Meditation for Relaxation

Each week during semester-time there is an opportunity to share a time of silent meditation with others: Tuesday at 12pm and Thursday at 5pm in the Multifaith Chaplaincy Garden Room (Buckley Building Ground Floor).

We use generic techniques that may draw on zen, mindfulness, and breathing meditation; if you have your own practice you are welcome to join us and practice in whatever way works well for you.

What is meditation?

Meditation can take many forms; at its most basic it is any practice that helps to calm mind and body. Meditation helps you to create space between your thoughts, which helps problem-solving and can be part of combatting anxiety. Meditation helps you to connect with your body and your surroundings.

Is meditation a religious act?

For people who have a faith, meditation may be a form of prayer that helps them to appreciate God in their lives, who- or whatever they perceive God to be, but you do not have to have any kind of belief in God to meditate! Wherever you are, meditation helps to keep your thoughts and focus on the ‘here and now’ and to calm worries about the past and future. In a busy world, it creates a true rest from the routine. If you want to talk about meditation in your own faith tradition, you can find a chaplain or faith adviser by emailing chaplaincy@brookes.ac.uk.

Why do people meditate?

Meditation is a rest for the mind and body. When you meditate, you commit to giving a short time over to yourself and to your wellbeing, and to rest from thinking and planning for the day. Many people find that consciously turning away from a problem can help them to solve it – the solution may come when you stop ruminating (although we can’t promise that will happen every time you meditate!).

Is it easy?

It can be. Meditation doesn’t come naturally to everyone, and anyone can improve with practice. The first time you try to meditate it might feel very frustrating, but many people find that practice helps them to stay still and calm for longer, and even a very few minutes of rest for your mind has benefits.

If you find it difficult, try to stay in the silence and the presence of others and keep returning to the posture and breathing you worked on at the beginning of your meditation. In time, you will find you have to try less and the techniques will come more naturally.

What if I find myself unable to meditate?

If you are in a group and you find you are distressed, uncomfortable, or you have finished your useful meditation time, feel free to leave quietly. Don’t worry about being a distraction to others, we are all only responsible for our own experience. Try again another time – every experience is different.

Where else can I practice?

Anywhere and everywhere! As part of our meetings weekly, we share resources we’ve found useful for meditation and relaxation, so you should pick up some good tips. You can meditate literally anywhere where you can sit and rest. As you start to find it easier, you might even find you can meditate successfully on the U1 or in the Forum.

What other resources are out there?

The Headspace Meditation App has some good, basic, free meditations. It’s available on the Apple, Android and Amazon app stores.

Inner Space on Broad Street in Oxford city centre offers guided meditations as well as talks and workshops.

If you are worried about your emotional wellbeing, the Brookes Counselling Service has a list of self-help resources on the website: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/counselling/self-help/

You are also welcome to contact the Multifaith Chaplaincy for support, chaplaincy@brookes.ac.uk
Meditation for Relaxation
This is a basic toolkit to get you started on your own meditations for relaxation.

Where to Meditate
Find any place where you feel you will be undisturbed. This may be your room, the Multifaith Chaplaincy, or Prayer & Quiet Rooms on campus, or a quiet spot in your favourite park. (Once you feel comfortable meditating you may find you can even do it on the bus!)

When to Meditate
If you are working meditation into your routines, it can set you up for a good day in the morning, or be part of a successful sleep hygiene routine just before bed. Any time you think you need a bit of space for yourself is a good time to meditate.

Body Position
Make sure you are comfortable, so that you won't need to move around or readjust your posture and so interrupt your stillness. It is preferable to sit up straight on the floor or on a chair if you can. Try not to lie down, since this makes it more likely you will fall asleep! Your hands can relax on your lap, palms up or any way that you feel most open. If you rest the fingertips gently against one another, you can feel if you tense or relax, and this is a cue to return to your breathing.

Thoughts
Thoughts will inevitably drift in and dance around your mind, but that's normal. Don't try to do anything with them – let them be. If you find yourself thinking about what's passing through your mind, just return to focusing your awareness on your breath – you will soon slip into the space between thoughts.

Breath
When we pay attention to our breath, we are in the present moment. In an unforced, natural rhythm, allow your breath to flow in and out, easily and effortlessly. You may find it helpful to count your breaths as you begin if you are anxious, but once you have settled to a natural rhythm, let it be.

Meditation Length
When we meet together in the Multifaith Chaplaincy we aim for 15-20 minutes of meditation together, as a manageable length of time. The effects of meditation are cumulative, and setting aside as little as 15 minutes a day to retreat and rejuvenate is beneficial. As you get used to meditating, you can extend your time. It is good to build up a routine of little-and-often to help keep the benefits going.