



Practice Basics

Intention, Environment, Posture, Routine

Setting the conditions for deepening practice.

Each time we begin formal meditation practice, the variables of intention, environment, posture, and routine are heavily influential. Skillfully setting each of these conditions will optimize meditation efforts and lead to a deepening of practice. Here are some simple things to “set before you sit”...

Set Intention

In its most general form, “*Setting Intention*” means: deciding to consciously think on **why** you are practicing and be resolved in yourself to **maintain** that purpose — it can be helpful to think back on why you ever attempted to meditate in the first place. Other ways to think about what intention is include:

- What do you want to get out of the practice (short-term and long-term)?
- What technique do you feel challenged by or comfortable with, and therefore want to strengthen or enjoy more deeply?

- What specific skills of mind do you want to target?
- What elements of your own happiness do you want to cultivate?

Set Environment

“Setting Environment” refers to the **physical space** within which you choose to practice meditation. Generally, it can be helpful to situate yourself away from excessive distractions and in a place where it will not be necessary for you to be pulled away. Always keep in mind, however, the point of meditation is not to “escape out of life”, but to learn to “escape into it” — so try not to be too disturbed by the disturbances!

Set Posture

I consider there to be two primary concerns in “Setting Posture”:

1. Is the body relatively **relaxed**, comfortable, calm, settled, and at-ease?
2. Is the body relatively **awake**, supported, energetic, open, and alert?

Beyond these two things — which are typically reinforced when the spine is stretched up; and the ears, shoulders, and hips are aligned — there is no special posture required for meditation.

Set Routine

As a general guideline with “Setting Routine”, it can be helpful (especially as a daily practice is being established) to sit in meditation at roughly the **same time** and in roughly the **same place** each day. It is in maintaining this consistency that the body and mind are conditioned to engage more fully in practice. This will certainly fluctuate, and that is just fine! In fact, switching up the time and place of practice can present some interesting, growth-inducing challenges; but having a “home base” to return to provides a sense of stability, continuity, and familiarity — it transforms meditation practice into an old friend to whom you pay daily visits of quality time.