

## 10 UNEXPECTED WAYS TO MEDITATE EVERY DAY



Posted by [Sophia Breene](#) on May 22, 2013

Ready to get Zen? Meditation can do way more than people think — and it’s not just for hippies. Practicing meditation regularly has legitimate health advantages, especially for the brain. Studies suggest meditation can do it all: reduce anxiety and sensitivity to pain, [make us smarter](#), [ward off sickness](#), and [prevent stress](#) . If carving out an hour to sit on a cushion doesn't float your boat, there are many unexpected ways to meditate every day. Get the benefits of meditation by trying out an alternative style from the list below.

### ZEN ZONE — YOUR ACTION PLAN

**Standing Meditation:** Standing instead of sitting to meditate can [relieve lower back pain](#) and promote a greater sense of [internal stability](#). As with any form of meditation, begin with a short period of time — start with five minutes only. Stand in a comfortable, straight posture with the feet pointing straight forward, about shoulder width apart. After settling into the position, do a quick [full-body “scan,”](#) releasing tension and bringing awareness to every part of the body.

**Walking Meditation:** In walking meditation, called [kinhin](#) in the Zen tradition, practitioners move slowly and continuously while [staying aware of the body](#) and mind. For this form of meditation, use good posture (just like seated meditation), take deep breaths, and experience the motions of the body. The walking [movement should be continuous](#), so pick a safe place with space to roam around, like a large park or field.

**Tai Chi:** This ancient wellness practice, which means “Grand Ultimate” in Chinese, is all about aligning energy in the body as well as the mind. In traditional Chinese medicine, illness or pain happens when the life force, chi, is disrupted [\[3\]](#). The contemplative practice of tai chi — which looks like [slow-motion](#)

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[dancing](#) — is supposed to realign the body’s chi. This form of moving meditation may increase memory and brain size [\[4\]](#), as well as alleviate symptoms of [fibromyalgia](#). Find a local class [here](#).

**Qigong:** Like Tai Chi, Qigong is a form of “moving meditation” that uses rhythmic physical movements to focus and center the mind. Qigong is also used to regulate, maintain, and heal the body’s chi or energy force. The practice works as a [combination of meditation and low-impact exercise](#) and can reduce stress and anxiety, improve blood flow, and increase energy. Studies have shown that qigong meditation is an effective therapy for those overcoming substance abuse, especially for women [\[5\]](#). Because it combines mindful meditation with body movements, qigong can be used as a [mental, physical, or spiritual exercise](#).

**Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique:** Mata Amritanandamayi, an Indian humanitarian and spiritual leader known as “[Amma](#)” (mother) or “The Hugging Saint,” invented this practice to help people [redirect energy](#) in a positive way. Each session of IAM takes [20 to 30 minutes](#) and includes postures, pranayama breathing, and meditation. Participants spend the first eight or so minutes doing yoga, followed by deep breathing and meditation. According to [one study](#), the practice actually lowers the levels of stress hormones cortisol and adrenaline in the body. Find a practice in your area [here](#).

**Dance Meditation:** Get ready to boogie — meditation just got a soundtrack! Most people, at one time or another, have put on some tunes and cut the rug to chill out after a tough day. Dance or [kundalini meditation](#) takes that release one step farther by asking participants to [let go of the ego](#) and surrender to the rhythms and ecstasies of movement. Some classes encourage yelling, jumping, and even [hooting like an owl](#)! Dance meditation may not be for the faint of heart — or arm or leg — but it can be a great way to [release tension](#) and get in touch with our instincts.

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**Daily Life Practice Meditation:** Does high-energy dance sound a bit too wacky? Bring meditation back to a more reasonable pace with [daily life practice meditation](#), which is also called [Samu work meditation](#) in the Buddhist Zen tradition. In this style of meditation, practitioners slow down daily activities to half-speed and use the extra time to be mindful and focus on thoughts. There's no need to sign up for a class when it's possible to meditate while washing dishes, taking a shower, walking down the subway steps...

**Hand Movement Meditation:** For many people, the toughest part of meditation is sitting without moving for an extended period of time. It's so hard to resist the urge to pick at an itchy spot because [scratching activates areas of the brain](#) that control pain and compulsive behavior. What's the best solution to this conundrum? Try [hand movement meditation](#), in which participants focus on moving the hands slowly and mindfully.

**Gazing Meditation:** If staring into space or spacing out is your jam, try Trataka or fixed-gazing meditation. This unusual style of meditation encourages participants to focus inward by [staring at a fixed object](#) while sitting or standing. Trataka has many alleged benefits, from physical plusses like [eye health](#) and headache relief to mental advantages such as lower stress levels and better focus. If outdoors, fix the gaze on a natural object like a stone, tree, or even the moon (just avoid staring at the sun). Indoors, try looking at the center of a lit candle or an [interactive computer graphic](#). Trataka can be pretty intense, so start very slowly — stare for just 15 to 20 seconds, with plenty of rest time. Eventually work up to 10 or 15 minutes.

**Breathing Meditation:** This technique takes those pre-yoga class "Oms" to the next level. Also called yogic breathing or [Pranayama](#), this meditation style is all about controlling the inhales and exhales.

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Greatist Expert [Dr. Jeffrey Rubin](#) explains, "Longer exhales tend to be calming, while longer inhales are energizing. For meditative purposes either the ratio of exhale to inhale is even or the exhale is longer than the inhale for a calming effect." This type of meditation can be done anywhere, anytime (except underwater, for obvious reasons).

Meditation can mean much more than sitting on a pillow for an hour. Try one of these alternative meditation styles to find the best fit and incorporate mindfulness into any daily routine.

Special thanks to [Greatist Expert Dr. Jeffrey Rubin](#) for his contributions to this article.

Which meditation style is the best fit for you? Tell us in the comments section below or tweet the author at [@SophBreene](#).

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