

**Shiny Dime:** Meditate to see clearly - not to clear your mind, calm down, or focus. See things not as you wish things to be, or wish them not to be. To see reality as it is, accept it with the understanding that it's all changing - no matter how joyful or painful.

## **Why You're Probably Meditating with the Wrong Goal in Mind**

I used to think that the point of meditation was to clear my mind, relax, calm down, or focus. Boy, did I miss the point...

I get it, though. What was I supposed to expect when the names of the apps I used to meditate were "Headspace" and "Calm"? Of course, I wanted to get rid of the incessant chatter in my mind to have more *headspace*, to be *calmer*. Who wouldn't?

I meditated on and off for years with these apps. During all of that time, I knew deep inside that something was missing. I still had a monkey mind – jumping from one random thought to another in a matter of milliseconds, all day.

I kept chasing this state of Zen mind. The more I chased, the less attainable it all felt. I became more and more acutely aware of how far I was from this heaven-like serenity. So, I chased it harder.

For example, I made it a goal for myself to earn that 365-day streak badge on Headspace – the longest one possible. I achieved this streak, but it's questionable whether it helped me accomplish my intention. If you ask my partner, she will probably tell you that it did the opposite. I was more anxious to just complete a quick meditation session and keep my streak going than actually being present for my meditation. I'd wake up and remember that I hadn't meditated the day before and quickly rush to the app to check whether I lost my streak. If I didn't, I'd breathe out a sigh of relief and rush to complete a one-minute session just so that I could get on with my day. I'd sit down for that minute and once it was over, I'd feel so accomplished – only to repeat this experience the next day.

This was like setting a goal for myself to work out every day, and then going to the gym for a minute, lifting a 3-lb dumbbell once, and patting myself on the back for keeping my working out streak going. Did I "work out"? If we get really technical, maybe at best.

I eventually completed the 365-day streak – probably meditating in earnest for half of the time and meditating for a quick minute to just get the streak for the other half. It wasn't long after I got the badge that I lost my streak. I also didn't care that I lost that streak. I was sad to realize that I cared more about having the badge and being able to show it to my friends than I did about having deepened my practice.

Knowing that it'd be foolish to keep trying the same things and expecting a different result, I wanted to find a different way to deepen my practice. I had heard about the 10-day silent meditation course a few of my friends took, so I was intrigued to try it myself. I signed up for the course, and off I went.

The instructions were simple but powerful.

Notice the physical sensations in your body and no matter what they are. Accept it as it is. That's the reality of the moment. Know that these sensations will pass. Accept them, as they are, at that moment.

You're feeling relaxed, accept the looseness in your muscles. You feel sharp and shooting pain, accept it. Pay attention to it, be curious about it. That's your reality in the moment.

Day by day, hour by hour, and finally second by second, I felt a subtle but profound shift. The point of my meditation was not to relax or calm down. It was now to see the reality clearly and accept it as it is. Perhaps even love it. Accept and love it as it is, so that I can take wholesome actions – actions that are simultaneously good for me and good for others.

That's different than ... wanting and craving a state of mind. Only when I accepted the anxious nature of my mind and wanted to observe it objectively without trying to change it and without wanting it to be something else that it isn't in that moment, I was able to feel a sense of ease.

Yes, I was in pain at times. A sharper level of awareness of my body brings forth all the impressions past experiences left on me. Some were emotionally and physically painful to confront. I didn't want to deal with them so much that I buried them somewhere in my subconscious mind, where it's comfortable and safe to ignore them. But, when I could see them clearly and not wish them away, something magical happened. They started to lose their power over me. I accepted them as they are.

Once I experienced this impact of this subtle shift in my motivation, I actually started to get the results. I did feel calmer. I did feel like I had more mental space – because I could now see the invisible boat anchors in my mind, accept them, love them, and let them go.

So, don't meditate to clear your mind. You will never achieve that.

Meditate to get to know your mind. Accept it as it is, at any given moment. Know that it's probably the hardest thing you'll ever do, but the most rewarding.