

Meditation

By Jean Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., WFS Founder

To meditate is to reflect, to think, to ponder. Dorothy Canfield Fisher once wrote, *“We need to meditate, for meditation brings that calm continuity of spiritual and mental effort without which few can have the heart-satisfying sense of understanding.”*

Meditation is a way in which we can glimpse that glory of life... our life.

Meditation is part of the recovery process used in the WFS “New Life” Program. It is, in fact, an integral part of the program because it provides that part of our recovery that helps us to center ourselves and our place in the scheme of things.

Too often our lives are merely centered on our family and our jobs. We do not take the time to see ourselves in relation to the larger fabric of life. Too often we do not make time to reflect, to think, to ponder.

To practice the “New Life” Program to its fullest extent is to take a part of each day for meditation, for a time to think, for a time to reflect. The time of day selected can be different for each of us, but, for me, the very best time (and the time I most urge members to use) is the first segment of each day... that time of day before anyone else arises, so that each is entirely alone with her thoughts, her reflections, her meditations.

The meditative period should be that period in which each sees herself and her values; it should be that period of time when we are thankful for our sobriety, for our new life, for our ability to think straight, for our family and friends. It can be a period of spiritual reflection and it can be a period of quiet time for thought. It can be a period of time to make affirmations to oneself about what one wishes to achieve.

Meditation is very effective when one sits close to a window so that the outer world of nature can be observed. This provides a means for reflection, for it helps us to realize that there is a much larger but much less complicated, more normal life out there, a life not riddled with arguments, fights about money, worries about mundane things. It is a world of order and harmony. There is the dependability of the moon rising and the sun setting.

Seeing the natural world... looking at a tree... helps us to drop the worries and the tension. It changes our focus. It allows us to know that life is greater than arguments and sticky relationships.

We are a part of a greater whole. We are an important part of that living, natural world.

A twenty-minute period of meditation helps us to ponder ourselves. It helps us to think about ourselves and helps us to feel good about ourselves. (At least, that’s what it’s SUPPOSED to do!) It helps us to be centered. For those using the WFS “New Life” Program, it gives us a time to read the Program Statements each day and to reflect on them and their meaning for us. It gives us a time to select one Statement that we will use all that day.

There are many forms of meditation. Perhaps the form that became the most popular is transcendental meditation. This form means to transcend, to go beyond. Usually one assumes a certain position and makes use of a ‘mantra’.

Some persons use a form of meditation that is more like relaxation, lying on the floor in a relaxed position, listening to soft music.

The form of meditation suggested by WFS is the form in which we reflect, we ponder, we think, we relate, we center on ourselves and where we are going and what our relationship is to the world around us.

There is no one form of meditation that is right or wrong. To meditate, whatever form one uses, is to grow. It is the time in which we see ourselves in relation to eternity. ☸

(This article is from *The Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet*, Volume 11 and copyrighted by Women for Sobriety, Inc., PO Box 618, Quakertown, PA 18951.)

Comments from Cindy:

In much of her writing, Jean places great emphasis on morning meditation time. In early sobriety, I have heard many women say, "I can't meditate" or "I don't know how to meditate." And I'd like to address those of you who might be saying the same thing...

Meditation doesn't just happen; it's not a skill that we are born with. It is a habit, something that we need to practice and start out slowly with. The key word is START. Because I personally found it difficult to commit myself to meditating 20 to 30 minutes every morning, I decided that I would start off with only 5 to 10 minutes. After all, even marathon runners start training with shorter distances. I began by finding a quiet place and time and settled down with the WFS Program Booklet. Each day I would read a section on one of the 13 Statements. Then I would close the book and think about the statement and what it meant to ME and how I would start using that statement in my daily life. Of course, I had my favorite statements that I would go back to time and time again (Statements #4 and #13); but, I made sure that I would meditate on all of them, not avoiding any even if I thought they were difficult. Eventually, I found it easier to extend my morning routine to 15 and then 20 minutes.

Today, I meditate not only in the morning, but at night when I go to bed too. My two favorite times have become when I get up and look forward to every day and when I go to bed at night, grateful that I have had another day of my new life. Are YOU meditating every day? Here are a few guidelines* to get you started:

- ♦ Put your expectations aside, and don't worry about doing it right. There are, however, a few things to avoid. They are...
 - Trying to force something to happen.
 - Over-analyzing the meditation.
 - Trying to make your mind blank or chase thoughts away.
 - Putting too much emphasis on doing it right.
- ♦ Find a quiet, comfortable place to meditate. You can sit in a comfortable chair, on the bed, on the floor... anywhere that's comfortable. It's not necessary to sit cross-legged. Your legs and hands can be in any position that is comfortable. Eliminate as much noise and as many potential distractions as possible. Don't worry about those things that you cannot control.
- ♦ Relax and focus on an object, a word or a thought, a color or symbol, or just your breathing. When your mind drifts off, gently bring it back to your focus, no matter how many times this occurs.

* Guidelines reprinted in abridged format with permission from Jim Malloy's Worldwide Online Meditation Center (www.meditationcenter.com). ☸

Comments from "Razz":

"To meditate is to reflect, to think, to ponder..... Meditation is a way in which we can glimpse the glory of life... our life."
From the article "Meditation" by Jean Kirkpatrick.

Raise your hand if, when you heard the word "meditation" (in regards to the "New Life" Program), you rolled your eyes and had a vision of Tibetan monks sitting crossed legged in a temple with their orange robes, their shaved heads and humming the same sound. I'll venture to guess that it was probably most of you.

Now raise your hand if, after you got over the "visual", you then said: **"I can't do that!" "I've tried and it just didn't work."** Would I guess correctly if this applied to a large number of you? It's a very common kind of thinking, especially for those who have little or no experience with meditation. For many, it would be a foreign notion, along with the possibility of living a full and happy life sober. The good news is that even if those were your first thoughts, through trial and error, you'll be able to find a form of meditation that works just right for you and will become a great tool to use in recovery. With practice, you will find that you **no longer feel silly and awkward doing it**. However, before we get into the technique(s) of meditation, let's look at why Jean felt it was an integral part of the program.

“It is, in fact, an integral part of the program because it provides that part of our recovery that helps us to center ourselves and our place in the scheme of things.” “The meditative period should be that period in which each sees herself and her values; it should be that period of time when we are thankful for our sobriety, for our new life, for our ability to think straight, for our family and friends. It can be a period of spiritual reflection and it can be a period of quiet time for thought. It can be a period of time to make affirmations to oneself about what one wishes to achieve.” From the article “Meditation” by Jean Kirkpatrick.

Let’s look at those things again:

- a time to center ourselves and our place in the scheme of things
- a time to look at yourself and your values
- a time to be thankful for your sobriety, your new life, your ability to think straight, your families and friends
- a time of spiritual reflection
- a quiet time for thought
- a time to make affirmations to oneself about what one wishes to achieve

Jean doesn’t mean for us to do them all in one session; instead, she is giving us different kinds of things we can use that meditative time focusing on. In other words - HIT THE PAUSE BUTTON! It’s important to take the time each day to just “be” quiet and allow our thoughts to focus on our sobriety, affirm what we want to achieve or to help us see our place in the world around us. Even in regards to this practice, Jean has given us options of how we want to use this time. A basic tenant in the WFS “New Life” Program – **choice!**

Jean then explains an effective method of meditation that is easy to follow and doesn’t take any professional training or guidance. We’re talking real simple here ladies!

- Wake up 15 minutes earlier in the morning (which is probably the best time to avoid interruptions).
- Sit by a window so you can take in the beauty of the outdoors (helping you to understand how we are a part of a much bigger whole).
- Have a copy of the 13 Statements with you to read over, think about and perhaps pick one of them to focus on that day.

It doesn’t get any simpler than that; and you’re not even required to shave your head and wear an orange robe!

In her wisdom, Jean also understood that there will be those where this is a challenge and so she goes on to talk about adapting it to suit your own lifestyle or suggests looking for a method that works better for you. It’s not about the method, it’s about the good feelings and calmness you’ll get from doing it.

“There is no one form of meditation that is right or wrong. To meditate, whatever form one uses, is to grow. It is the time in which we see ourselves in relation to eternity.” From the article “Meditation” by Jean Kirkpatrick.

It wasn’t until I re-read this article in preparation for this post that I actually read the comments by “Cindy”. I recommend you read that as well, she makes some important points. Also in her comments was a link to a website. I was sure that it would no longer work but I found that it’s still alive and kicking. For anyone who wants to know more about meditation and find some very good tips on how to make meditation work for you, I highly recommend you check it out:

<http://www.meditationcenter.com/>

I started meditating long before I started my quest for sobriety, so it wasn’t something new. I also found that it really is a “simple” thing and that we’re the ones that tend to make it hard. It’s not about emptying your mind, that’s impossible to do and perhaps not desirable. It’s not about being in the right position. It is about being able to spend quiet time in a position that is comfortable for you. It doesn’t have to be about using the right “mantra” or keeping your mind focused on one single thing. It is about **BE STILL AND KNOW.**

Razz’s Method

And there are so many other things that one can do that will put you in the same frame of mind that traditional meditation does. As long as you can find a way to pause everyday living and spend some quiet quality time with yourself and your thoughts, free from distraction. When I first became curious about meditation, I asked a very special and “spiritual” women friend: “How does a person meditate?” “How do you meditate?” She then shared with me the method of meditation that worked the best for her.

- She had a small bench/alter on which she had placed some “special to her” articles along with some crystals that have suggested healing properties and a candle. These are optional; however, they do help set the atmosphere, it gave the area a special kind of feeling. (Until recently, I had a little bench that I sat in front of, that has similar items on it - along with a little water feature.)

- She sat on a chair or laid on the floor because she had mobility issues; however, sitting crossed legged on the floor is traditionally how one sits.
- Then she closed her eyes and said that it was her intention to allow any wisdom or cleansing power to enter her mind. (Personally, this is a time for prayer and, also, when I lift up those I've been holding in my heart who are struggling.)
- She then practiced her breathing to bring it to a steady and deep rhythm. She found that many answers came to her this way for the many challenges she had to deal with. (Once I got used to "being open", in other words having more control over what thoughts came into my mind, very often I find that I'll have a single word pop into my mind and that word leads me to the things I must do if I want something changed. At other times, the word can comfort me or validate what I've been feeling.)
- In the beginning, it's important to set yourself up for success and for the brain to get used to the process. She recommended doing it for **just 5 minutes** at first.
- For thoughts that come to mind that threatened to derail the meditation (such as "Oh, I must remember to take some meat out for supper.") she would acknowledge the thought **"Yes, I hear you" and then tell it to "Come back later" as she imagined her hand gently sweeping it away.** I must add that I have found this to be very effective for me.
- Sometimes she'd pose a question, sometimes she asked for guidance or understanding, and sometimes she'd just sit and be open to what thoughts or feelings came her way.
- Then, when she's finished, she slowly started to move back into the everyday world, using the blowing out of the candle as a form ending prayer.

That's just one way to meditate that's different from Jean's suggestions of how to do it. I can think of many other ways, forms and activities that give you the same results. Simple and doable ones. **Can any of you think of things or activities that are meditative in nature?** Please share them with us. ☺ [January 2013]

"Meditation brings wisdom; lack of meditation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what holds you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom." - Buddha

Comments from "Gutzylucy":

A passage from Martia Nelson's book, Coming Home: *"My greatest teacher was the experience of living in split realities: personality and true self. Personality is our daily companion, our conscious self that sees the world through the eyes of limitation and dutifully keeps us informed about what we can and cannot do. True self, on the other hand, patiently stands by, offering the unwavering knowledge that a state of vibrant well-being and unlimited possibility is our true nature, a birthright that can be lived if we choose to do so. ... True self simply refers to the aspect of our being that is completely aware of its expanded nature no matter what we may be experiencing at the time. Whenever we feel constrained, fearful, unworthy, inadequate or anything we deem to be negative, we have identified with our personality. We can always choose to view the same situation from the perspective of our soul."*

A drinking Life is a DIVIDED LIFE! Drinking brings insanity into our everyday life. It was this divided life of competent, capable woman by day and imprisoned lover of my wine by night that was crazy-making for me. I did anything to keep my wine flowing. **INTEGRITY** is a very important value of mine; yet, I told those little "white" lies to meet my drinking needs. A drinking life is driven by personality and negative thinking.

"We can have the life we want, or we can drink. That's the choice." - "Tooz"

Once I stopped drinking, I found that I had to **CREATE a "New Life"** one baby step at a time. **I needed a COMPASS.** For me, that compass has been my morning meditation time. It has changed and "morphed" over the past 7 years as I have changed and grown. In the beginning, I had an empty soul on the inside. I also couldn't sit still for even a minute. I started with journaling my thoughts to get them out of my head and to help me stop ruminating and obsessing. I read and reread the 13 Statements. I used guided meditations on CDs. I am now on Journal #34. I have a whole library of spiritual writings that I read in the morning in addition to the statements. I have found a meditation practice called "Centering Prayer" and have attended meditation workshops and lead Centering Prayer groups.

Meditation does not have to be hard. **START SLOW AND GO EASY!** *"To practice the "New Life" Program to its fullest extent is to take a part of each day for meditation, for a time to think, for a time to reflect. The time of day selected can be different for each of us, but, for me, the very best time (and the time I most urge members to use) is the first segment of each day... that time of day before anyone else arises, so that each is entirely alone with her thoughts, her reflections, her meditations."*

JUST START! Start with 15 minutes... 10 minutes reading and reflecting and 5 minutes in quiet meditation. You can expand it later.

“Meditation is part of the recovery process used in the WFS “New Life” Program. It is, in fact, an integral part of the program because it provides that part of our recovery that helps us to center ourselves and our place in the scheme of things.” It gives us the **COMPASS** we need to move through life by **CENTERING** ourselves before we start our day.

Statement #8, **“The fundamental object of life is emotional and spiritual growth.”**

Daily I put my life into a proper order, knowing which are the priorities.

Do what YOU need! *“It can be a period of spiritual reflection and it can be a period of quiet time for thought. It can be a period of time to make affirmations to oneself about what one wishes to achieve.”*

“Mornings are magical, in my opinion, but do what works for you. Get in a daily habit of reviewing the statements.” –“Shine”

Be CREATIVE! Be open. Investigate Labyrinths and do a walking meditation. Sketch instead of writing in a journal. Do a meditative dance instead of sitting during meditation. Consider Chanting... it brings the meditation into the body.

Get in NATURE! *“Meditation is very effective when one sits close to a window so that the outer world of nature can be observed. This provides a means for reflection, for it helps us to realize that there is a much larger but much less complicated, more normal life out there, a life not riddled with arguments, fights about money, worries about mundane things. It is a world of order and harmony. There is the dependability of the moon rising and the sun setting.”*

TRUE SELF is LOVE! It is our “Higher Self”, our “Divine Self”, our “Real I”. *“We are a part of a greater whole. We are an important part of that living, natural world.”* It is our birthright. Statement #6, **“Life can be ordinary or it can be great.”** *Greatness is mine by a conscious effort.*

Set your COMPASS daily and then REMEMBER TO REMEMBER ALWAYS your INTERIOR COMPASS as you move through your day, bumping up against Life! ☸ [January 2013]

Comments from Denise (Denver, CO group):

Jean’s article on *Meditation* expresses so well the benefits of a daily meditation practice. I must admit that I was skeptical that meditation would help me or that I could even do it. Patience is the key to establishing a meaningful meditation practice and patience was in short supply in my early sobriety.

Jean’s article points out that many women do not take time to see themselves in relation to the larger world. We frequently do not take time to reflect, think, or ponder. I know I was guilty of this. When I was stuck in my addiction, my mind was in chaos and constant turmoil - that proverbial “monkey mind.” I was hard pressed to find goodness in life; it was hard to find gratitude. Using the 13 Acceptance Statements as suggested by the “New Life” Program was my first introduction to quiet reflection. Over the years, that quiet reflection has evolved into an important ritual of self-care, and a very integral component of my recovery.

Like Jean, I find solace and peace in nature. I know I tend to get flaky if I cannot spend time each day either outside or by a window. I find grounding and internal calm in the natural world. I am very fortunate to live in a place with such easy access to a variety of natural places. I walk among the tall Ponderosa pine trees daily; in all weather and in all seasons. This is my special time; I talk to myself, the trees, the deer, an occasional bear, elk, and the guiding spirit of my father. Additionally, I have created a meditation room in my home. It is used only for meditation and is a sacred space in my life.

We each have a special place where we can find comfort and soothing. It’s important for every woman to find her unique way of reaching that inner core of self. If it isn’t nature for you, know that your special place is there, somewhere. You can try any number of places and settings. Just find your special place. You are worth the effort; and, it truly does work if you give it a chance.

Using the 13 Acceptance Statements as mantras was my first real attempt at utilizing the power of positive thinking. I resonate with, and love, all the statements; but, I find that one will usually “jump” out at me; an area of my life that needs special attention. I’ve learned to pay attention and attend to that particular statement as I go through my day. I also use those things for which I am grateful as mantras. In early sobriety, a “Gratitude List” can be very helpful in providing perspective.

I encourage all women in recovery to start a daily meditation practice. It keeps us grounded, centered, and in touch with the inner self that was disregarded or denied in addiction. There is no single right way to meditate. Do what works for you. If you need help, there are numerous books available as well as meditation coaches, or ask a friend or sister-in-sobriety for guidance. You owe it to yourself to at least try this simple yet effective recovery tool. ☸ [July 2013]