



## **Meditation: How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind**

*Pema Chödrön*

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When it comes to meditation, Pema Chodron is widely regarded as one of the world's foremost teachers. Yet she's never offered an introductory course on audio until now. On How to Meditate with Pema Chodron, the American-born Tibetan Buddhist nun and bestselling author presents her first complete spoken-word course for those new to meditation.

## **Meditation: How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind Details**

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## **From Reader Review Meditation: How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind for online ebook**

### **Sarah Monreau says**

Ein schönes und lehrreiches Buch, gerade für Anfänger natürlich sehr geeignet. Es gab schöne Aspekte, worüber man nachdenken kann und es gibt ein paar Übungen zum Ausführen, die man sich für die Zukunft merken sollte, da sie wirklich für den ein oder anderen sehr effektiv sein können.

Ich hatte eine nette Zeit mit dem Buch, muss aber sagen, dass es mich mit der Zeit nicht mehr so packen konnte. Am Anfang fand ich es noch interessanter, obwohl gerade da eigentlich das erzählt wurde, was ich ohnehin schon alles wusste. Sehr seltsam. Am Schreibstil lag es nicht, es war schön geschrieben, auch wenn ich das Gefühl hatte, das viele Sätze mehrfach wiederholt wurden. Damit blieb die Aussage immer die gleiche und ich dachte mir so: Ja, ich hatte es schon im ersten Satz verstanden. Sie drehte irgendwie die Sätze um oder nutzte andere Wörter, die aber eben am Ende den gleichen Sinn ergaben. Das ist mir stark aufgefallen.

Dennoch ein gutes Buch für Anfänger. Für alle anderen gibt es aber auch sicher Bücher, die einem tiefere Einblicke in die Meditationspraxis geben können.

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### **Teesa says**

I quote "We meditate in order to remove the root of suffering. Getting to the root of suffering begins with the returning to the present moment, with coming back to the breath. This is where expansion can occur. ... The present moment you will find is limitless."

For anyone struggling with strong emotions and monkey mind as you meditate, this is your guide. These are the meditations my therapist gave me for which I will be forever grateful. From the basis of meditation to "The Seven Delights - how moments of difficulty can become doorways to awakening and love." and "Shamatha or calm abiding, the art of stabilizing the mind to remain present with whatever arises."

If I had a Kindle this would be on it.

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### **pri says**

Very good, very practical. In my practice, I've been thinking okay - what do you "not think" about then? And Pema Chodron covers many meditation techniques that answer that question as well as the basics of why meditation is so very essential to our lives.

Quote: You have to get dirty with your emotions. Meditation allows us to feel them, live them, and taste them completely. It gives us a lot of insight into why we do the things we do and why other people do the things they do. Out of this insight, compassion is born. This insight also begins to open the doorway to buddha nature and the complete, open spaciousness that's available when we're not blocking our feelings.

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### **Tari Conway says**

I loved this book. Bodhichitta. Bodhi means "wide awake" or "enlightened". Chitta means "heart" or "mind", or "heart-mind". This type of meditation teaches us how to achieve this level consciousness ~ it's not a way of shutting out the world in order to find inner peace, as I had previously thought.

The goal here is a "completely open heart, a completely open mind; it means a heart that never closes down, even in the most difficult and horrendous situations. Bodhichitta communicates a mind that never limits itself with prejudices or biases or dogmatic views that are polarized against someone else's opinions. There is no limit to bodhi, no limit to its fluid and all-embracing openness."

Pema Chodron explains clearly how our minds can take us on a wild and crazy ride, but offers advice on how we can "train ourselves through meditation to be more open and more accepting toward the wild arc of our experience, and lean into the difficulties of life and the ride of our minds, to become more settled and relaxed amid whatever life brings."

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### **Aimee says**

For beginners and experienced meditators--Pema Chodron's writing is always enlightening. Her style of meditation is not to transcend, but to lean into your life. Sit here right now, eyes open, and breathe it all in. It's hard and I feel like an infant with this often uncomfortable style of meditation. But it's far more transformative than any other style of meditation I've ever tried. After all, as Pema teaches, the goal isn't to escape who you are or create a better version of yourself, the goal is to make friends with who you are right now.

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### **Haffi says**

This book is deep yet so simple. It explains in comfortable detail how you can rewire your mind through the practice of meditation. The author is a practitioner of Buddishm but it is easy to look past that (or even embrace it) to understand the message.

Somehow I had always confused relaxation and meditation but now I see that they are two different things entirely.

Become enlightened.

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### **Kivrin Engle says**

Dearest Pema Chödrön, thank you, thank you, thank you. Peace & Love, K.

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## Roy Lotz says

*Enlightenment isn't about going someplace else or attaining something that we don't have right now. Enlightenment is when the blinders start to come off.*

When I was in high school, I spent a few years going to Tae Kwon Do classes. I was never any good. Every time we had sparring practice, I got whooped—that is, unless I accidentally kicked my opponent in the crotch (which I did a lot). But besides the fun of hand-to-hand combat, one thing that kept me coming back was the meditation. After every class, we would spend about ten minutes in a guided meditation. These were not easy. Most often, the master had us holding an uncomfortable or difficult pose, until all my muscles were quivering and shaking and I collapsed.

Sometimes all I felt was pain and struggle; but other times, something would happen. As I listened to the master talk about energy flowing through my body, I could actually feel it. I felt strange forces in my arms and legs, seeming to move through me. This was weird, since I didn't believe anything the master was saying—at least not in a literal way. I didn't believe in qi, or energy centers in the body, or any of that stuff; but I felt something, and it was interesting.

This experience left me with a lingering respect for and curiosity about meditation. A book by David D. Burns about anxiety recently reawakened this curiosity. As I read about Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, I kept thinking that it reminded me of what I knew (or thought I knew) about Buddhism. Besides that, Burns himself drew some parallels with Buddhism in his discussions of fear. So I decided to look into it. A Buddhist friend of mine suggested Pema Chödrön as a place to start; and this book, a practical guide to meditation, seemed perfect.

I was surprised by what I found. The type of meditation Chödrön advocates doesn't involve holding difficult postures or enduring pain. You don't even have to close your eyes. Instead, you find a spot, sit up straight, cross your legs (or don't), and stay there, eyes open, breathing in and breathing out. You don't focus on energy centers or the cosmic flow of qi. Instead, you just try to focus on your breath. You breathe in, breathe out, and try to keep your attention on the present moment.

I have been doing these exercises for a week now, and I can tell you that being present, focusing on the moment, is far more difficult than you'd think. My mind is like a boiling, bubbling cauldron. Memories randomly appear; fearful fantasies flash into being; my to-do list nags me; an itch on my head irritates; my leg is falling asleep; a sound triggers an association; a smell makes me think of food; and spasms of impatience surge through me as the time wears on.

Meditation certainly hasn't induced a Zen-like calm in me so far. But it says a lot that now I'm aware of all these things. Just sitting there noticing what happens in my head, and letting it all pass through me, has been tremendously interesting. I realize that my very brain is not totally under my control. Things are always happening in there, constantly, spontaneously, which draw my attention from the moment; and it takes effort not to get sucked in.

One of the things I like most about Chödrön's approach is its versatility. You can make anything your object of meditation. You can focus on sounds, sights, tactile sensations, or the taste of an apple. You can focus on fear, anger, sadness, joy, on fantasies or memories. Anything in your life can be the object of meditation, as long as you use it as an opportunity to reconnect with the present moment. Meditation gives you the self-

awareness—not through conceptual discussion, but first-hand experience—to learn what your mind is doing and how to interrupt your habitual patterns.

What I find especially appealing is the philosophy. Well, perhaps “philosophy” isn’t the right word; it’s more of an attitude or a mindset. Through the attempt to reconnect with the moment, you realize how much of your experience is transformed by the conceptual overlay you put on top of it. Our heads are full of judgments, opinions, beliefs. We are constantly telling stories about our lives, with ourselves as the protagonist.

Have you ever had an experience like this? When I was in college, I accepted a job doing surveys over the phone. But I was extremely nervous about it. I imagined respondent after respondent yelling at me, hanging up on me, and my manager angry at me and chastising me, and me having a breakdown and getting fired. This fantasy was so strong, I almost couldn’t make myself go to my first day of work. But when I finally did make myself go, shivering with fear, and when I finally made myself call, my voice quaking, I realized that I could do it. What seemed impossible in my imagination was easy in reality. In fact, I ended up loving that job.

This is what I like to call the “novelistic imagination.” Your mind is a natural dramatist—at least, mine is—and it can tell the most outrageous stories about your past, present, and future. But the interesting thing, I’ve found, is that we’re actually quite bad at imagining how things will be. We’re good at imagining possibilities—especially worst-case scenarios—but bad at imagining experiences. That’s because, when we use our novelistic imagination, we assume that life is a story with a beginning, middle, and end. But life is not a story: it’s a collection of moments. And the present moment is so different, and so much richer, than all the wild fantasies in our minds.

My hunch is that we evolved our novelistic imagination as a way of avoiding danger by running scenarios. “If I go so far away, maybe I won’t be back by sundown, and the hyenas over there might smell me, etc.” The problem is that this gets out of hand, which is why we humans get so many stress-related diseases—not to mention suffer from chronic anxiety. We developed the mental faculty to anticipate danger and avoid it; but we can’t turn it off, so we sense danger everywhere.

This is taking me pretty far from the book (so you know it’s a good book, because it’s making me think). I’ll only add that this book strikes me as an ideal introduction to meditation. Chödrön writes with warmth, humor, and understanding. She is brief and to the point, but you don’t feel that she’s leaving anything out. She is practical, encouraging, and inspiring. I encourage anyone whose curious to try it. You can be a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, a Muslim, or an atheist like me—it doesn’t matter. Meditation is not about believing certain things. To the contrary: it’s about getting past your beliefs about the world, and experiencing the world itself.

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### Claire says

(This review refers to the 2013 ebook edition.)

There is some very useful and down-to-earth advice in this book, and it is written in straightforward, conversational language. It's not hard to see that this book is based off teachings that Chodron has given over the years (the audio book version says something to that effect). I appreciate that Chodron draws on and shares her experiences as a meditator and student throughout the book; she gives the reader the impression

that while she's been meditating for a long time, and teaching meditation for a while, she still has distractions - she lets the reader know she's human.

However.. if you are not Buddhist, and not interested in becoming Buddhist, there's a lot of Buddhist teaching to work around. In other words, if you don't agree with or find resonance with Buddhist teachings, this may not be the best book for you. I don't mean this as a criticism of the book in any way - it's meant as an observation for other people trying to decide whether to read it. Chodron alternates between talking about Buddhist teachings and talking about meditation practice in a way that doesn't have to be Buddhist.

Overall a solid and well written book.

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### **Clara says**

This is a solid foundational tool for someone who is learning to meditate. The five discs include actual meditation sessions in real time, which feature guidance by Pema during the meditations. Even if you're not a novice meditator, you'll find useful advice and new information. I found the last two discs to be the most helpful because meditations increased in sophistication, Pema seemed to integrate more dharma teachings into the meditation instruction.

Pema is specific and very clear both in her instructions and discussing the bigger picture of Buddhist meditation. For example, new meditators may be surprised to learn that Buddhist meditation is not about achieving a state of bliss, or emptying the mind of thoughts, or complete relaxation.

As usual, Pema takes her subject, but not herself, seriously. And by using her own experiences, both her struggles with meditation and the ways she's worked through them, make the learning more intimate and personal.

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### **David says**

I purchased this book hoping it would be a good guide for going deeper with my meditation practice. As someone who has meditated on and off for the better part of a decade, I wanted a book that would help motivate me to return to my zafu and go deeper within myself. While I enjoyed this book and got a lot out of it, it was geared more toward beginners than I had originally hoped. Still, there was a lot of helpful information and it served as a much-needed refresher course for me. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is interested in beginning a meditation practice.

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### **Kevin says**

This is a book to come back to time and time again. Best digested in small doses I usually start out slow and then get pulled in and read it all at once. I'm sure I'll be back to read this again the next time I'm looking for help or inspiration.

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## **Kay says**

I first read up on and tried meditation in the '90s during grad school. And I now know that I did what many beginners do - I quit after a particularly glorious experience that I was unprepared for.

The vast majority of meditation guides instruct on the proper posture and focus on breathing. As far as I can tell, there's much more diversity in direction as meditation has been secularized into a Western self-help method of dealing with modern stress. But *How To Meditate* by Pema Chödrön is the first book I've found to truly help me past what I saw as the unachievable basic barriers to "proper" meditation.

I'm physically unable to hold anything like the traditional meditation posture. And as one who breathes with a trach and ventilator, much of the typical instruction about focusing on the breath is impossible or leads me directly back to my greatest source of anxiety. For example, instructions to focus on the breath leaving the nostrils, the centering sensation of a long exhale, or the feeling of breath in the belly are senseless and alien to my present physical self. And as a beginner, asking me to turn my attention to my biggest anxiety? Not helpful.

But Chödrön puts it in context. Breathing is a focus because of its impermanence and changeability, not because you can regulate it into something calming. Then she introduces sound, emotion, tasks, and any sensation as a possible focus for meditation practice. Her gentle guidance doesn't just begrudgingly note you could use a chair or lie down if the traditional posture is difficult, as so many guides do. She shows how meditation is, in each moment, working with what your reality is. Got anxiety? Try looking at it. Or gently move on. Focusing on breath doesn't work in your practice? Try sound.

Even if a meditation practice isn't a goal, I recommend this book for the versatility of approach to self-awareness.

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## **Lindsay says**

This ran hot and cold for me. On one hand, while I appreciate that Chodron provided guidance on some of the more basic "how to meditate" practices, I didn't always agree. I've only just begun my meditation practice, however, but I am also looser about it and feel pretty secure in there being no one right way to meditate. What really landed with me was her discussion of how to handle emotions while meditating. That is so REAL to me, and it is something I will surely return to as I continue this practice. I tried reading one short chapter a day (almost all chapters are very short) until my life got topsy-turvy with this move, and then I realized it might be better if I read through it once to get the gist and then return to the chapters I need. Many chapters, but not all, provide exercises on how to hone your practice--I wish those were a little more consistent, but they do provide an example of how to structure your meditation when you need it. So, in the end, I was glad I read this, but I'm not necessarily going to let it lock me in.

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## **Jessica says**

I really liked the meditation exercises and how Pema Chodron reinforces being gentle and loving to yourself.

