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The Secret of Meditation

By Evette Gardner

Author of Divine Heritage / June 2008

Do you want to become more spiritually enlightened; feel more connected to the people and things around you; or even relieve yourself of mental and physical stress? One of the top recommendations for all of the above aspirations is meditate. But what does this mean exactly? What is meditation? Images of some tranquil faced person, donned in relaxed attire, sitting in the lotus position is a commonly conjured impression when thinking of the idea of meditation. And while such an image may indeed be apt, it unfortunately does very little to actually convey an understanding about what meditation really is. Pictures may only hint at meditative techniques (or rather strategies which might make your mind more conducive towards meditation). And while a lot can be said for the benefits of any number of different meditative techniques, meditation is strictly an internal activity. Which means pictures have very little to offer as far as offering an explanation as to what takes place in meditation. Never confuse technique with intent; for though there may be numerous methods of meditation, the intent of meditation is always the same. *Be present*. Of all the many definitions of meditation (and yes there are plenty of them), the intent that underscores them all is actually one. *Be present*.

For example, let's look at the following definitions of meditation:

Meditation means “consciously directing your attention to alter your state of consciousness.”

Question: What is this state of consciousness to be realized?

Answer: To be present.

“Meditation is a discipline in which one attempts to get beyond the conditioned, ‘thinking’ mind into a deeper state of relaxation or awareness.”

Question: What is this deeper state of relaxation and / or awareness?

Answer: Being present.

Meditation means “continuous thought and reflection” or “intent observance.”

Question: Continuous thought and reflection or intent observance to what end?

Answer: To being present.

Be present. Be present Be present. That truly is all there really is to meditation. Simply be present. But how does one go about being present? Now this I cannot really explain to you. I'm actually of the opinion that trying to teach someone how to meditate by

telling them what to do is like trying to teach someone how to swallow or inhale by employing the same approach. Words are inadequate to the task. Being present is just one of those somethings that you will only understand by getting a natural feel for it. What's more, it is only by recognizing the experience of what being present is that you grow in your ability to induce the meditative state at will. And even though words may be inadequate to the task of explaining *how to be present*, words are extremely valuable in describing *what it is to be present*.

Being present is just as natural a tendency as swallowing or inhaling. You fall into and out of this state of consciousness all the time while washing the dishes, drifting off to sleep, walking in the park, riding a roller coaster, using the bathroom... You do not need to be taught how to be present. You merely need to learn to recognize what being present is in order to become a proficient meditator. And to that end, consider this...

Think of a time in your experience when you felt wholly engrossed in the moment. When you felt completely engaged in whatever event was before you for no other motive than you loved just being. You didn't care about how things were going, you weren't trying to make anything happen, you had no agenda, you were worried about nothing, expecting nothing, regretting nothing, you weren't dwelling wistfully over times gone by or trying to distract yourself from the experience of an unpleasant feeling. You were quite simply and unconditionally enraptured with the moment; emotionally engaged in what was going on before you yet mentally impartial about the outcome. You were just content to be.

Can you recall such a moment in your experience? True these moments may be fleeting, they often whisk by us unappreciated, but I assure you we do all experience these flashes. They occur everyday. The thing is to get in the habit of noticing of them, acknowledging them. These are the moments which show us what it is to be present. Meditation is about deliberately producing these moments. How do you do this? The answer may *seem* vague, but it's the one that's most proper. You just do it.

When you meditate you are making a conscious commitment to think in terms which will evoke the experience of being present. Again, I cannot tell you how to do this, but I can assure you that in your learning to recognize these moments as they involuntarily occur, you will instinctually become aware of what you need to do to voluntarily make these experiences occur.

There is definitely no shortage of ideas on meditative techniques "out there." I say go ahead and experiment with them to your heart's content. If you need to feel grounded in a process of focusing on your breath or on chanting or whatever have you, that's quite okay. Ritual is a good way to get yourself in the mood for meditation. Ritual is good practice for meditation because practice is a precursor to actually living out a desired experience. But in all your experimentation with these different meditative techniques, might I suggest that you always remain mindful of the underlying intent of what meditation is. Always be mindful that the objective is to be present. Also, as you are going about your day, from this moment forward might I also suggest that you resolve to be diligent about consciously acknowledging those moments in your experience where you have unconsciously slipped into a period of being present. These acknowledgements will go a long way towards teaching you the secret to meditation. They will do more to

this end than any amount of words could ever do. That's what makes it such a good secret.

Evette Gardner can be reached at comments@YourDivineInheritance.com

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