

Guided Meditation: Gentle Relaxation

by Gale Lyman, RN, BSN, HNB-BC

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Guided meditation is one of my favorite ways to relax and center myself. It is gentle, easy to do and can be done almost anywhere. You may become deeply relaxed and rather oblivious of your surroundings, so I don't recommend using guided meditation while driving or performing any other activity that requires your full attention. You may even relax so much you fall asleep.

In my work and at the online [TLC Resource Center](#), I offer three kinds of guided meditation. The simplest and quickest form of guided meditation is guided breathing meditation, also referred to as deep breathing, breathwork, abdominal breathing, and relaxation breathing. Paying attention to your breath promotes relaxation.

Another form of guided meditation is muscle relaxation, also called progressive muscle relaxation or deep muscle relaxation. A guided muscle relaxation will invite you to relax your muscle groups, working from head to toe or toes to head, with or without imagery or cue words. I find guided muscle relaxation helpful when I am trying to fall asleep, if I have been sitting too long, or if I need a quick way to boost my energy.

Guided imagery meditation is using your imagination to create pleasant images to replace negative or stressful feelings. My personal favorite, guided imagery is creative and can give you a sense of getting away from it all. It's perfect when you'd rather run away from a stressful situation. I find it gives me the resiliency to manage stress – which is much better than trying to escape it.

Will guided meditation help me to relax?

Most of the time the answer to this question is “Yes.” You will be the judge; I truly hope it does help you to relax. However, if you are too stressed to even listen to the guided meditation, you might need to bring your stress level down to a point where you can focus, perhaps by going for a walk, calling a friend, or doing something that works for you in extremely stressful times.

What are the benefits of guided meditation?

The practices of guided breathing, guided muscle relaxation, and guided imagery can help avoid the harmful effects of stress like anger, social withdrawal, anxiety, depression, exhaustion, irritability, and lack of concentration. It's also good for what ails you, according to the National Institute for Health which claims that “Relaxation techniques may be helpful in managing a variety of health conditions.” ([Relaxation Techniques for Health, NCCIH](#)). Guided meditation can help you to stay healthy and be resilient to stress.

How often should I repeat a guided meditation reading?

The truthful answer is “as often as you like.” A more helpful suggestion is at least once a week, and if you can, twice a day is really nice.

Can nurses and other healthcare professionals use these readings?

Definitely. All healthcare professionals are very busy nowadays, but guided meditation can be done in short periods of time, especially if you start with guided breathing meditations. I strongly recommend that all healthcare professionals use or at least try guided meditation as a self-care practice. If you are a health professional and wish to use guided meditation with your patients, I suggest that you check your employer's policies, your license and scope of practice, your professional insurance coverage, and consider getting trained via peer reviewed professional continuing education.

Are there any contraindications or safety issues?

Yes, although guided meditation is generally safe for most people. Consult your physician before doing guided meditation, especially if you have a history of post-traumatic stress disorder, seizure disorder, or if you take medication or remedies especially for diabetes, thyroid disorders, hypertension, anxiety, and sleep.

If you have a history of trauma, and or post traumatic stress syndrome, a guided meditation has the potential to send you into a state of anxiety or even to cause you to relieve the trauma. Guided meditation can be extremely helpful in healing trauma, but it would be best if you did guided meditation only with a psychotherapist trained in it. ([NCCIH, 2016](#))

Some people with seizures find that deep relaxation is a trigger for their seizure disorder, but others find that reducing stress can help. ([Epilepsy Society, 2017](#))

Medication needs may change if your health improves by consistently doing contemplative practices like guided meditation. Consult your physician before beginning guided meditation, especially if you take any medication or remedies, especially for diabetes, thyroid disorders, hypertension, anxiety, and sleep.

Do not use these meditations while driving or performing any other activity that requires your full attention. You will receive many benefits from meditation, often including deep relaxation.

There are many contemplative practices from which you can choose, so talk with your health professional about which ones best for you.

You can try a guided meditation at the [TLC Resource Center for Contemplative Practices](#).

Wise use of wellness information

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TLC Resource Center

www.LymanCenter.com
Info@lymancenter.com

Calming and centering contemplative practices for senior citizens and family caregivers from Gale Lyman, holistic nurse, freelance writer and guest speaker.

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