

Visualization Meditation Actually Encourages an Active Mind—Here's How It's Done



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For every person who meditates religiously, there's at least one other who's just not that into the practice. If you're one of the many who can't quiet your mind long enough to get through even a five-minute meditation, no worries. Sitting in

silence isn't your only option—there are other, dare I say more *fun* styles of meditation that don't require you to clear your head of all thoughts. In fact, there's one type of practice that actually encourages an active imagination: Visualization meditation.

"Visualization meditation is the method of picturing positive images, ideas, symbols, or using affirmations and mantras to help calm the mind while the body is in a relaxed state," says Ariel Van Alstyne, a reiki practitioner and meditation guide for online health and wellness platform Vivaya. This is an all-purpose style of meditation—the only limit is what you can conjure up in your mind. "You can do a visualization meditation to help ease pain, send love to people near and far, or help you manifest your goals," says reiki master, chef, and nutritionist [Serena Poon](#). "Athletes also often use visualization as a performance-enhancing technique. And energy healers often use this in their practice to send distal energy."

The main difference between visualization and regular meditation is that visualization is more active. With regular meditation, Van Alstyne says the goal is to clear the mind and bring awareness to the present moment. With visualization meditation, your focus is on engaging your imagination and actively creating imagery in your mind. "One can draw from sensory information, such as picturing

yourself in a calm, safe environment while tuning into the sounds, colors, sights, smells, and positive feelings associated with this image," she says.

Want to try it for yourself? Keep reading to learn the benefits of visualization meditation and how to add it to your mindfulness routine, step-by-step.

5 benefits of visualization meditation—a perfect practice for those who have trouble clearing their minds.

1. It can be good for your overall wellbeing.

Visualization meditation is known to impact us on all levels—mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional. "Visualization meditations can truly transform your life by helping you tune into a deeper connection to your higher self, to your intuition, and to a powerful connection with the universe, which can truly manifest an improved state of being," Poon says. "Scientists agree that our mental state plays a significant role in healing. Meditation has also shown to help increase focus, decrease cognitive decline, and improve mental health-related quality of life." In other words, this form of meditation comes with both spiritual and science-backed benefits, making it a well-rounded option for anyone looking to start or deepen their mindfulness practice.

2. It may enhance creativity.

Given that the whole point of visualization meditation is to let your imagination run wild, it makes sense that it's said to help get your creative juices flowing. "This style of mediation enhances your creativity by encouraging your imagination to create desired outcomes in your reality and raise your consciousness," Van Alstyne says.

3. It can help you achieve your goals.

Envisioning yourself achieving your biggest goals supports a more intentional way of living your life, says Van Alstyne—and it may even increase your chances of actually achieving those goals. Let's say you want to start your own business but you don't know where to start. Through visualization meditation, you can slow and focus your mind enough to picture yourself going through the process step by step: picking a name, creating your website and social media accounts, and actually doing the work you dream of. At the end of the meditation, your goal will feel more within reach and you'll have a game plan in place to get started.

Sound a little too woo-woo? Poon points out that pro athletes have embraced the power of visualization meditation for ages, imagining themselves performing at their peak before they compete. So if it works for them, it can theoretically work for the rest of us.

4. It could improve your self-image.

Visualization meditation can be transformative in many ways—and the internal shifts you may experience from it can be just as profound as the external ones. Visualizing yourself with a positive and healthy self-image can help change the way you see and feel about yourself, Van Alstyne says.

“Ultimately, what we condition our mind to think and believe through visualization meditation can influence the way we take care of ourselves in our fully aware and awake state.”

5. It may help relieve stress and anxiety.

Visualization meditation comes with all the benefits of traditional meditation, including stress and anxiety relief. Meditation has been found to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for bringing the body into a resting state. So if you need to calm down and drop into your body, visualizing yourself somewhere relaxing is a great solution.

How to practice visualization meditation

I'll preface this by saying that there is no one right way to practice visualization meditation. That's the beauty of it. You can allow your imagination to take over and enjoy the ride. But if you need a little guidance, here are two different methods you can try to get started, courtesy of Van Alstyne

and Poon. Remember that it's safe to go with the flow and make the meditation your own, or try different styles until you find one you groove with the best.

Ariel Van Alstyne's visualization meditation method

1. Find a quiet, comfortable space to get your meditation on distraction-free. (Pro tip: Put your phone on do-not-disturb mode.)
2. Allow your body to settle into stillness in a relaxed, seated or lying-down position.
3. Clear your mind of wandering thoughts and begin to create a visual of your choice in your mind's eye. Alternatively, you can select a mantra to guide your practice.
4. Once you've cleared your headspace, bring your awareness to your breath. Focus on a gentle rhythm of inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.
5. Then, bring your focus back onto the imagery or your mantra while keeping your breath's flow and pace.
6. As you inhale, visualize the picture. As you exhale, feel the good feelings or intention of your picture or your mantra.
7. Repeat for as long as it feels good. When you're ready, open your eyes.

Serena Poon's visualization meditation method

1. Sit up tall either on a chair or in a cross-legged position.
2. Inhale and exhale deeply through your nose.
3. Continue to focus on breathing deeply, allowing your thoughts to come and go.
4. Begin to visualize a specific outcome you want to call into your life. If you're in the process of healing from something, Poon recommends envisioning pure, bright light—white is most commonly used—surrounding the affected area of your body. If you want a new job, she says to picture yourself accepting your dream position or performing new tasks.
5. Get as detailed as you can with the visuals. The more specific, the more powerful it will be.
6. At the same time, focus on how you will feel once you have the outcome and embody those feelings now. "How does your body feel?," Poon says. "What are the sensations? What expressions do you have on your face? What does your environment look like? What emotions are you feeling? Really internalize the sensations as though it is actually happening in this moment."
7. Marinate in those visuals and feelings as long as you want.

How often to practice visualization meditation

Like all types of meditation, visualization meditation is more beneficial the more consistently you practice. Poon recommends shooting for 20 minutes twice a day, in the morning and before bed, but studies show that even five minutes of daily meditation can bring about mental health benefits. The most important thing to remember is that consistency is the secret sauce—and the best way to achieve that consistency is to make the practice your own.