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## Meditation for stress relief – Part II

As you attempt a contemplation, concentration and then meditation process, you'll almost certainly become conscious that your mind wanders off the desired course into all sorts of little alleyways. That's fine. Gently bring it back to your initially intended thought, image or word repetition and continue visualising or repeating. Start off with five minutes a day. Do this for two weeks or so. Then increase the time to ten minutes. Do that for two weeks. You may even use some gentle orchestral background music in the early stages to help calm and focus the mind. This is not a war! This is a gentle re-persuasion of your thoughts. Violence and vigour is not the way to go. Subtlety and calmness is.

The effect of focusing the mind through such gentle repetition is that you'll typically start to produce an Alpha brain wave of between 8 and 12 Hertz or cycles per second, or even deeper into Theta between 4 and 7 Hertz per second. Those brainwaves have been scientifically demonstrated over many studies to have a calming, restorative and therapeutic effect on both the brain and body of the practitioner. Blood pressure falls, your breathing rate becomes calm and deep, and energy is harnessed and stored.

Make a pact with yourself today. Invest in your future tranquillity and find just five minutes a day. Choose a place where you're unlikely to be uninterrupted by a person, animal or mobile phone call. Sit comfortably on the floor or in a chair where you feel really secure and aren't at risk should you (not desired though!) doze off. Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing. Trying this process with your belly full of food isn't great – but then neither is trying it on a starving one. A cup of sweetened non-caffeinated tea or a piece of fruit before you start the process will raise your blood sugar and keep your mind away from the larder.

Masters of the art of meditation will assess the student's preferences. If you're visually predominant, then looking at a scenic or holy picture or candle flame is a gentle and effective way of focussing the mind according to its natural preference. If you're an auditory (sound) predominant person, then a mantra, holy name or repeating a word like salaam, shalom, shanti or peace can work very well for you. If you're a kinesthetic (feelings) predominant individual, then using your fingers to count the repetitions of the word, name or mantra or using prayer beads (a rosary) will work well. Burning a fragrant incense stick is a good way to create an impact on the olfactory (smell) sense. This will help focus a kinesthetic person's mind even more.

The whole idea of these little aids is to engage the mind in a way which is preferred by and natural to it. The intention is to gently lead it into a process which is relaxing, enjoyable and tension free. If you try to bully it into submission, it just isn't going to cooperate with you.

Give this easy approach a try and, as you evolve, so my third and concluding article on the topic will make a whole lot of sense. A set routine of some sort works best with a meditation process. If your day is typically hectic and fragmented, then maybe try getting up just 15 minutes earlier than you usually do. Let that be your 'quiet time' with the universe or God or your de-stress time. If you establish a routine, you're less likely to fall off the rails at the first disruption of your schedule.

The secret to meditation progress lies in your consistency. It's like taking medication for a chronic condition. You have to take it regularly for it to properly work its healing magic.