



What Meditation Isn't

By [Louise Jensen](#) | April 11, 2014



Originally published on [Medium](#) by Louise Jensen, an award-winning naturopathic kinesiologist, mindfulness meditation coach, and co-creator of [The Happy Starfish](#), an online community dedicated to celebrating health, happiness, and peaceful living.

As a meditation coach, I hope to dispell some of the most common [misconceptions about meditation](#). Here's the real deal on 11 myths that need clearing up:

1. Myth: Meditation is purely a relaxation technique

I often hear, “but there are other things I do that relax me; I don't need to meditate.” It's certainly true that relaxation is a byproduct of a regular [meditation](#) practice, but it's also so much more. Meditation allows us to consciously choose to live by being perfectly present and fully experiencing life right now, freeing yourself of the limiting negative mental chatter that can sometimes feel relentless. We can do this through reconnecting with the still, silent space inside of us, rather than seeking temporary periods of [true happiness](#) through external measures.

2. Myth: Meditation is a religious practice

You don't need to shave your head, join a monastery, or give away all your money. You are making a commitment to love and honor the real you by reconnecting with the peace and love that resides inside but that has been slowly consumed through years of modern living.

3. Myth: Meditation makes you an emotionless robot

[Meditation](#) does not remove emotions; rather, it makes you more attuned to emotional changes. I used to worry all the time, believing the commentator in my head to be very true, which caused me lots of energy and stress. (*“Wow, could that really happen? That would be terrible.”*). Lots of the emotions I had were very fear-based and surrounded the future. Meditation has increased my clarity, allowing me to think more logically rather than emotionally. Living in the present moment helped me to disengage from my unhealthy emotional states, but I still feel things very deeply.



4. Myth: Meditation is too hard

This one's understandable: It's a completely alien concept to many to just sit and be. No distractions, no entertainment, no planning the future. Meditation is not hard, but it is helpful to have someone [guide you](#) when you start practicing.

5. Myth: Meditation takes years to work

It is called [meditation practice](#) for a reason. It takes time to cultivate the habit of directing our attention inward. It's not an instant fix, but changes will be gentle and consistent. Gradually, you will break free from the cycle of thinking too much and you will reconnect to your natural state of peace and love. The longer you put off starting your practice, the longer you will remain in disharmony.

6. Myth: Meditation takes too much time

Spare time is a luxury that many of us do not have, but everyone can create a few minutes in their day (I have periods where I switch my smartphone off so I can't keep checking it to free up time). People who say they don't have the time to meditate are usually the ones that need it most. Try just 10 minutes a day for six weeks. It's enough to see a difference.

7. Myth: To meditate you need to stop having thoughts

I have been meditating for years, and my mentors even longer, and I honestly don't know of anyone who doesn't have any thoughts. We are human beings with human nervous systems and will probably remain having thoughts for the rest of our lives. Meditation offers you the freedom to choose which thoughts you engage with.



8. Myth: Meditation is an escape from reality

Personally, my reality pre-meditation was full of fear and panic and generally full of angst. I am now free from remorsefully thinking about the past or anxiously trying to foresee the future. You can't get much more real than the present moment.

9. Myth: Meditation doesn't work for everyone

There are many types of meditation, all with the ultimate aim of enabling you to be present. There is something for everyone. I believe the majority of people give up, feeling like they're "bad" at it due to the amount of thoughts they have when trying. Never judge a meditation by the time spent meditating, but rather on the after effects (e.g. do you sleep better, have improved clarity, less worry?).

10. Myth: Meditation is selfish

I struggled initially with taking time out of my day to meditate that could have been spent with my children or doing a [million other things](#). It felt extremely self-indulgent and uncomfortable. However, my practice has made me calmer, happier, and generally a lot nicer to be around. Others will reap the benefits almost as much as you do.

11. Myth: Meditation is the answer to all

Life is subject to flux, and we will all have times where our circumstances become more difficult. Unfortunately, meditation does not guarantee you a problem-free existence, but it *does* give you the tools you need to navigate your way through life with calmness, clarity, and knowing that this too shall pass.

Do you practice meditation and, if so, are there more misconceptions that need clearing up? Let us know in the comments below or tweet us [@greatist](#).