



ahimsa
meditation

AhimsaMeditation.org

**Mindfulness
Meditation
for Anxiety**



This targeted meditation practice aims to help everyone who suffers from anxiety.

We want to help very busy business people living and operating with manic schedules, those who experiences an enormous pressure from peers and their immediate environment, but also others who live with mild anxiety that comes from their childhood and so on.

Age of Anxiety

Our modern era has been called “the age of anxiety”.

But even if we lived in an age free from modern kinds of stress, we would still experience anxiety. We have deeper anxieties rooted in the fear of impermanence, in a fear of being separated from what we love, because “things change”.

Anxiety is not just nerve-wracking experience that you may feel fairly often. Based on the work of Russ Harriss in his ‘The Happiness Trap’, anxiety leads to:

- Physical changes such as raised blood pressure, increased heart rate or perspiration, faster rate of breathing.
- Sensations such as racing heart, churning stomach, trembling hands, shaking hands, sweaty palms.
- Urges to run away or quit what you’re doing.
- Action tendencies like fidgeting, talking rapidly.



It's evident that it is not just a huge personal problem, it also affects people around and the entire world.

Studies also showed that people with mental health issues contribute a lot of healthcare costs, but unfortunately also to rise in crime.

You have probably guessed it or already got a chance to read on our [Meditation Benefits](#) page – one of the solutions to anxiety is mindfulness meditation.

University of Massachusetts Medical School studied the effects of mindfulness-based meditation on a group of people suffering with the generalised anxiety disorder. An incredible 90% of the participants documented significant reduction in anxiety and depression, following just 8 weeks of learning. 3 years after, in a follow-up, they found that these improvements had been maintained.

When we are talking about 8 weeks, it is a regular meditation practice just 30 minutes a day.

With anxiety, we at Ahimsa Meditation would like to focus on two characteristics that would be great to contemplate during your practice to reduce anxiety.

These are:

- impermanence , which allows anyone to stop being reluctant to accept that everything is changing all the time;
- suffering or dissatisfaction that occurs as a result of clinging to our day-to-day desires.

How do you practice mindful meditation to help with anxiety?

Practicing meditation is really easy and you can try it right now with these simple instructions for a concentration meditation on breathing:

Find a quiet place and set your alarm for an initial 10 minutes (more if you feel comfortable to start with a longer session).

Sit cross-legged on a floor (use a mat and a cushion to level your hips with your knees), place your arms on your lap. Only sit on a firm chair if cross legged position is very uncomfortable. In general, your posture should be fairly relaxed but not sluggish, so you won't meditate yourself to sleep. Full lotus is the most stable and firm posture, but you can adopt half-lotus or a simple cross-legged position too.

Take a few really deep breaths as so other people would be likely to hear you breathing. It should make you feel relaxed fairly quickly.



Close your eyes and start paying attention to sounds, smells, your posture and breathing. Simply make a mental note on what you are observing. No need to judge it or dwell on it.

Pay attention to how your body feels. Start doing so by scanning your body from top to bottom and notice how even the smallest parts of your body feel. Don't try to change anything or judge. It's all good, you are being attentive, that's it.

Move the focus of your attention to your breathing. Do not try to change it, just let it be. No judgement please, do not allow to be violent towards yourself.

Notice where in your body your breathing starts, how it flows and how it ends.

To help you settle with this pattern, you can start counting your breaths from 1 to 10 and then revert back to 1.

If your attention shifts to something else, notice the very fact of this happening and then gently get your mind to count the breaths again and again. These 'jumps' happen all the time, so be kind to yourself. The more skillful you become, the less monkey-like your mind learns to be. Every single time your mind gets back to counting breaths, it also gets stronger. This, in effect, gives your mind a proper training.

When you have established a good concentration on breathing, invite your mind to contemplate on the fact that all things change; it is just the way of life. Think about life and death, how are your thoughts are coming and going. This is what it's called impermanence. Accept it and relieve yourself from a pressure of stress factors. They will come and go too.

These stress factors come with dissatisfaction and suffering. It happens because you cling to positive states, and are averse to things that cause you pain. You can contemplate whether you can simply let go of your attachment to that stressor. This will definitely alleviate your stress and relieve anxiety. Yet if you cannot do it, by simply accepting that '*yes I cling to that, and that's why I feel anxious*' you



acknowledge your suffering and, paradoxically, it will subside. You will feel it less and with time it will disappear.

With time you will become familiar with both of these characteristics and your level of anxiety will gradually lessen. You will accept these as universal truths. Everyone experiences dissatisfaction and all things are impermanent. Your full acceptance and absence of clinging are key to lower your anxiety.

Continue for your set amount of time. When finished, allow your mind to rest for 30 seconds with no focus at all. Just observe and let it simply flow.

Finish by making a mental note how you feel now, what you are going to do next and open your eyes.

You have just completed a session of mind training or cultivation that specifically targeting anxiety.



Anxiety can be one of the obstacles to meditation. It can be a part of restlessness that creates a barrier to meditation practice. But don't be alarmed. If you do not judge yourself for being restless at some point during meditation but simply acknowledge the fact, it will actually lessen your anxiety. It's a paradox, but also a fact.

If you allow awareness to embrace your doubt, your unhappiness, your confusion, your anxiety, your pain, these mental states cease to be 'yours'. They revert to being recognised as merely 'weather patterns' in the mind and body (as quoted in "Falling Awake" by Jon Kabat-Zinn)

Acceptance and emotional stability transform restlessness and anxiety into peace

To finish our meditation practice that targets anxiety, let's making a pledge:

I am determined not to cover up loneliness, anxiety or other suffering by losing myself in consumption.

I will contemplate interbeing and consume in a way that preserves peace, joy and well-being in my body and consciousness, but also in a collective body and consciousness of my family, my society and the Earth.

We hope that you have found our instruction on mindfulness meditation for anxiety helpful.

Please do get in touch with [Ahimsa Meditation](#) with any questions or comments.

Few more studies to deepen your understanding of how mindfulness meditation helps to overcome anxiety:



Study at the John Hopkins University School of Medicine and published in JAMA Int Medicine showed that meditation can provide a level of relief from symptoms of anxiety and depression similar to that of antidepressant drugs. Peace and happiness, no prescription needed. (from Suze Yalof Schwatz



Study showed slowing of breathing after just 8 weeks of mindfulness meditation practice: 1.6 breaths slower. It means 2000 extra breaths for non-meditators per day; 800000 a year! These extra breaths are physiologically taxing, and can exact a health toll as time goes on. As practice continues and breathing becomes slower, the body adjusts its physiological set point for its respiratory rate accordingly. That's a good thing. While chronic rapid breathing signifies ongoing anxiety, a slower breath rate indicates reduced autonomic activity, better mood and salutary health. (from J. Wielgosz et al., "Long Term Mindfulness Training is Associated with Reliable Differences in Resting Respiration Rate", Scientific Reports 6, 2016)



Researchers from Maharishi International University taught meditation to prisoners with standard prison program as a comparison. They found that 4 months later the prisoners doing meditation showed fewer symptoms of trauma, anxiety, depression; they also slept better and perceived their days as less stressful (from S. Nidich et al., "Reduced trauma symptoms and perceived stress in male prison inmates through Transcendental Meditation Program" Permanente Journal 2016; doi.org/10.7812/TPP/116-007)

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