



**Meditation 101**  
**Laura Good and Robert Hodge**  
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**Talk 1**

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**White Hall Meditation** (WHM) is committed to honoring the Buddha's teachings of wisdom, compassion, interdependence, and the end of suffering. By practicing concentration, awareness, and insight, we cultivate peace, joy, and balance.

White Hall Meditation is dedicated to making the study and practice of Insight Meditation available to all including the local community of Western Albemarle County. Our sangha aims to provide a spiritual home for those seeking contemplation and inner peace.

**Insight Meditation** (also called Vipassana in the Buddhist Theravada Tradition) is a method to see the true nature of reality. Vipassana is the oldest of Buddhist meditation practices and is a direct and gradual cultivation of mindfulness or awareness. It is also a form of mental training that will teach you to experience the world in an entirely new way. You will learn for the first time what is truly happening to you, around you and within you.

Meditation is an approach to training the mind, similar to the way that fitness is an approach to training the body. We use mindfulness, paying attention moment to moment to what is, to gain clarity and wisdom into every situation and thus cultivate peace and joy.

WHM was started about nine years ago by Robert Hodge and since then we also have guest teachers and myself. Meditating together is a wonderful way to practice because not only do we learn different teachings and techniques but being part of a sangha deepens your experience.

**History of Meditation**

The word meditation stems from meditatum, a Latin term that means 'to ponder.'

"The oldest documented images of meditation are from India and date back to 5000 to 3500 BCE. Wall art paintings depict people sitting in meditative-like seated postures with their eyes half closed, presumed to be deep in meditation.

The earliest written records come from Hindu traditions, in India, of Vedatism from around 1500 BCE. Vedatism is a school of philosophy and is one of the earliest known Indian paths for spiritual enlightenment. Other forms of meditation are then cited around the 6th and 5th centuries BCE within Taoist China and Buddhist India."<sup>1</sup>

So, we have the development of meditation in Taoist China in the 5th and 6th centuries and also in the 6th century the life of the historical buddha, Siddhartha Gautama and his journey towards enlightenment.

### **Different types of mediation:**

Mindfulness Meditation: paying attention to thoughts as they pass through your mind and greeting them with a general friendliness and without judgement. We concentrate on bodily sensations, thoughts or feelings as they arise, but we don't cling to them.

Spiritual Meditation: uses techniques to develop a deeper understanding of religious beliefs and a higher power. Some examples of these are:

- Centering prayer in Christianity which focuses on interior silence.
- Sufi dhikr (remembrance of God) continual awareness of the Divine Presence is established.
- Jewish Kabbala: the ancient Jewish tradition of mystical interpretation of the Bible

Movement Meditation: Walking meditation, qi gong and Thai chi and some uses of yoga.

Mantra meditation is used in some Hindu and Buddhist traditions. This type of meditation uses a repetitive sound or phrase to clear the mind. It can be a word, phrase, or sound, one of the most common being "om."

Transcendental Meditation: founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and refers to a specific practice designed to quiet the mind and induce a state of calm and peace.

Loving Kindness Meditation is used to strengthen feelings of compassion, kindness, and acceptance toward oneself and others. It's used by itself and in many Buddhist practices.

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage."  
- Lao Tzu

Insight meditation incorporates many of those techniques. It's important to try different ways of meditation to see what works for you.

### **What are the benefits of Insight Meditation?**

For many of us, life can seem like a hardship when we are exposed to the stresses and the challenges of life. All of us experience loss, aging, sickness, separation from loved ones, and dying. We often respond with anxiety, fear, anger, disappointment, and separation. Life is simply not meeting our expectations!

Through the teachings and the practice of insight meditation as prescribed by the Buddha, it is possible to gain insight into why we suffer and to achieve joy, peace, and happiness in this life.

### **Getting to Know the Mind**

We meditate so we can get to know our mind. By getting to know our mind we can see when and how it gets hooked into thinking that causes suffering. By cultivating a less reactive, open and flexible way of responding to life, we let our mind be all it can be: luminous, clear, loving and beautiful. With a mind like this, everything in life is workable. We see the difference between pain and suffering and how our thoughts determine how we experience each moment.

### **Keep life simple**

When we get to know our mind, we see the arising of suffering and the abandonment of suffering. We can more easily offer compassion to ourselves and others and it becomes a huge gift to the world, yet we don't get stingy with our compassion like it belongs to us. What does belong to us is our intention: in our hearts and then the execution of that intention.

There is a trust that develops with meditation. How? We can let go of the grip of the self, or rather our version of ourselves. Instead of interpreting events as always "against me" (and my grand plans), I could have the courage to see them as they really are: part of countless causes and conditions. While in quiet meditation, we experience our true nature, not bound by our limited beliefs of who and what we should be. We allow the Buddha nature to exist if only for a few moments.

### **How to Meditate**

Intend to meditate

Sit with dignity crosslegged or in a chair.

Find a posture that works for you.

Focus on your in breath and out breath.

Gently pay attention.

Welcome any feeling with friendliness and non-judgement.

Let go. Repeat!

[More meditation instructions](#) can be found on our website – whitehallmeditation.org under resources.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://positivepsychology.com/history-of-meditation/>