tips from meditation experts and gain access to guided meditations to deepen your practice.

Sign up now for the 21-Day Meditation Challenge!

PROGRAM PAGES AND COPY

Welcome page

Welcome! By taking this step to learn to meditate, you are giving yourself a gift that will last a lifetime.

Why Meditate

Research increasingly validates the benefits of meditation. We now know that regular practice:

- increases focus
- helps you feel less reactive
- boosts your memory
- supports immunity
- decreases anxiety and helps with depressive symptoms
- helps with pain management
- helps you sleep better
- may prevent age-related cognitive degeneration
- supports goal-setting

On top of these benefits, one of the most important gifts of meditation is the feeling of coming home to oneself.

This self-directed practice is a powerful way to befriend your thoughts and emotions, and feel more confident. Through regular practice, you'll forge an unshakeable alliance with your most trustworthy resource: Yourself.

Over the next 21 days, you will experience some of these benefits, and maybe more.

You also may just find yourself jumping out of bed instead of hitting snooze, humming while you wait, laughing easily, and having the subtle sensation of life being on your side instead of something you have to elbow through.

This is the true promise of meditation: More ease, greater flow, and the opportunity to experience life as an unfolding journey that you are absolutely ready for.

How it works

Each day, from Jan. XX-XX, you will practice the most direct meditation techniques that we've discovered. We're gonna start small—with just 1 minute of sitting, breathing, and being present with the experience. Each day, you'll sit a little bit longer until you are able to experience a full 21-minute session of meditation.

Throughout the program you'll hear from leading meditation experts, get answers to your questions, learn pro tips, and be guided through simple practices that provide real results.

Overview of Rodale's Organic Life 21-Day Meditation Challenge

Getting ready We'll give you ideas and advice for setting up your space and getting yourself ready to sit for daily meditation.

Meditation how-to We'll teach you the most direct meditations we know. We'll also share expert tricks and tips to help you through the program and beyond.

Daily meditation Starting on XXX, each day you will practice meditating, starting from 1 minute and leading up to 21 minutes, with a recommended bonus session of 30 minutes.

Guided meditations There are guided meditations of varying lengths sprinkled throughout the three weeks, which you can listen to online or download.

Sharing your experience Meditation is by nature a solo journey. But doing the program with someone else, and sharing your experience and insights with the community, can be a big source of support for you and for your fellow meditators.

Your commitment:

To meditate every day for 21 days, even when ...

you don't feel like it
it's hard
it's boring
you're really busy
you don't think it's "working." (Trust us, it is.)

You got this.

Schedule

We've created an easy-to-follow plan that gradually builds up to 21 minutes of sitting meditation.

When you start out, really, the most important thing is to **do some meditation, every single day.**

We've broken this into three weeks of guided instruction that will help you get comfortable, start to develop your own rhythm, and begin experiencing some of the benefits of regular meditation practice.

Week 1: *Be with the breath*

Meditate for 1-5 minutes each day

Bonus: Learn a candle meditation

Week 2: *Awareness*

Mediate for 10-15 minutes each day

Bonus: Learn a body scan practice

Week 3: *Mindfulness in daily life*

Meditate for 15-21 minutes each day

Bonus: Learn a mantra meditation

SUPPORT CONTENT

Take a Seat: How to Sit for Meditation

The first lesson in becoming a meditator is how to sit. Sounds simple, right? But sitting in meditation is not just about kicking back and relaxing. In fact, how you sit will greatly impact your experience.

You should be comfortable enough so that you're not distracted by physical *discomfort*, but not so much that you start to feel sleepy or lose the integrity of your posture. For meditation, you want to stay alert. Here's how:

- Hips slightly higher than knees
- Spine long and tall
- Head directly atop spine
- Chin slightly tucks
- Jaw relaxes — separate your teeth but keep your lips gently closed
- Hands rest palms-down on your thighs — this keeps a natural bend in the elbows and supports an upright posture

[images needed]

On the floor

Some people find sitting on the floor comfortable and makes them feel connected to the tradition of meditation. You'll want to sit on a small bolster called a [zafu](#), or some other support that raises your hips higher than your knees. You can sit cross-legged or kneeling.

In a chair

Choose a chair with a seat high enough that can place your feet on the floor. Scoot to the front of the seat so that your spine stays erect and your knees slope downward, helping support a natural lumbar curve.

Tip: *To feel the energetic experience of correct meditation posture, imagine a string being gently pulled upward from the crown of your head.*

How to do it: The technique

Once you find your meditation posture, allow yourself to settle. Maybe take a mental scan of your body to notice if you're holding tension anywhere. If so, see if you can release a little bit with each breath.

Mouth and face: With your jaw soft and lips gently together, either rest your tongue at the bottom of your mouth or place the tip just behind your front teeth. Your face should be relaxed, without strain or tension in your forehead, jaw or neck.

Eyes: Keep your eyes open but soft, even slightly unfocused. Rest your gaze 2-4 feet on the floor in front of you. Blink naturally. (If this is uncomfortable for you, you can close your eyes.)

Breath: This basic technique using your own natural breathing pattern. Bring your awareness to your breath as you naturally inhale and exhale through your nose. Just notice how it feels to inhale, and then how it feels to exhale. That's it.

Notice the air as it comes into your body and leaves again.: the expansion and rise of your chest, spine, and belly on the inhale, and then the gentle falling and contraction as you exhale.

This breath is your home base, the place to rest your attention and come back to any time you feel your mind drift.

That's it! Continue just like this until your time for that day's session is up.

Tip: *When you notice the mind drifting (which it will), just gently guide your attention back to the breath. It doesn't matter if you spend your entire meditation time doing this; you are training your mind away from the tempting drift of thoughts and back into present awareness.*

Set Up Your Space

Wherever you choose to do your meditation, it should be a place you look forward to visiting, someplace “magnetic” to you, says Shambhala Buddhist meditation teacher Lodro Rinzler. [link to Rinzler’s bio] Think: a cozy, sun-dappled corner; a back room far away from any noise; an atrium or patio surrounded by plants. Any place where you will *want* to sit, undisturbed and comfortable, for up to 30 minutes at a time, will work just fine.

Here are a few things to consider when you set up your meditation space:

It should be somewhere where you won’t be disturbed.

The temperature should be just right—not too warm, too cold or too drafty. But you may want to have a special sweater or throw handy, just in case.

Your space should be clean and uncluttered. Like you would clean your house before welcoming guests, make your space worthy of this special time you’re setting aside for yourself.

If symbolic images help you get into a meditative frame of mind, by all means, add them. Pictures, statues, and plants can all lend an air of specialness to a meditation space. You may even want a candle to light when you begin, or a beautiful meditation rug to sit upon.

And since we are intentionally building up our meditation session times in this program, you’ll need an alarm. Smart phones have lots of cool alarm sounds that will *nudge* you back into a present wakeful state when your time is up. (Our favorite? Crickets.)

You might also consider a pre-practice routine to help shift your focus before sitting down to meditate:

Try doing a few yoga stretches, actively releasing tension in the neck, shoulders, hands and back, while you begin to deepen the breath.

Take a short walk outside, disconnecting from the mental activity of your day, breathing in the fresh air, feeling your body move, and mindfully taking in your surroundings.

A cup of tea or a glass of water might be all you need to transition from a state of doing into sitting in meditation. (And any of these things can be done after meditation as well. The idea is to put a clear punctuation point between your normal activities and your meditation time.)

Find your time

It is helpful to meditate at the same time each day. You might experiment to find a time that works best with your schedule. When you do, claim it. This will help make meditation a *practice*: it just becomes part of your daily routine.

Many people find it easiest to meditate early in the morning, before they start their day. A midday meditation break can also be a nice reset. For some, meditating at night helps them ease into a more restful state for sleep.

Whenever you can consistently commit to sitting, when you won't feel pulled to do something else or be tempted to put it off, will be the best time for you.

Mindfulness in everything

As you practice resting your awareness on the breath in meditation, try bringing that same awareness into your day.

When washing the dishes, taking a walk, or in the shower, let your attention fully settle on what you're doing, feeling into the experience with all your senses.

When you find yourself drifting into thought, very gently bring yourself back to the moment at hand: the movement in your body, the feel of the water or the air on your skin, the smells around you. As meditation teacher Tara Brach advises, "Use the body as an anchor throughout the day."

PROGRAM EMAILS

Intro email to Week 1: Be with the Breath

Welcome! You are embarking upon a journey that will reap benefits large and small. But perhaps the best reason for meditating is this one unfailing fact: Meditation anchors you deeply into a relationship with yourself. With your uniqueness. With your vitality. With a part of you that is wise and knowing.

And this connection to YOU can never be taken away, no matter what else happens in your life.

In this first week we'll begin to explore just being with the breath. That's one of the most common and most direct ways to meditate.

[<http://www.rodalorganiclife.com/wellbeing/5-meditation-myths-busted>] It sounds simple — until you try it. Our mind is capable of impressive acrobatics when it realizes that you're asking it to do ... nothing.

So, we're starting small today, with just one minute of meditation. Each day we'll add a bit more, as we address common questions and concerns people have when they begin meditating.

As we enter weeks 2 and 3, we'll dig into some of the really juicy stuff about how meditation increases brain mass, helps you sleep, diminishes pain, helps you access your intuition, and much more.

For now, you just need to find your meditation seat and begin.

Ready?

Day 1: Ready, Set, Sit! An introductory 1-Minute Meditation

Welcome to your first day of meditation training. Over the next 21 days, you're going to discover that *anyone* can meditate. It simply takes a willingness to show up, every day, until it becomes a habit —

even if you can't tell whether it's "working"

if you get bored

if the thoughts and feelings that come up make you squirm a bit. (They'll pass. Trust us on this.)

Sound doable? Yeah, it really is.

And as promised, we're starting out nice and easy.

Meditation for today: Settle into your meditation seat [link to [how to sit](#)] and just ... breathe. That's it. Rest your attention on the breath, following the inhalation through your nostrils, down your throat and into your lungs, feeling the gentle expansion of your belly, and then ... exhale, following the breath all the way back out. Pause slightly at the end. Breathe again.

Don't try to breathe differently than usual. You're just sitting calmly with a tall spine, shoulders and jaw relaxed, eyes either gently closed or open with a soft focus about 4 feet on the floor ahead of you. *Inhale ... exhale. Inhale ... exhale.* Do this for 1 minute.

Join the conversation:

Wherever you choose to meditate, it should be somewhere magnetic to you: a cozy sun-dappled corner; a quiet room far away from any noise; an atrium surrounded by plants.

Where do you go to disconnect?

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

Where do you meditate? Share a photo!

Day 2: Finding Your Time + Belly Breathing

Welcome back! How did Day 1 go? We know, one minute of meditation probably isn't making you feel blissful quite yet. We promise, this will get more interesting as we go along. But for this first week, we just want you to get used to setting this time aside, making your meditation place special, and simply being with the breath.

Today's meditation practice: Either sitting or lying down, place your hands on your belly, and focus on breathing into and out of this area.

Inhale, feel the belly rise.

Pause.

Exhale, feel the belly deflate.

Pause.

Do this for 2 minutes.

When should I meditate?

This is a common question for new meditators and the answer may be a surprise: It doesn't matter. The most important thing is to meditate *every day*, even for just a few minutes at a time. And meditation teachers recommend making that time consistent, so you can plan for it and ensure that nothing gets in the way.

Some people like to do their meditation first thing in the morning, before they get into the busyness of their day. A midday break can be a nice way to reconnect to yourself. And meditating at night can ease the way into a restful state before sleep.

Whenever you can consistently commit to sitting, when you won't feel distracted or be tempted to put it off, will be the best time for you to meditate.

"There's something about having that time every day that you check in and pause that's really a gift to the soul." —Tara Brach [[link to Tara's bio](#)]

TIP: Each week of the challenge includes one day where you're asked to do two meditations. (Yep, two.) Try doing these at different points during the day to get a sense of what time works best for you.

Social prompt:

The best time to meditate is when you don't feel distracted and can relax fully into the moment. Morning, noon, or night? It's up to you.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

When do you like to meditate?

Day 3: Why Consistency Matters + Candle Meditation

Meditation for today: A 3-minute guided candle meditation

Why Consistency Matters

Consistency is important when you begin a meditation practice. For as simple as it seems — sitting down and focusing on your breath for a set period of time — it can be surprisingly challenging, torturous even when you start out. We're simply not used to just sitting, without distraction, and being with ourselves.

The schedule for Become a Meditator is designed to be user-friendly. And the practices are paced to help you build your meditation "muscles" so that you can eventually increase your practice time.

This is also the ideal time to learn discipline in your meditation practice. To that end, it's important not to change course, says Lodro Rinzler. If you plan to sit for 10 minutes, set your alarm, sit for that amount of time, and then when the crickets chirp, stop.

Even if you find that you're really in the groove and want to sit longer, don't. Not right now.

"When you start to go down that road of adjusting the amount of time you're meditating while in the act of meditation, a) You're using your meditation as a source of distracting yourself from your meditation, and b) You're starting to judge your meditation practice," Rinzler says.

By the same token, don't fret if something disrupts your schedule, he adds. This gets to the point of being kind and gentle with yourself when it comes to meditation. Just recommit, and get back to your meditation seat.

Social prompt:

It's not easy to develop new habits, even when they're beneficial. It takes dedication and some effort to adopt a new behavior. But in the case of meditation, it's so worth it.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

What's the best way you've found for adopting new habits?

Day 4: Meditation is a No-Judgment Zone + Sit for 5 Minutes

Now that you've had a few days' practice with sitting and being with the breath, you're going to do it on your own for slightly longer.

Today's meditation: Find your meditation seat and set your timer for a full 5 minutes.

There are so many ways in which we judge ourselves. *I'm too much this, not enough this. If only I were this.* Meditation is truly one time and place in life where you can just be exactly who you are.

Here's the thing: There is nothing to achieve in meditation. It's not a race. There's nothing to win at and certainly nothing to beat yourself up about. Insight meditation teacher Tara Brach likens

learning to meditate like dealing with a puppy. When the puppy chews a slipper or pees on the rug, you don't berate it. Instead you gently but firmly show it the toys it's allowed to chew or to the newspaper in the corner. And you continue to love and adore it unconditionally.

Meditation is simply about learning to develop an unshakeable relationship with yourself. And you are pretty incredible. (You may not believe us yet, but you will.)

"Sometimes people think meditation should be easy, but it's not. It's simple, but it's not easy. We're not used to focusing on one thing, we're used to multitasking. It takes time and effort."
—Lodro Rinzler

Social prompt:

There's nothing to achieve in meditation. It's not a race. There's nothing to win at and certainly nothing to beat yourself up about. So treat yourself with kindness and gentleness. Recognize that you are in this for the long haul, not a quick result. And the only goal is forging an unshakeable bond with yourself.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

Are you in a self-criticism loop around meditation?/ How have you been judging yourself in your meditation practice?

Day 5: Set an Intention + Two Meditations!

Today's meditation practice: Today we're going to do two meditation sessions, for 3 minutes each. Do one at your normally scheduled time and the other a new time during the day.

Set an Intention

When we begin any self-improvement endeavor (hello, diet!) we start out strong. We're focused. We're enthusiastic. We have a plan and we're determined to follow it. And then, well, we get a little bored. Maybe a bit distracted. And before we know it, we've skipped a day here, a day there until we feel so far removed from that original impulse, we just don't even try any more.

But there was a reason why you began this program, a very good reason. Maybe you've felt really stressed out or don't sleep well. Perhaps you've heard about the memory-boosting benefit of meditation or are looking for ways to keep your brain limber as you age. You might simply crave quiet time just for yourself.

These are all valid reasons to meditate. But when challenges arise — life gets busy, your sciatica acts up, you just don't think meditation is "working" — the temptation to stop can be strong.

An intention can anchor you to the **why** that prompted you to learn this practice. When you remember

I want more clarity in my life

I don't want to lose my temper so much

I want to feel more centered and in touch with my intuition

having an intention will provide a needed touchstone when the going gets tough.

Lodro Rinzler recommends writing your intention each day before you sit to meditation. Keep a special meditation journal handy, and jot a note to yourself about what brings you back to your seat.

Social prompt:

When we begin any self-improvement endeavor, we're on fire. But sustaining that energy is hard. Setting a daily intention can keep us anchored to the reason we wanted to learn to meditate in the first place.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

How do you deal with distractions and challenges to your daily meditation practice?

Day 6: Am I Doing it Right?

Today's meditation: Today you'll sit for 6 minutes.

Have you ever hired a personal trainer who stood over you telling you exactly how to perform the exercises, pointing out where you should "feel the burn," and providing feedback on your form?

That doesn't happen in meditation. You get the basic instruction [link to technique section] and then ... you sit. You sit while a seemingly endless stream of thoughts roll through your mind. *Inhale ... exhale*. You sit while your foot falls asleep. *Inhale ... exhale*. You sit when a jarring emotion floats up and makes you want to jump out of your seat. *Inhale ... exhale*.

As simple (or annoying) as it sounds, this *is* the practice: To sit, to keep your awareness resting on the breath, and to just bear witness to anything that arises without reacting or holding on to it. And when you inevitably *do* latch onto a thought, emotion, or daydream, you very gently and kindly bring yourself back to the breath. Again and again and again. That's it. That's meditation.

Know this: Everything you experience when learning meditation — runaway thoughts, distractions, sleepiness, boredom, frustration, emotions — happens even when you’ve been doing it for years!

So, how do you know if you’re “doing it right”? If any of the above resembles your experience, congratulations, you’re meditating!

“If you sit down and consciously bring your attention back to the breath over and over again, you’re meditating.” —Lodro Rinzler

Social prompt:

Everything you experience when you begin a meditation practice—runaway thoughts, distractions, sleepiness, boredom, frustration, emotions, even nothing—are exactly what’s supposed to happen. If this is your experience, congratulations: You’re meditating!

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

What have been the most challenging parts of meditation so far for you?

Day 7: Overcoming Obstacles to Practice + Mantra Meditation

Today you’ll do a meditation using a mantra, or a word or phrase that you repeat silently to help focus your mind. There are mantras from spiritual traditions (in some you are given a personal mantra that you use for life and never reveal to anyone). But we find that any word or phrase that makes you feel peaceful, inspired, and grounded will work. Here are a few we’ve used: *Peace. Breathe. Right here. Let go. Om.*

Today’s meditation: A guided 7-minute mantra meditation [link]

Overcoming Obstacles to Practice

We get it: You sign up for a meditation program with the best of intentions, and then life happens. You get busy. You get bored. You don’t feel anything happening, or you’re not sure you like what you do feel. Any and all of these may seem like real obstacles to sticking with it. But the truth is, they’re just excuses.

Here’s what’s also true: Obstacles (*ahem*, excuses) are not a bad thing in meditation. In fact, they provide useful information. They provide insight into our lives, our resistance, and our mind-state. Any challenge we experience in meditation shows us what we need to work on in order to fully welcome the practice into our lives.

Here are some of the most common obstacles/excuses to meditation, and tried-and-true advice for overcoming them:

Laziness. Yep, we said it. You're just feeling a bit lazy. It's like staring at your gym bag and thinking, "*I really don't want to work out today. The gym is so far, and, oh man, look at the time! It's going to be so crowded right now. Ugh, and I'm going to have to shower again.*"

But you know (you do) that you NEVER regret exercising; you always feel amazing afterward. So how do you deal with the whiny voice in your head saying, "*I really don't want to meditate today*"? You sit anyway. It's that simple. No story, no judgment. You just sit.

Put it like this: You've already planned on it (see: consistency), you've scheduled it into your day, you have everything you need (um, that'd be nothing). So, take a seat. That's all you need to do.

The antidote to laziness in meditation practice? Gentle but firm exertion of effort.

Too busy. Life is busy. Family life is busy. Work is busy. Our days are busy. *Everyone* is busy. That's why you've chosen a consistent time and place to practice meditation, so it becomes a habit. So you're not tempted to replace it with something else when you ... get busy.

And if 5 or 10 minutes is all you got, take a seat. In fact, some teachers say that meditating a couple of times a day for just a few minutes can be even more effective, because it gives you opportunities throughout your day to check in with yourself.

And as we've said before: Some meditation is better than no meditation.

The antidote to too-busyness? Consistency.

Disheartenment. Because meditation practice is really about doing, well, nothing, it can be difficult to gauge what's happening, let alone any results.

We promise, with consistent practice, you *will* begin to notice changes, from subtle to big.

But it won't happen right away.

In the meantime, return to your intention, honor the time you've set aside for yourself, and sit.

"There is no pill we can pop or mantra we can recite that will magically make meditation easy so we won't ever get disheartened again," Rinzler says. "We simply have to stick with the practice until disheartenment eases its hold over us and we once more recall why meditation practice is essential to what we're cultivating in our lives."

The antidote to disheartenment in meditation? Intention.

Fear of Failure. Everyone can meditate. That's worth repeating: Everyone can meditate. Like anything new, it takes practice. And like everything new, the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

But if you've ever tried to meditate and experienced a barrage of mental activity, you might have told yourself, *I can't do it. I'm not a meditator.* "That's partially a misunderstanding of meditation," says Integral Enlightenment meditation teacher Craig Hamilton. "When you focus

on trying to still the mind, and can't do that, you feel like a failure. But when you learn to be with whatever arises without reactivity, *that's* what meditation practice is. And realizing this frees us from the notion that we need to have a certain kind of experience."

Antidote to fear of failure? Realize that the learning curve in meditation is just that, a learning curve. It takes practice to let thoughts and emotions pass without reacting. But stick with it. You *will* get the hang of it.

Social prompt:

Obstacles/excuses are not bad in meditation. In fact, they provide insight into our state of mind. Challenges in our meditation practice shows us what we need to work on.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

What are your biggest obstacles/excuses to meditation?

Week Two: Developing Awareness

You've made it through your first week of daily meditation practice. Congratulations!

We know how challenging it can be to just sit and breathe, to not really have any idea what you're doing or whether anything is even happening, and, on top of that, to deal with some pretty bizzaro stuff revealing itself from your own mind.

Seriously, meditation ain't for the faint of heart. OK?

Last week we focused on sitting and being with the breath. This week we're going to continue doing that (it's the basis of most meditation traditions) while starting to consciously expand our awareness. *Awareness* in meditation-speak refers to a witnessing part of ourselves that's separate from our minds.

It's a concept that's a bit difficult to swallow at first: a part of *you* that you encounter in *your mind* but that is *separate* from your mind?

Yep, exactly.

We'll do some exercises that will help assimilate this idea as we go through the week. For now, just know that as you develop the ability to sit and be with yourself — with the breath, with a mantra, whatever your focus is — you're also developing awareness. And that's a very good thing.

Day 8: Building awareness + A 10-minute Guided Practice

Today's meditation: Listen to this 10-minute guided meditation [\[link\]](#)

Have you ever driven somewhere, all the while replaying a conversation you had earlier in the day, and arrive at your destination only to realize you don't remember anything about the journey? Or sit down to a meal thinking, *This is huge, I'll never eat all this*, only to realize you've cleaned your plate?

That's how we are: We move through rote activities, barely registering what we're doing, unless something (a car horn, an interruption from the waiter) snaps our attention back to what's happening.

"We let the energy of the moment ride us," Rinzler says.

Meditation is the best tool we have for developing awareness. In fact, one of the first things you'll begin to notice from meditating a bit is an increased sense of awareness of the world around you.

Test it out this week: Simply notice when you've realized you lost focus in meditation. Does it happen immediately when you start to follow a thought, or does it take awhile before you realize you've drifted off? This is a simple but powerful gauge of how well-tuned your awareness antennae is becoming.

The great news? It gets stronger and sharper the more you meditate.

Social prompt:

After meditating for a few weeks, you'll begin to notice an increased sense of awareness in your daily life. It may be subtle — the sound of wind in the trees, noticing something for the first time along your normal route, letting someone finish speaking.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

How has your awareness increased since beginning the program?

Day 9: All These Emotions!

Today's meditation: Meditate for 10 minutes on your own.

An alarming thing can happen when we meditate. You'll be sitting there for minutes on end, *inhale, exhale; inhale exhale*, Hmm, my nose itches, oh, thought—c'mon little puppy, back to the newspaper; *inhale, exhale* ... and wham! Some big emotion barrels out of nowhere. It can take your breath away.

When we're always in motion, always in thought, it's easy to keep emotions at bay. When we finally get still, stuff can start to come up. It could be the emotion of an old hurt or a recent

embarrassment. It might be a twinge of anger or residual heartache from a relationship long past.

And it can be really tempting to say to this emotion, “Oh no, *you’re* not coming out” and end your meditation session.

If you can possibly help it, don’t do this. *Because when you allow emotions to naturally arise in mediation: They move through you.* They get unstuck.

And this is why awareness is your ally: You can simply notice the emotion rising, maybe name it — emotion, sadness, hurt, anger, continue to breathe, and witness the emotion dissolve in the light of awareness.

When you approach rising emotions in this way, *they can’t hurt you.*

If you can sit with what comes up, simply noticing and touching it lightly with your awareness, you may receive useful information. For example, you might discover that something you’d long forgotten is still being played out in your psyche.

Or that you’re scared.

You might also notice feel-good emotions, such as an underlying sense of joy or excitement. And as tempting as it is to relish these more positive feelings, let them move on through, too.

As these emotions come up and dissipate, you’ll experience an almost tangible sense of feeling lighter, as if some old burden has been lifted.

So, no matter how tempting it is to engage with the emotion— to hold on and relish it, or to push it away and bolt — try to just sit. Just breathe. And let the emotion pass.

Social prompt:

So no matter how tempting it is to engage with emotions that come up in mediation, just witness them, even name them, and let them pass.

#iammindful

Join the conversation:

What emotional experiences have you had during meditation, and how have you handled it?

Day 10: Will I Lose My Edge? + 2 Meditations

Today’s meditation: Today do two meditations, an 8-minute practice at your regular time and another one for 5 minutes.

Will I Lose My Edge?

Some people worry that meditation is going to make them soft. That they'll lose their edge. On the contrary: Meditation helps us to be more present, to show up with confidence and see things more clearly. It actually helps us get us out of our own way and be even more effective.

Also, there's this: Research has shown that even just a few days of meditation improves focus, concentration, and attention.[\[link\]](#)

Social prompt: Meditation helps us to be more present, to show up with confidence and see things more clearly. It actually helps us get out of our own way and be more effective.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: What benefits have you noticed from meditation?

Day 11: Don't Stress

Today's meditation: Sit on your own for 14 minutes.

Many people come to meditation to help manage stress. An important study [\[link\]](#) found lower brain arousal in response to provocation among people who practiced mindful meditation. This led researchers to conclude that not only does meditation decrease reactivity, when stress *does* occur, it's easier to manage because it's not as strong.

Another study [\[link\]](#) found that after just 5 days of meditation training, people had lower levels of cortisol, a hormone released in response to stress.

Meditation has also been found to reduce anxiety, particularly social anxiety. If the idea of doing a presentation at work or walking into a party makes your heart race, meditation's got your back.

Social prompt: From just 5 days of meditation training, study subjects released far less cortisol, a hormone released in response to stress.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: How has meditation impacted your stress levels?

Day 12: Sweet Dreams + a 15-minute Meditation

Today's meditation: Sit for 15 minutes.

How often do you go to bed, and no matter how tired you are, find your mind just spinning through your day, your upcoming week, your dream vacation, what you'd *really* like say to your mother-in-law — anything, it seems, to keep you from the sleep you so desperately need?

Enter meditation.

We know that meditation triggers the relaxation response, which helps the body and mind calm down. It also lessens the emotional intensity of stressors in our lives, the very things that often keep us up at night.

A 2015 study revealed[link] that adults with a history of insomnia who completed a six-week mindfulness meditation training feel asleep more easily and experienced less fatigue and depression than study participants who went through a sleep-education program of the same length.

Social prompt: Not only does meditation trigger a relaxation response, it also helps lessen the emotional intensity of daily stressors. #iammindful

Join the conversation: Have you noticed any changes in your dreams since you began meditating?

Day 13: The Great Connection

Today's meditation: Sit for 15 minutes.

One of the many wonderful things about meditation is the deep sense of connection it inspires. Connection to what? Well, that's up to you to decide. It doesn't matter what spiritual tradition you come from — or whether you have one. There is a palpable sense of touching *something* in the meditative state.

According to awareness-based meditation teacher Craig Hamilton, the witnessing part of you that you experience in meditation is the connection to something larger than you — call it higher self, universal intelligence, God, whatever you'd like.

"You sit in meditation and without identifying with thoughts and reacting to the content of your consciousness, and it opens the door to the discovery that *I'm not my mind. There's something here much bigger than this world of thought I've lived my life in,*" he explains.

Does this mean that you need to be spiritual or follow a religious path to meditate? Not at all. Meditation can be completely secular and humanistic. But if you do have a faith tradition, you'll likely have a deeper experience of that connection through meditation.

"When you meditate you have access to wisdom beyond your mind, beyond your learning. You discover your capacity to hold what's happening in your life in an integral way, with a lot of compassion and wisdom. And that changes your life. It changes the world." —Craig Hamilton

Social prompt: Meditation isn't spiritual. But if you have a faith tradition, or just a spiritual bent, it will likely deepen that connection.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: Have you experienced touching something "bigger" than you while in meditation? What do you think it is?

Day 14: Getting Creative

Today's meditation: Sit for 15 minutes during your normal time plus try meditating somewhere totally different for 5 minutes: on the train, in your office, on a bench during your lunch break, waiting in the carpool lane to pick up your kids. Just sit quietly and be with the breath, letting any thoughts or outside distractions pass by.

We love this: A new study found that meditation promotes creative thinking.[\[link\]](#) Creativity was sparked even among people who had never meditated before.

It makes sense: When we become more present, less reactive, and begin to experience ourselves without judgment, we reduce the barriers to creativity. We generate the conditions for curiosity, perception, and bravery — the very things that feed the creative impulse. And by treating ourselves with kindness and non-judgment, we're far more open to explore the ideas and sparks of inspiration that come from deep within.

Social prompt: Research has found that meditation promotes creative thinking. This result was noted even among people who had never meditated before, but who had just been introduced to the practice. #iammindful

Join the conversation: Have you felt more creative as a result of meditation? How so?

Week Three: Mindfulness in Everything

As we head into the third week of the 21-Day Meditation Challenge, we hope that you've begun to notice *something* as a result of your practice. Maybe you feel more alert and or aware of what's going on around you. Perhaps you're sleeping better or experiencing greater clarity in your dreams. Have you found yourself laughing more easily or not feeling triggered by things that typically drive you nuts?

You might not be experiencing any of these things, and that's OK, too. Just keep at it. Remember, the goal in meditation is not to achieve anything, but to get truly in relationship with ourselves.

This week, you'll practice bringing the sense of awareness and mindfulness you've been cultivating on your meditation cushion into daily activities.

Day 15: Cultivating Mindfulness + Continue your regular practice

Today's meditation: Sit for 16 minutes.

Today you'll begin to bring the awareness that you've been cultivating in your daily meditation practice into your day. Mindfulness, according to Insight meditation teacher Tara Brach, "is really about presence. It's about knowing what's going on inside and around you, and being able to respond to the moment with clarity and with kindness."

This includes during moments when you're not meditating. Like washing the dishes, on a walk, or taking a shower. Just let your attention settle fully on what you're doing, feeling into the experience with all your senses.

When you find yourself drifting into thought, very kindly and gently bring yourself back to the moment at hand: the movement in your body, wherever your gaze falls, the feel of the water or the air on your skin, the smells all around you. Like the breath, these physical sensations are anchors back to the present moment. "Use the body as an anchor throughout your day," advises Brach.

Social prompt: When washing the dishes, out on a walk, or taking a shower, let your attention settle on what you're doing, feeling into the experience with all your senses.

#becomeameditator

Join the conversation: What happens when you bring present-moment awareness into your day? Share your experience.

"We don't want to compartmentalize meditation; that the only time we are quiet, balanced and clear is when we're sitting on a cushion with our eyes closed." —Tara Brach

Day 16: Your Brain is Growing

Today's meditation: Sit today for 15-20 minutes

We now know that meditation changes the size and structure of the brain. A Harvard University study found [link] that after 8 weeks of meditation, there is growth in the hippocampus, the part of the brain that controls learning and memory, and plays a role in emotional regulation. There are also notable decreases in the amygdala, which is connected to fear, anxiety, and stress. Researchers also found changes in the brain regions related to mood and arousal, which corresponded to study participants' self-reported experience of psychological well-being.

Social prompt: After 8 weeks of meditation, there is growth in the hippocampus, the part of the brain that controls learning and memory, and plays a role in emotional regulation. #iammindful

Join the conversation: Do you believe that meditation can alter the structure of your brain? Why or why not?

Day 17: Willpower & Self-Control + 2 Meditations for Today

Today's meditation: Sit for two 10-minute sessions, one at your regular time and once more at a time of your choice.

Lasting change requires equal parts desire linked to a strong reason, an action plan, and a measure of willpower. The first two parts are pretty easy to generate. But the third, willpower, is trickier.

Numerous research studies have shown that meditation helps. How? It increases our awareness of triggers and helps us manage emotions that often drive us to bad habits.

When you can learn to let cravings come and go (awareness and non-reactivity) you are more likely to stick with, rather than sabotage, your goals.

This skill paired with the stress-reducing effects of meditation helps us feel more in control and better able to make healthier choices. In other words, we're not controlled by our emotions.

"To see what's happening clearly, not react compulsively, and bring a wise response that meets the situation—that's wisdom." —Craig Hamilton

Social prompt: Meditation is an ally for behavior change.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: Have you experienced greater self-control in a specific behavior since beginning meditation?

Day 18: Become Your Own Best Friend/ Hone Your Intuition + a guided meditation

Today's meditation: Listen to a 20-minute guided meditation. [link]

You have a runaway train in your head. We all do. Thousands of thoughts and associations run through our minds.

All of this "noise" makes it difficult to hear the voice inside — call it inner wisdom, higher self, or intuition — letting you know when something needs our attention.

The more connected you are to yourself, to your own unique rhythms and wisdom, the easier it is to hear this voice. And meditation is one of the best ways to develop this connection.

"What if 'doing nothing' for a specified time each day was like clearing the space, allowing the activity to calm down, and creating the room for a deeper source of wisdom that you don't normally have access to?" —Craig Hamilton

Social prompt: Intuition can be a trusted ally in life. And meditation is the most direct route to establish a connection to this inner knowing.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: When is your intuition the strongest?

Day 19: Keep Your Brain Young + A 20-minute practice

Today's meditation: Sit for two 15-minute sessions today. Sit today on your own for 20 minutes.

One of the best results we've heard about meditation has to do with research linking the practice to the delay of age-related neurodegenerative conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease. Researchers at University of California in Los Angeles discovered [link] that people who practice mindfulness meditation have less atrophy, or shrinking, in the hippocampus. This corresponds to other research that found greater gray matter, the area of the brain that contains neurons, among longtime meditators compared to people who have never meditated.

Social prompt: Research links meditation to the delay of age-related neurodegenerative conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: How do you plan to stay healthy as you age?

Day 20: Feel Less Pain

Today's meditation: Sit today for 20 minutes.

If you suffer from chronic pain, you want to be meditating: An important study found that just four days of meditation resulted [link] in significantly reduced pain. That included both the intensity of the pain and the perceived unpleasantness. Researchers concluded that meditation changed the way the brain experiences pain.

Social prompt: Regular meditation is a proven means of pain control. Even a small amount of meditation can reduce both the intensity and the perception of pain.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: Do you suffer from chronic pain? Has meditation helped?

Day 21: You Did It! + Continuing Your Practice

Today's meditation: Do a 21-minute session on your own.

By now, we hope that you have experienced some of the peacefulness, groundedness, and sense of expansion that comes from regular meditation practice.

If you haven't yet, you will!

We strongly encourage you to continue to meditate as part of your daily routine — like brushing your teeth or exercising. If you do, before you know it, it'll be hard to imagine your life without meditation. Good thing you don't have to!

One of the best parts about meditating is that you can do it anywhere, anytime, and for the rest of your life. It just gets better over time.

Meditation teachers recommend working up to 30 to 45 minutes daily, with one longer session per week.

You might also try exploring different styles. Many yoga studios and community-education programs offer meditation training. And some churches and Buddhist centers provide free group meditation sessions. If you want to deepen your practice, a weekend or weeklong meditation retreat will take it to another level.

While all these things are good, great even — and we highly encourage them — at its core meditation is a personal practice. It's there, just for you, at any time. It will never fail you. Befriend the practice and you'll forge an unshakeable friendship with yourself, for life.

Social prompt:

At its core meditation is a personal practice. It's there, just for you, whenever you need it. And it will never fail you. Befriend the practice and you'll forge an unshakeable friendship with yourself, for life.

#iammindful

Join the conversation: What have you learned about yourself through meditation?

MEET YOUR TEACHERS

Lodro Rinzler is a practitioner and teacher in the [Shambhala Buddhist](#) lineage. He began meditating as a child and attending retreats as a teenager. In college he became a Vajrayana student of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and established Buddhist House, an 18-person dorm at Wesleyan University. He's the former Executive Director of the Boston Shambhala Center and served as the Head of Development for Shambhala internationally before founding the [Institute for Compassionate Leadership](#), [The Daily Dharma Gathering](#), and [MNDEL](#).

[<http://mndflmeditation.com/work/>] A frequent columnist for the *Huffington Post*, *Marie Claire* and *Elephant Journal*, Lodro has also authored five books including [The Buddha Walks into a Bar...](#), [Sit Like a Buddha](#) and [How to Love Yourself \(And Sometimes Other People\)](#).
<http://www.lodrorinzler.com>

Tara Brach teachings blend Western psychology and Eastern spiritual practices, mindful attention to our inner life, and a full, compassionate engagement with our world. The result is a distinctive voice in Western Buddhism, one that offers a wise and caring approach to freeing ourselves and society from suffering. She is the founder of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, DC and gives presentations, teaches classes, offers workshops, and leads silent meditation retreats throughout the United States and Europe. Her monthly podcast reaches more than 1 million people. A leading expert in the integration of mindfulness into clinical psychotherapy, she is also the author of *Radical Acceptance* and *True Refuge: Finding Peace & Freedom in Your Own Awakened Heart*. <http://www.tarabrach.com>

Craig Hamilton is a pioneer in the emerging field of evolutionary spirituality. In his writings, talks, and teachings, he calls us to awaken beyond the confines of the separate ego and dedicate our lives to the further evolution of consciousness itself. As the founder of [Integral Enlightenment](http://integralenlightenment.com), Craig offers spiritual guidance and teaches tele-courses guiding participants through a process of spiritual awakening into an evolutionary relationship to life. He is a founding member of Ken Wilber's Integral Institute, a member of Deepak Chopra's Evolutionary Leaders Forum, and was a participant in the Synthesis Dialogues, a 35-person interdisciplinary think tank presided over by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He serves as CEO at Evolving Wisdom, the online transformational education company he co-founded. <http://integralenlightenment.com>

GUIDED MEDITATIONS [embed links]

Candle Gazing Meditation

Mantra Meditation

A 10-minute Guided Practice