

LEARN TO MEDITATE

GRATITUDE MEDITATION—Make a short list of some of the things that you are most grateful for. Sit quietly somewhere that you will not be interrupted. Read each one and take a moment to feel the gratitude well up for each one. Just turning your attention to something you are grateful for can turn a moment of stress, say a traffic jam, into a moment of serenity.

PRAY AND WAIT MEDITATION—Most every wisdom tradition or religion recommends some form of prayer and meditation. If prayer is part of your belief system, I recommend devoting a few minutes to praying every day. Make the prayer one of gratitude for all that you have and wish to have. Then wait. Expect nothing. Just wait for at least 60 seconds. If you have enough faith to believe in prayer, it makes sense to believe that on at least some level, it's a two-way conversation.

STICKY NOTE MEDITATION—This is my favorite beginning meditation. Sit somewhere quiet. Set a timer for one minute at first, working up to five minutes over time. Sit up straight and close your eyes. Do not TRY to stop thinking. Simply identify each thought as it pops up and imagine yourself putting a sticky note on it that says, "Thought." After some practice, it will become clear that you are not your thoughts. This is a first step toward bringing your mind and your thoughts under your control instead of the other way around.

BREATH MEDITATION—Turn your attention to following the air as it moves in and out of your lungs. Breathe slowly and deeply. If you have a hard time holding your attention on your breathing simply think these words as you breathe: "I am breathing in. I am breathing out." Another simple exercise is to breathe in for four seconds, hold for two, breathe out two seconds, then hold again, etc. . . .