

How to Make Starting a New Meditation Practice Easier and More Sustainable.

(David Neilsen)

The following recommendations are based on what the science shows can effectively support a person in creating and sustaining a new pattern of positive behaviour.

These methods help a person get beyond the mental and logistical barriers many people have based on their feeling they are already “too busy” for anything new.

1. Try an “Experiment in the Laboratory of My Life”.

- Frame the changes you make as an “Experiment in the Laboratory of My Life”. Like a scientist, you can intentionally try a change; and then see what effect it has. You can make an informed decision about what is working best for you.
- It can be helpful to bear in mind that the “experiment” is for a limited time. And, that it may enable a positive change in the quality of your life.

2. Consciously chose to make “newly opened” time available.

- Make a conscious choice to let go of a specific low value activity; to make room for a specific high value activity.
- Value is identified as the ability of the specific activity to grow your well-being and happiness; today and in the future.
- A question that can help with this process is:

**“What can I say ‘no’ to that I want;
so that I can say ‘yes’ to what I want and need most of all?”**

- Identify and list some activities that are relatively low in their contribution to your well-being. Common examples include: listening to the news, TV, surfing the web, non essential shopping, non essential social media or communications, some housekeeping or yard work, some projects, etc.
- Then, consciously chose one or more of the low value activities to be “put on hold” for the limited term of the Experiment.
 - o For example; make a conscious choice to not watch a specific TV program that you normally would, for the time of the experiment.

- o Or, to specifically limit time spent on web surfing, social media browsing, non-essential shopping, housekeeping etc.

- Sometimes choosing a less time-consuming replacement version of a low value activity can be helpful. For example, getting news from a relatively short session with an online newspaper instead of watching more time consuming TV news programs.
- The point is: Just trying to “fit meditation in” can be much harder.
- If you wait for the time to show up; you may wait forever.
- Intentional choice in creating the time for meditation can be a big help.

3. Connect with an established behaviour routine.

- It can really help to connect your new meditation practice with a behavior pattern that is already well established.
- Some examples that may be helpful are:
 - o In your morning routine you may choose to connect your meditation time with finishing your first cup of morning coffee or right after a shower. Or, after you eat and before you do your email.
 - o Finding a quiet place right after eating during a lunch break at work.
 - o Sitting in your car in your workplace parking lot before or after your work time.

4. Intentionally choose the time of day, physical space, and conditions.

- Make it easy for yourself. Experiment as needed until you find what works well for you.
- Some possibilities you may choose to consider are:
 - o Try for a regular time and place. Make it as comfortable and pleasant as you can.

- o Put the meditations on your phone or otherwise make them easily accessible.
- o Eliminate distractions. Put your phone on silent mode and/or mute your computer sounds so they do not distract you when meditating.
- o Find some alternative places to meditate like a back yard or patio. You may consider stopping at a public park on the way to work or back home. Try sitting in your car, and on a park bench, and notice the difference.
- o Choose to go to bed a half hour earlier, so you can get up a half hour earlier. This can be a very useful strategy to get some quiet time in the morning without reducing sleep. Many people find morning to be an excellent time for a meditation practice.

5. Ask for and accept the support you need.

- Tell your family what you are doing, why you are doing it, and ask for their support.
- **Create an Empowerment Partnership.** These partnerships can be very simple, quick, and surprisingly effective.
 - o Get a Meditation Buddy from the class (or a friend, family member, etc.) to check in with frequently by text, email, exchanged voice messages, until your practice is established.
 - o Use a CCT teacher as Meditation Buddy.
 - o Quick and efficient communications are the key.
 - o Start with a three-point model. You can always change it.
 - The three points are:
 - What I did or did not do.
 - What I noticed.

- What is my next step.

6. Keep a simple log of your meditation activities.

- Write a very few words on what you did and what you noticed.
- Even a *very* simple log can be surprisingly helpful in increasing insights into the evolution of your meditation practice and the value you gain.
- A very simple log can greatly help sustainability.

7. Keep in mind that other very busy people have started and sustained meditation practices.

- Many people, who originally believed they did not have time for a meditation practice, came to realize that they did.
- The basic reason was they learned that it was “worth it” to “make the time” to have a meditation practice.
- Some of those very busy people include:
 - o Practicing doctors and other medical professionals.
 - o High level business executives; including some at world class enterprises.
 - o The parents of special needs children.
 - o The children of parents who have dementia and/or other special needs.

8. Keep in mind what you have to gain in the quality of your life.

- The science clearly shows that virtually anyone can gain a meaningful increase in the quality of their life from this kind of Experiential Learning.
- It is realistic to say to yourself, **“This can work for me.”**

- It is normal to feel resistance in creating a new pattern of behaviour.
- And, it is also normal to be able to get through that resistance with a sensible process in a reasonable time.
- You are worth your own best efforts to be as happy and as free of suffering as you can be. For the benefit of yourself and those you love.