

Week 1: Bridges into Meditation

Goals / Homework:

- 1. Show UP.** ...use a bridge to get here, if necessary!
- 2. Breathe.** ... the breath can be a powerful bridge! Recommendation: Breathe in and out through the nose with awareness of the sensation of the breath. Nothing fancy this week, just breathe and know that you are breathing!
- 3. Accept.** Whatever comes up, just accept it! No judgements. No expectations! Just show up and sit! Beginners goal: 5 minutes / day. Experienced Students 15 minutes / day. Overachievers - Practice Twice a day

Extra Credit:

- 1. Explore Bridges...** Try to meditate after doing another activity that takes your mind out of your outside life and into your body. I think of these as meditations in motion and may be yoga, tai chi, a body scan, singing, painting, a walk, aerobics, whatever! Something that you are engaged and absorbed in, so that thoughts and worries begin to become redirected and awareness turns within!
- 2. Journal:** I provided a link for you to access a practice log. Keep it simple and basic! I approach my meditation journal from the perspective of essentialism. Just note a few key items and then, let it go. This is not a competition, just a lifestyle change. Keeping a log may provide insight later that is helpful, even if it feels useless in this moment!
- 3. Create a Sacred Space or Ritual!** Having a ritual that you do prior to meditating can become a bridge from your outside life inward. *** See the handout for ideas!

TIPS

What time of day is optimal? Anytime is better than no time! So, while this can be a personal choice, I recommend MORNING. The sooner after waking the better. To start your day with meditation or prayer, can have a significant impact on how you experience the rest of your day! Ending your day with a moment of mindfulness and a gratitude practice can also have positive affects! If you miss a day, just begin again the next opportunity. Don't give up!

How Long? Use a Timer - A nice beginning goal is 2 minutes. DAILY. Most smart phones have basic timers. This takes the anxiety component out of meditation! I use "Insight Timer App" & love it.

Calming Breath - Step by step instructions:

Close your eyes and begin breathing through your nose.

Exhale completely. Then inhale for a count of two... pause for a count of one... exhale gently, for a count of four, pause again for 1 count with empty lungs. Keep your breathing even and smooth, with the exhale twice as long as the inhale, increasing as needed, by lengthening the count of the breaths to maybe 3-6 ratio or 4-8.

If you increase the length and longer breaths create any anxiety there is no need to push yourself. The most important thing is that the exhale is longer than the inhale, not the absolute length of the breath.

Set a timer and breathe this way for 2-5 minutes!