

NINETEEN

• • •

aspire: the seven-day meditation challenge

If you are ready to bring meditation into your life, I am so glad! Below is a seven-day program for easing your way in. I chose to make this program seven days long so you could get a sense of what it would be like to add meditation into each day of the week. Though I know there is no such thing as “typical,” choose a week that accurately reflects a normal seven-day period. If you get to the end and want to keep going, simply repeat for fourteen or twenty-one days or however long it takes you to feel that you are establishing a good groove. And, of course, you are free to revisit this seven-day guided experience whenever you like.

Please visit www.susanpiver.com/shn-resources to find meditation videos created especially for this



seven-day program, as well as some additional material that reviews key components of establishing a lasting practice.

Begin by choosing which day of the week you will start this program. Depending on your schedule, it may be best to begin on a Saturday when you have more flexibility, but it is up to you. However, note that the final meditation session is a full thirty minutes long. You may have more time for this lengthier session if you end on a weekend.



A day or two before you're ready to begin, set up your space. It does not have to be fancy in any way and you don't need any special equipment. It does not have to be isolated from the rest of your space and it doesn't even have to be particularly quiet. A nice, clean corner of your room or an easy chair in your living room will do. If you want to use a meditation cushion, that is great, although a chair is also fine. If you do want to use a meditation cushion, it seems to work best to use one that is specifically meant for that purpose. (I've tried to sit on couch cushions or stacks of bed pillows but they always end up feeling uncomfortable.) Rather than plopping down anywhere, the main point is to establish a sense of place for your practice.



In addition to meditation, this program involves keeping a simple practice journal. You can jot down your thoughts on notebook paper, in a diary, or on your smartphone.





The only other thing to do is decide what time you will practice. For most people mornings work best, although you may be a night owl or simply have a lot to do in the mornings. After work or before bed may be the best time for you. If you choose mornings, just get up a few minutes earlier. If you choose evenings, don't wait until you're exhausted and all you want to do is fall into bed. Instead, make your practice a part of your nighttime routine. If you brush your teeth and wash your face before bed, change your routine to brush your teeth, wash your face, and practice meditation. There is nothing magical about this order, and you are free to switch it around. The point is to establish your practice as a habit, and joining it to other habits seems helpful.

Now that you have prepared the space and settled on a day and time, you are ready to begin the program.

Day one

Plan to sit for ten minutes. (Remember, you may use the videos on my site to guide you.) Ten minutes is actually great. If you have trouble completing this, don't worry about it. Tomorrow may be worse! Or better! You never know. In any case, simply completing the allocated period is wonderful. However, if ten minutes seem to go by in a flash and you wish to sit longer, *don't*. Stay with the plan. Develop trust in

yourself that you are able to stick with this (or any) program.

At the end of your session, open your practice journal and jot down a few observations about how it went. Keep it simple. Note the time practiced (in this case, ten minutes) and a few words about how it felt: that is, great, awful, boring, confusing, relaxing, and so on. If you have any questions, jot them down too.

Day two

Sit for ten minutes again. At the end, note elapsed time and a few key words indicating the qualities of your practice today. If any insights into yesterday's questions arose, note them. If additional questions arose, note them too. Add any reflections you like.

Day three

Sit for fifteen minutes. Use the meditation video on my site if you'd like. Note elapsed time again and a few key words indicating the qualities of your practice today.

Day four

Sit for fifteen minutes. Today, begin your practice by saying to yourself, "Now is my time to meditate. Everything else can wait." See what it feels like to begin

in this way, definitely, surely, with a sense of command. Afterward, make notes again about this particular session.

Day five

Same as day four. P.S., congratulations! You've almost completed your first full week. You may continue to use the video or experiment with sitting on your own, no video. If you choose to do so, you'll need a timer of some sort. You can use an egg timer, an alarm clock, or an app on your smartphone.

Day six

Sit for twenty minutes using the video I created (or not, if you prefer). Make note afterward of how it felt, just as you have in the previous days. Include questions, observations, and thoughts about continuing your practice beyond this seven-day period.

Day seven

Sit for thirty minutes! You can do it! Use my video for support. After your sit, note, again, any qualities you noticed or questions you have.

I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart! It is no small thing to complete seven concurrent days of



meditation. Going forward, you now have meditation videos to choose from to guide you in your daily practice. You are also now capable of sitting on your own, without guidance. I suggest that you make your own plan for the next seven days, choosing from these options. Preparing in this way by scheduling your practice into your day can help solidify your commitment to it.

If you would like, please continue the post-meditation journaling practice, making special note of questions. You can search my site (www.susanpiver.com) for answers, e-mail your questions to me (it will take me time to respond, but I will), or look for relevant books or articles.

