

Meditation Posture Guidelines

This script of the Meditation Posture Guideline audio is provided by Christine Lustik for those that might prefer to read the guidelines.

The point of meditation is not to sit thru pain caused by your posture so let's briefly go over and practice the various options you have for meditation posture. There is no one right way; you should choose the posture that works best for your body at that time. This may change from day to day. The meditation posture guidelines are provided for two purposes. One, to prevent unnecessary pain and long-term injury. If we are sitting in pain every day, it's likely we'll keep putting off our meditation. Two, to help you find a posture that doesn't encourage sleep. While you may be purposefully using a Body Scan before bed to settle down, that is separate from your normal meditation practice. We do want to stay awake for meditation.

Please note, as I give directions each person's body is different. Alignment will look different on each person, please do not force your body into a posture that is painful and does not work for it.

Sitting on a cushion: Traditionally, you see people sitting on a cushion, so we'll cover that first. If you have very long legs you may need two cushions or a folded blanket on top. To properly sit on the cushion, you'll sit on the front edge so your pelvis tilts down toward the floor. Cross your legs in a comfortable manner. You do want your knees supported. If they reach the floor great! If not, place a pillow or folded blanket under them to support them. The goal is to have a downward tilt from your hips to where your knees rest. This tilt should allow you to sit upright easily, with very little effort. Each lineage teaches meditation posture slightly differently, but for our Mindfulness purposes rest your hands comfortably on your lap either palms up or palms down and pull your elbows slightly back to your side. They shouldn't be encouraging you to lean forward. You may sit with eyes closed, but if that is unsettling for you just soften your gaze and lower it gently to the floor a few feet in front of you, but still keeping your head upright and balanced on your shoulders.

Sitting on a chair: Sitting in a chair is the next option. If sitting in a chair, allow both feet to balance equally on the floor and allow your hands to rest on your legs in a comfortable manner. You shouldn't be in a tripod position, if needed, move elbows back slightly so you aren't leaning forward. Balance your shoulders over your hips and your head over your shoulders. Ideally, you want to be sitting upright, which means most of the time you aren't leaning against the chair back. It can really help to have a small pillow, scarf, or sweater to place between the back of the chair and your lower back for support.

Standing: One can do a standing meditation. This is a great option when you are tired, or perhaps after lunch. The meditation can help focus you for the coming afternoon, without allowing you to fall asleep. Stand equally on both feet with knees just slightly bent, not locked. Balance your hips over your feet, your shoulders over your hips, and your head over your shoulders. Gently roll your shoulders back to where it's comfortable for your body and allow your arms to hang to your side gently, fingers pointing down. Some people can close their eyes and maintain balance in standing meditation, but again, it is

perfectly fine to soften your eyes and gently lower your gaze to the floor 4-6 feet in front of you, maintaining an upright head position.

Prone or Lying Down: Finally, I'd like to review lying meditation. Body scan is often done lying down, but any meditation can be done in this manner if your body won't allow you to use another posture. Please note, you will have to pay attention more to not fall asleep in the prone position. If this is your preferred position, I encourage you to take the time to do the following things; otherwise you may get uncomfortable or cold ½ way through your meditation. Have a yoga mat or blanket to lay on, something with a little cushion. You may like to have some cushions and / or pillows around that you can use under your knees or a small one under your neck for comfort. Putting something under your knees can really help your lower back. Lay on your back with your arms extended slightly out from your sides and palms up. You may also want to take the time to cover up with a blanket and don't forget your socks! Even though the posture is similar to corpse pose, the pose one uses for shavasana in yoga, the purpose is different so make sure you prepare yourself to keep your awareness on the meditation that you are doing.

These are traditional still postures. There is also walking meditation, but that is not covered in this review. I encourage you to become familiar with a variety of meditation postures. That way if there are times your knees don't want to bend the way you normally sit, or your back is sore, you have options and you are less likely to put off the meditation. Thanks for listening and feel free to email me with questions.