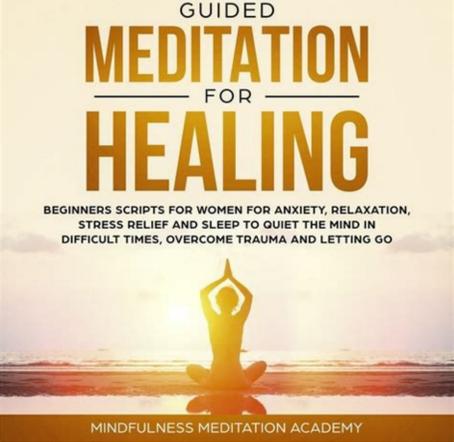


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We independently research, test, review, and recommend the best products—learn more about our process. If you buy something through our links, we may earn a commission. Let's face it: Finding peace and calm in the chaos of life can be a real challenge, especially when you're trying to balance work, social obligations, family, and personal life. That's where guided meditation can help. In as little as 10 minutes a day, you can develop a meditation practice that fits your schedule and gives you the space to relax both your mind and body. The benefits of meditation extend far beyond relaxation. In fact, a regular practice of meditation could help reduce anxiety, depression, insomnia, general pain, and high blood pressure. And the best part? It's safe, accessible, and fits easily into your day. And don't worry about sorting through thousands of YouTube videos and websites to find one to try: We did the busy work for you. Here are our top picks for guided meditation. **Key Specs:** Cost: Calm offers a 7-day free trial with an annual membership for around \$70. Or, if you want meditations for life, you can pay about \$400 for indefinite access to the app. **Features:** Calm background waves, individual exercises. **Why We Chose It:** Calm is a quick and easy meditation for anxiety through a flexible app. **Pros:** App offers more individual exercises. **Less structured:** Levitt's class gets right to what helps anxiety. **Calming waves in background:** Simple to follow. **Cons:** Need a subscription. **App isn't the most intuitive:** If you live with anxiety, adding one more thing to your day is enough to trigger thoughts of worry, stress, and panic. **The good news?** Calm offers a meditation from Tamara Levitt that only takes 10 minutes. This meditation is perfect for a morning routine to help prepare your mind for the day ahead or at the end of a hectic day to help ease stress and anxiety. At the start, you'll get right into body awareness and deep belly breathing. Then, you'll focus on calming racing thoughts. She often pauses to let you just focus on breathing (while listening to waves), which can be difficult for someone with anxiety. You might notice thoughts arising about the past, the future, or something you should have said or done. **Her advice?** Don't make an effort to look for thoughts, but when they arise, simply notice them. **Pay attention to whether or not they have a charge.** Then, focus on letting the emotion come and letting the emotion go, just like the breath. The simplicity of this guided meditation is one of the reasons it made the list. **Calm offers a seven-day free trial with an annual membership for around \$70.** Or, if you want meditations for life, you can pay about \$400 for indefinite access to the app. **Feeling anxiety?** Online anxiety support groups can help. **Key Specs:** Cost: All of the meditations are free, but Brach asks for donations to make them as widely available as possible. **Features:** Website with video classes. **Why We Chose It:** We chose Tara Brach because the meditations are guided by a clinical psychologist and are peaceful and cathartic. **Pros:** Guided meditations Has a therapeutic slant. **Several categories to choose from:** Meditations are free. **Cons:** Not the most user-friendly website. **Not best for beginners:** If you're looking for a deeper practice that also feels like you're getting a dose of therapy, then Tara Brach is for you. With a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, Brach will guide you through a peaceful, yet cathartic, meditation that helps you discover how self-compassion can relieve emotional suffering. There are four meditation categories to choose from: Basic, Heart, Open Awareness, and Special Meditations/Reflections. **Pre-recorded meditations include:** Relaxing Back into Natural Awareness, A Calm Refuge, Touching Peace, Embracing Life with an Open Heart, and more. Some meditations feature guidance with just a few silent pauses, while others feature gentle rain or birds singing in the background. They range from around 10 to 40 minutes, on average. All of the meditations are free, but Brach asks for donations to make them as widely available as possible. **Want to find some inner peace?** There are many online therapy services to help you. **Key Specs:** Cost: Headspace offers a two-week free trial. An annual subscription is about \$70 and a monthly membership costs around \$13. **Features:** User-friendly app with guides for beginners. **Why We Chose It:** Headspace has a user-friendly interface with hundreds of guided meditations from beginners to experts. **Pros:** User-friendly app. **Guided for beginners:** Cues to cope with external sounds. **100s of meditations to choose from:** Cons. **Membership is a bit expensive:** Not great for the less tech-minded. **Trying meditation for the first time can be intimidating,** especially if you have no idea what to do. **The good news?** Headspace co-founder Andy Puddicombe talks you through the entire technique. You will learn to do deep breathing, in through the nose and out through the mouth. He walks you through how it should feel throughout your body and what you should be noticing about your breath. At the same time, he will also help you find where in the body you feel your breath and the rhythm of your breath (long, short, deep, or shallow). **Headspace provides helpful cues for when external sounds appear.** It's amazing what you hear going on around you when you quiet your mind and body. This is an excellent reminder of the simplicity of the practice. You can choose from a variety of meditations based on your needs and how long you want to focus on the practice. **Headspace offers a two-week free trial.** An annual subscription is about \$70 and a monthly membership costs around \$13. **Key Specs:** Cost: This meditation, as well as Clarke's other offerings, are free and available on YouTube. **Features:** Calming imagery and background sounds. **Why We Chose It:** The Honest Guys offer free, simple meditations with breathing techniques to help quell anxiety. **Pros:** Soothing guide and background sounds. **Reassuring for anxious users:** Calming imagery. **Free Cons:** Only one video. **A bit generalized:** Like many others who swear by this guided meditation, Rick Clarke's voice is alluring because it isn't distracting. He begins with deep breathing and points out that thoughts of anxiety and stress are common. **By asking you to follow or pace your breath with the sounds of the waves, the meditation becomes very calming.** You could easily apply this slow breathing technique to life when having a panic or anxiety attack. While listening, you'll find that your mind begins to quiet. The key to success with this guided meditation is to allow yourself to be in total peace with your surroundings. As you feel more relaxed, Clarke counts down from five to zero, and each number takes you deeper into relaxation. At the eight-minute mark, you'll notice the addition of chimes and he stops talking. This allows you to focus on your breath while calming your body. As the chimes fade out and the only sound you hear is the waves, you have the option of drifting off to sleep, continuing in this deeply relaxed state, or resuming your day. This meditation and Clarke's other offerings are free and available on YouTube. **Key Specs:** Cost: Bernstein offers free meditations that you can get when signing up for her email list. Her meditation albums cost around \$10 to \$12. **Features:** Upbeat music, short meditations. **Why We Chose It:** We selected Gabby Bernstein because the meditations are great for active individuals who want to turn exercise into more of a mind and body experience. **Pros:** Combines exercise with meditation. **Guided meditation helps connect mind and body:** Upbeat music. **Free meditations:** Short and sweet. **Cons:** Have to sign up for newsletter for free meditations. **Not traditional meditation:** Cost: Bernstein offers free meditations that you can get when signing up for her email list. Her meditation albums cost around \$10 to \$12. **Walking meditation has gained popularity over the last few years as more people are trying to find ways to squeeze in some relaxation time for their mind while exercising.** If you're new to the idea of moving while meditating, the short intro from Gabby Bernstein is a great place to start. During the six-minute recording, you'll focus on each step and how it connects to your breath. Her voice is very upbeat, which is helpful since you're walking and not trying to fall asleep. The overall goal of the meditation is to help you understand how to connect your mind with the body. After a few minutes of breath-work, she asks listeners to repeat a simple mantra while walking: "My happiness is a choice I make." Whether it's her voice or the beat of the music, this guided meditation will empower you to take action as it calms, eases stress, and helps you focus on your breath. Listen to this meditation each time you go for a walk; you'll be amazed at how it changes your perspective on exercise. **Bernstein offers free meditations that you can get when signing up for her email list.** Her meditation albums cost around \$10 to \$12. **Key Specs:** Cost: Stephenson's recordings are available for free on YouTube, and you can subscribe to his email list for other free sleep meditations. **Features:** Calming guide voice and music. **Why We Chose It:** Jason Stephenson offers a super relaxing guided meditation designed to help you get to sleep by guiding you through the seven chakras. **Pros:** Calming guiding voice. **Gentle music:** Helps target and release tension. **Free:** Learn about chakras and alignment. **Cons:** Only one readily available meditation. **Have to subscribe to email list for more:** Many of us struggle to turn off our thoughts at night, which can interfere with sleep. Listening to a guided meditation before bed can help break this cycle of worry. These meditations work best if you get into a position where you can go to sleep (aka your bed). You'll begin by taking an inventory of the tension in your body. With your breath, you will free the tension and mental and emotional stress. As this happens, your consciousness will shift from thoughts to healing. For the remainder of the meditation, Jason Stephenson will guide you through the seven chakras, or energy centers in your body. You will understand what parts of your life need energy healing. Stephenson's voice, along with the gentle piano music, will help you release stress while sinking into your mattress. Stephenson guides you through each chakra, asking you to notice how it looks, feels, and if you have felt any discomfort (physical or mental) in this area. Stephenson's recordings are available for free on YouTube, and you can subscribe to his email list for other free sleep meditations. **Key Specs:** Cost: Free, 7-day trial; About \$100 annually. **Features:** User-friendly app and website. **Why We Chose It:** We chose Ten Percent Happier because it offers beginning guides for people who aren't sure about meditation. **Pros:** Simple beginner guides for the less meditation-inclined. **Good for sleep and stress:** Experts available for questions. **Hundreds of meditations available:** Easy to use. **Cons:** Above average membership cost. **If you've convinced yourself meditation isn't for you, because you can't focus, or you're skeptical of anything related to Eastern ideology,** Ten Percent Happier will speak your language. It's specifically marketed to "fidgety skeptics," especially beginners who need more of a guiding hand. The app came out of the New York Times best-selling book of the same name, and offers a number of expert guides who can walk you through all the meditation basics. If you have questions, the guides will even respond to you personally. It has hundreds of meditations that can help you sleep better, cope with anxiety, or find ways to be a little calmer, and yes, happier. And the premium version has even more. There's also an informative podcast and newsletter. **Guided meditations can be helpful for a wide array of people, from first-timers, to meditation skeptics all the way up to seasoned experts.** Whether you're new to meditating or not, a guiding voice is sometimes your best way in when it becomes difficult to shut out the noise of the busy world around us. While all these meditations are useful, our top pick is Calm. Calm is incredibly user-friendly, offers the widest variety of guided meditations for every experience level, even short, targeted meditations for those anxiety emergencies. This is the sort of guidance you want when stepping into unfamiliar territory, aka your quiet mind. **Best Guided Meditation:** Cost. **Features:** Calm. **Best Overall Annual Membership:** is \$70. **Meditations for life:** is \$400. **Flexible app with short meditations:** Tara Brach. **Best for Deepening Your Practice:** Free or donation-based. **Website with video classes:** Headspace. **Best for Beginners:** Annual membership is \$70 and monthly membership is about \$13. **User-friendly app interface:** The Honest Guys. **Best for Relaxation:** Free. **Youtube video with music:** Gabby Bernstein. **Best for Walking:** Free or \$10 to \$12 for an album. **Blog with videos:** Jason Stephenson. **Best for Sleep:** Free. **Youtube video:** Ten Percent Happier. **Best for Skeptics:** \$100 annually. **User-friendly app and website:** Meditation is a mind and body practice that can help you focus on your breath, find clarity, develop concentration, and enhance emotional positivity, which allows you to remain in the present moment. Meditation focuses on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior. Through practice, you will move into a peaceful and energized state. This empowers you to observe your thoughts or feelings without judging them. The benefits of meditation can come from practicing only a few minutes a day. When it comes to different types of meditation classes, there's definitely not a shortage. Other than choosing between a guided and unguided (silent) meditation, the next step is to determine the type of meditation you want to do. Some of the more common types of meditation classes include: Visualization, Loving-kindness, Reflection, Zen, Transcendental Chakra Gazing, Breathing, Yoga, Mindfulness, Vipassana (self-transformation), Walking. Many guided meditation classes that made it into our top picks are available for free, but services like Headspace and Calm offer memberships in addition to free trials and select meditation recordings. The cost of in-person classes can range from \$20 to \$150, with an average of around \$55 to \$60 per class. This depends on the length of the meditation and experience of the instructor. You can also download meditation apps, which range from free to \$15 per month. In general, this fee gives you access to guided meditations, deep breathing exercises, and self-guided recordings. The advantage to guided meditations is that the narrator or teacher walks you through how to meditate, what to expect from your mind and body, and how you can apply what you learned in the meditation to your life. If your mind tends to wander during meditation, the guidance of an experienced teacher can help you focus and bring you back to the present moment. For starters, we looked at guided meditations only, which are led by a teacher via video, audio, or both. The overall pick and the best meditation for beginners scored high points in the guided department. Our writer tried each meditation video and service and provided feedback based on her experience. Rounding out the criteria, we considered online reviews and YouTube comments posted below each meditation video. Tara Brach's meditations have rave reviews on iTunes and the Honest Guys meditations have been viewed over 300 million times. Additional reporting by Ally Hirschlag. Verywell Mind uses only high-quality sources, including peer-reviewed studies, to support the facts within our articles. Read our editorial process to learn more about how we fact-check and keep our content accurate, reliable, and trustworthy. **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Medicine. "Meditation: In Depth."** Updated April 2016.

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