

'The only thing you need is your own mind': how to start meditating

Level 1: Elementary

Article summary: This article discusses some of the benefits and techniques of meditation.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Zero conditional

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. The purpose of this activity is to activate students' prior knowledge about meditation and share some information about the practice.

Key:

1. ✓
2. *In most meditation practices, you don't stop your thoughts completely. Instead, you observe your thoughts without judging them.*
3. *Meditating for even 5–10 minutes can be helpful, especially for beginners.*
4. ✓
5. ✓

- b. The discussion provides students with an opportunity to share their reactions to task a and share personal experiences, anecdote or questions they may have about meditation.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the activity individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

Key:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>Benefits</i> | 6. <i>mindfulness</i> |
| 2. <i>empty</i> | 7. <i>comfortably</i> |
| 3. <i>relationship</i> | 8. <i>notice</i> |
| 4. <i>setting</i> | 9. <i>wander</i> |
| 5. <i>mind</i> | 10. <i>failed</i> |

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use some of the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they understand and know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

1. *relationship*
2. *mind*
3. *benefits*
4. *wander*
5. *failing*
6. *comfortably*

3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. They may do this in different ways, e.g. in item 1, they may say, 'Meditation has many health benefits' or similar

Key (suggested answers):

1. *many health benefits*
2. *Salzberg says that the goal is to change our relationship to our thoughts.*
3. *The goal is not to have an empty mind (or stop our thoughts completely).*
4. *They change, and those effects can last for a long time.*
5. *There isn't one. It can be five minutes, 15 minutes or more.*
6. *Lingo suggests starting small and not trying to sit for too long.*
7. *Sit comfortably with your back straight.*
8. *Your eyes can be open or closed. If they are open, look at a spot on the floor in front of you.*
9. *How you feel. Don't change or do anything, just notice it and let it be.*
10. *Let go of the thought about and return to your breath.*

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4. Key language

- a. The activity gives students an opportunity to practice the zero conditional. Remind students that the zero conditional is used to talk about general truths, scientific factors or predictable situations. Its form is *If / When + present simple + present simple*. You may want to remind students that when the *if* clause is first, it needs a comma, but when the main clause is first, there is no comma. As an extension activity, ask students to look for these and other examples in the article.

Key:

1. *If your eyes are open, look at a spot on the floor in front of you.*
2. *If you have to let go and begin again in those few minutes, it is fine.*
3. *If you like meditating, there are lots of resources available.*

- b. Students have the opportunity to get more familiar with how the two clauses in the zero conditional work together. You may want to ask students to identify the *if* clause and the main clause prior to beginning to activity.

Key:

1. *Look at a spot on the floor in front of you if your eyes are open.*
2. *It is fine if you have to let go and begin again in those few minutes.*
3. *There are lots of resources available if you like meditating.*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the quotes about meditation. Ask students to share their thoughts and opinions about how the quotes made them think about the practice of meditation. Encourage students to give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students to research more about a particular type of meditation, such as the ones mentioned in the article (loving-kindness, walking, transcendental), or any other type they are interested in. Ask them to answer one or more of these questions: *How is this form of meditation usually practiced? Where is it usually practiced? What kind(s) of breathwork are included? Is there a common script or mantra associated with it? What are some tips and/or resources for beginners?*

- b. Students could then present their reports to the class. Encourage students to include facts and information when they share their research findings. Encourage them to share their opinions and give reasons to support their answers. Alternatively, if you think this task will be too difficult for your students, you can set a meditation challenge for them. Ask them to meditate for five minutes every day until their next class (or in a week if you have classes every day). Ask them to write down:

- What meditation they did
- What they felt before, during and after the meditation
- If they noticed any changes after the week
- If they would consider meditating regularly