Meditation is a form of mind training that has a number of benefits. It can help you to relax and calm your mind. Meditation helps you to become more familiar with your mind, your thoughts and your emotions. The practice of meditation can also help you develop more control of your mind which will help you to overcome negative, destructive emotions such as fear, anger, hatred, greed and ignorance.

There are different forms of meditation, but they can be broadly defined as falling into two categories: concentration meditation and insight meditation. The type of meditation we will be discussing here is concentration meditation.

In concentration meditation, we attempt to quiet the mind by fixating our attention on a single focus such as a visual object, a sound, a mantra or the breath. Most meditation instruction begins by using the breath as the object of meditation.

### How to Achieve Proper Meditation Posture:

The first thing you need to do when you meditate is assume the proper meditation posture, referred to as the seven point meditation posture. This is a posture that will help you to concentrate your mind. Since the body and mind are interdependent, certain posture is more conducive to helping your mind to focus and become stable and relaxed. This posture is described by the various contemplative traditions. The seven point posture is achieved as follows:

1. Sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor. If you can’t sit on the floor, sit in a chair.
2. Rest your hand on your thighs, your left hand on your left thigh and your right hand on your right thigh. The positioning of your hands on your thighs should be such that your elbows are positioned near your sides. Your arms and hands should be relaxed and feel comfortable. Alternatively, you can rest your hands in one another, your right hand in your left hand with your thumbs touching.
3. Your back should be straight. This is important because it enables you to remain alert and awake and not get lazy or sleepy. It also makes it easier to breathe as your breathing is not constrained in any way as would be the case if you were slumped over.
4. The mouth, jaw and tongue should be relaxed. Part your teeth and place the tip of your tongue against the back of your upper front teeth.
5. Tilt your head just slightly forward. Don’t tilt too far forward or you’ll be sleepy.
6. You can meditate with your eyes open or closed.
   - If you meditate with your eyes closed, don’t close them too tightly.
   - If you meditate with your eyes open, they should only be partly open (about one third open) and your gaze should be downward along the angle of your nose. Your gaze should be unfocused on the floor in front of you.
7. Shoulders and arms should be relaxed at your sides.
Starting the Meditation Process:

**Focus on Your Body:** After you assume the proper posture, take a moment to ground yourself in your body. This helps open your awareness which is usually narrowly focused on the thoughts running through your mind. Feel your legs crossed in front of you and your behind pressed into the cushion underneath you. Notice your hands resting on your thighs, your arms at your side, your back straight and your head slightly tilted forward. If you noticed any tension in your body, attempt to release it and relax as much as possible.

**Focus on Your Breathing:** Now, turn your attention to your breathing. Focus on the tactile sensations of breathing. Feel your chest and stomach move as you inhale and exhale. Notice the movement of air cross your upper lip as you breathe. Don’t try to control your breathing or breathe in any particular manner. Allow your breath to breathe itself. Pick one spot to concentrate on such as your abdomen, chest or the upper lip and nostrils. Be curious about the breath. Notice that some breaths are short and some long. Observe when your breathing is fast or slow, smooth or ragged, regular or irregular. Notice any pauses as you breathe, such as at the end of the out breath or the end of the in breath.

**Distractions Happen:**
You will probably find that it is very difficult to concentrate on your breath for very long. You will find that you become easily distracted. Your mind will wander and many thoughts will enter your mind. This is perfectly normal and not a problem. When you discover that you have become caught up in a thought simply say the word “thought” or “thinking” silently to yourself and gently redirect your attention to your breathing again. Don’t evaluate or judge your thoughts as good, bad or right or wrong. Cultivate an attitude of curiosity and loving acceptance. View your thoughts as simply the play of the mind. Learn to disentangle yourself from them, and learn that you are more than just your thoughts.

You will need to repeat this process over and over again, so don’t get frustrated. This is what meditation is about, becoming aware of when you become distracted from the breath by thoughts, letting go of those thoughts and returning your attention to the breath again. This not only helps you to be more aware and mindful, it helps you learn to separate yourself from your thoughts and to have some control over them.

Over time, you will be able to better concentrate your attention on the breath. Initially, you may only be able to stay focused on the breath for a few seconds, but after months and years of practice you may find yourself able to stay focused on the breath for several minutes or even longer without being distracted.

**Tips on Meditation:**
- To get the most out of meditating, it is advisable to meditate daily.
- Try to meditate at about the same time each day. Find a quiet spot where you can practice without being disturbed.
- Initially, sit and meditate for five or ten minutes.
- Once you start meditating routinely, increase the amount of time you sit about five minutes.
- Continue to increase the length of time you practice until you are sitting for about a half hour.
- Some of your “sits” will feel like good ones and others won’t. Try to adopt the attitude that every sit is a good sit,

**Benefits of Meditation:**

1. **Calm Yourself:** It can help to calm your mind and make you less reactive to situations.
2. **Learn About Yourself:** It can help you learn about yourself, your thoughts and how they affect you.
3. **Gain Control:** It can help you learn to separate yourself from your thoughts, not take them so seriously and to control them rather than have them control you.