

Creating your own successful meditation practice

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An effective meditation practice consists of multiple elements which work together. Try to do *at least* one formal practice and one life practice every day. If there are one or two things you can do more easily than others, then make them your regular practice and really commit to them. As they become more habitual for you, try adding others.

1. **Formal Practice.** Meditation using your full attention on a specific technique for a set amount of time (at least 10 minutes).
 1. *Meditation in stillness*
 1. sitting
 2. standing
 3. lying down
 2. *Meditation in motion*
 1. walking
 2. eating
 3. doing yoga or exercise
 4. doing the dishes
 5. other simple tasks
 3. **Tips for implementation**
 1. Attend a regular group (or create one with friends)
 2. Schedule a regular time for both stillness and motion into your daily activities
 3. Create accountability: someone you “report to,” or friends who check up on you
2. **Life Practice.** Intentional application of specific techniques in daily situations.
 1. *Micro hits*
 1. Formal technique (100% attention)
 2. Short duration (from just a few seconds to a few minutes)
 3. Any situation or location
 4. Planned or spontaneous. For example,
 1. Planned
 1. Before every class
 2. Before difficult discussions
 3. During pleasant experiences (massage, concert)
 2. Spontaneous
 1. When you notice strong emotion arising
 2. When you are struck by a beautiful sunset or bird song
 3. When you are waiting at a long traffic light
 5. **Tips for implementation**
 1. Schedule ahead of time (add to calendar 5 minutes before appointment, etc)
 2. Location reminders (post-it notes, etc)

1. bathroom mirror for brushing teeth
 2. in your car for stoplight time
 3. on your phone wallpaper for when you are bored and check your phone
 3. Time reminders
 1. set regular alarms (mine cuckoos every hour)
 2. use existing reminders (church bells, class bells, etc)
 2. **Background Practice**
 1. Formal technique, but only small % of attention (running in background)
 2. Any duration
 1. during a short conversation
 2. all day
 3. etc
 3. Any situation
 4. Intentional or automatic
 5. **Tips for implementation**
 1. Use same tips as for Micro hits
 3. **Spontaneity Practice**
 1. Simple tasks: stop thinking and fall into practice
 1. chopping vegetables
 2. weeding
 3. rituals (memorized prayers, pledge of allegiance, etc)
 2. **Tips for implementation**
 1. Use same tips as for Micro hits
3. **Retreat Practice.** Intensive, structured, teacher-led periods of directed meditation.
 1. **Residential Retreats.** Try to attend at least one 5-10 day residential meditation retreat every year.
 1. How should you choose a retreat? Choose what interests you!
 1. Choose a teacher
 1. try to sit with the same teacher on a regular basis
 2. seek out specific teachers that interest you; or
 2. Choose a topic
 1. choose a retreat by topic: *vipassana*, concentration, loving kindness, etc; or
 3. Choose convenience
 1. choose a location that you can easily get to
 2. choose dates that you can attend
 3. choose a retreat you can afford (some retreats are entirely donation-based)
 2. **Tips for implementation**
 1. Sign up with a friend
 2. Sign up for your next retreat as soon as you return home from the present one.
 3. Book your time off work well in advance.

Unified Mindfulness: A Contemplative Odyssey