



# Stress Management Series Part 4: What is Meditation?

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Meditation is not stress reduction. Nor is it prayer, or thought control, or “having no thoughts”, or any myriad of concepts you may have happened upon. The only way one can truly teach the practice of meditation is by discussing all things which it is not. As a meditation teacher for the past couple of decades, what I can tell you about this subject would be to hold any information you hold to be true about it in an “as if” manner. Most followers of any specific path have been led to yet another belief system, which is the last thing humanity needs.

If meditation is best learned as a practice with no truths to be found, why would you read yet another article or attend another seminar about such a subject? Because there are enough belief systems already, because understanding is a usual part of the path to knowingness, and the essence of what makes us human is our ability to meditate. Because you have been taught by religions to fear those practices which invoke spirituality without praising a certain god or belief system to tithe or donate to. Because you have been taught by science to fear things you cannot understand; it sounds too much like religion. More importantly you have been taught to fear any teachings that transcend fear. Most importantly nearly all of us possess a deep inner knowingness that there is more to life than fear...and what our senses tell us....and it is that inner knowingness that seeks peace and unconditional joy.

That inner drive, that “guide” is you. Soul, Spirit, Self, You, whatever term we use should take you away from a belief *about* you and towards the actuality that *is* you. Meditation, simply defined, is the direct experience of the self. Fear drives “normal” human activity. Peace, freedom from fear, drives the meditative path. That part of us that seeks the changelessness in an apparent world of constant change is you.

We have all heard the aphorism “I think, therefore I am.” An entire belief system has grown up around it. Yet thinking is clearly just something we do. When I hear someone say “my thoughts are running away with me” (and who hasn’t experienced this?) it clearly delineates this “loss of the self”, the connection to the thinker of the thoughts. When we further understand the limitations of human thought (epistemology), then one understands that the knowingness of existence will have to come through an entirely different methodology.

Meditation is a journey of self-discovery through which the nature of existence is revealed; a re-experiencing of that primordial soup from whence you appeared into an apparently finite world, in an apparently finite body. The process of meditation is the “goal-less” goal. By coming to know the self, and then to know everything exactly as it is,

one transcends fear and *stress-reduction* comes as a necessary side-benefit of a self-realization practice.

How one meditates is as personal a decision to make as how one chooses to eat or to exercise. Is any one food plan or exercise pattern all-inclusive or “right” for everyone? No. Nor is there just one meditative practice which reproducibly takes one to silence, self. Learn a practice from a trusted respected authority... then “just be it”.

When I tell you that the disciplined practice of meditation is the single most important practice we can do, individually or collectively as a species, it is because this practice is the only way we can transcend fear, cultivate compassion, and cultivate joy. The experience of present-moment awareness, timeless awareness, transcends and includes normal time-bound awareness.

Our next article will teach you “how to meditate”, meaning one path on the pathless path. Confusing? Good.

Your Journey to Health and Healing,  
Gary E. Foresman, MD

#### References for the Meditative Path:

1. **Primordial Sound Meditation:** <http://www.chopra.com/our-services/meditation> For a local (San Luis Obispo County, CA area) teacher please contact Janne’ John at [http://greenlotuscenter.com/meditation-yoga-ayurveda\\_janne\\_john](http://greenlotuscenter.com/meditation-yoga-ayurveda_janne_john) Or at 805-748-4930.
2. **Transcendental Meditation:** <http://www.tm.org/> For a local teacher please contact Dr. John Freeman at 805-471-9100 or [jfreeman@tm.org](mailto:jfreeman@tm.org).
3. **Heart Math:** <http://www.heartmath.com> Unique biofeedback training, for info on the specific device **emWave 2** go to <http://www.heartmathstore.com/item/6310/emwave2> and for a local instructor contact Pam Taylor at 805-712-3308.
4. **Brainwave and Biofield Entrainment:** Utilizing technology to enhance the meditative experience. <http://www.profoundmeditationprogram.com/iawake-technologies>
5. **Adyashanti:** at <http://www.adyashanti.org/index.php?file=home>
6. **Ken Wilber and the Integral Community:** <http://integrallife.com/>
7. **Ms. Dantes:** <http://www.centerforholisticliving.org> or <http://www.ligiadantesfoundation.org/>

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