

MindfulLiving™ Module 3

Mastering Mindful Thinking

Chapter 9 - Reading

Sitting Meditation

Adapted by Shery Clein, MindfulLiving™ Coach

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[For audio guidance, go to Sitting Meditation]



In our MindfulLiving™ program, the core of formal meditation practice is “sitting meditation,” often called “sitting.” While sitting is a common and ordinary activity, mindful sitting differs significantly from regular sitting, much like mindful breathing differs from ordinary breathing. The critical distinction is your level of awareness.



To practice sitting meditation, we create a particular time and space for non-doing. We adopt an alert yet relaxed posture, ensuring we are relatively comfortable without needing to move, and then we remain calmly present without trying to add anything to the moment.

You have already engaged in similar exercises where you observed your breath. Adopting an upright and dignified posture—with your head, neck, and back aligned vertically—supports the natural flow of your breath. This posture also reflects the inner qualities of self-reliance, self-acceptance, and alertness that we nurture through practice.

Sitting meditation is typically practised on a chair or the floor (see “NOTE” at the end of this article for alternatives). If you choose a chair, select one with a straight back and ensure your feet are flat on the floor. Ideally, sit slightly away from the back of the chair to allow your spine to be self-supporting (see Figure A). However, leaning against the back of the chair is acceptable if necessary. When sitting on the floor, use a firm, thick cushion that raises your hips three to six inches off the floor (a folded pillow, meditation cushion, or zafu works well).

There are various cross-legged and kneeling postures for floor sitting. One commonly used posture is the “Burmese” position (see Figure B), where one heel is drawn close to the body with the other leg draped in front. Depending on your flexibility, your knees may or may not touch the floor, which is more comfortable when they do. Another option is kneeling with the cushion between your feet (see Figure C).



Sitting on the floor can create a reassuring sense of being grounded and self-supporting, but it is not essential for meditation. Many people prefer sitting on straight-backed chairs. What truly matters in meditation is the sincerity of your effort, not the surface you are sitting on.

Regardless of your choice of seating, maintaining proper posture is crucial. It supports the cultivation of dignity, patience, and self-acceptance. Remember to align your back, neck, and head vertically, relax your shoulders, and find a comfortable hand position. Typically, hands rest on the knees or in the lap, with the left hand's fingers resting above the right hand's fingers and the tips of the thumbs gently touching.

Once settled into your chosen posture, direct your attention to your breathing. Observe the breath as it enters and exits, staying present with each breath, moment by moment. This practice involves full awareness of the in-breath and out-breath, letting the breath happen naturally, and noticing all gross and subtle associated sensations.

Although it sounds simple, it can be challenging. You might find it easy to sit for hours in front of a TV or on a car trip, but when you sit with nothing but your breath, body, and mind, you may quickly notice discomfort or restlessness. The mind or body may soon crave movement or distraction, a natural response.

This is where the work of self-observation becomes particularly valuable. When the mind moves, the body often follows, and vice versa. If the mind is restless, the body becomes restless. If the mind seeks entertainment, the body might seek action. Similarly, if the body feels discomfort, it will prompt the mind to find a solution or distraction.

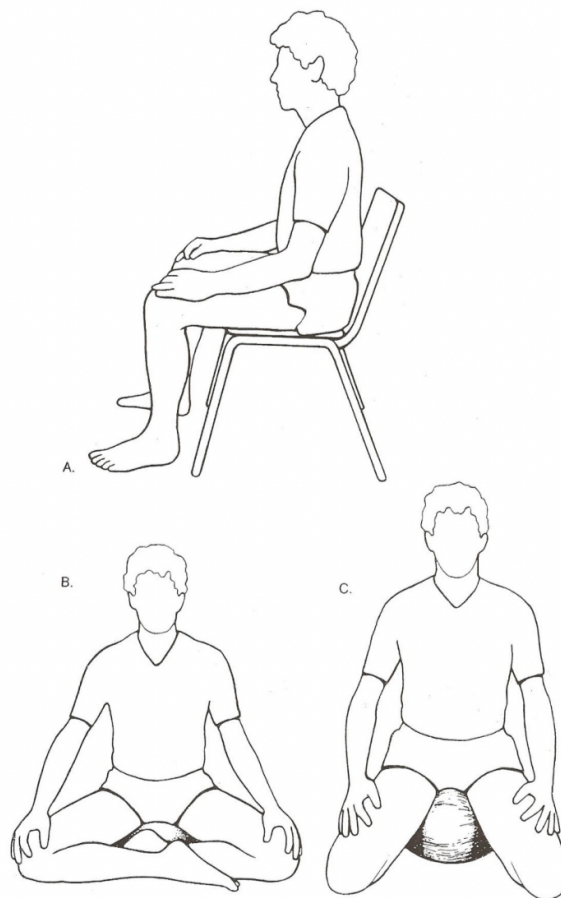
In meditation, we do not attempt to answer these questions but observe the impulses and thoughts as they arise. Instead of reacting to them, we gently but firmly bring our attention back to the breath, continuously focusing on it moment by moment. We might reflect briefly on why the mind behaves this way, but our primary practice is to accept each moment without reacting.

By practising this, you train your mind to be less reactive and more stable, making each moment count. This process enhances your ability to concentrate, similar to how muscles develop through repetitive exercise. Consistently returning your attention to the breath, despite distractions, builds inner strength and patience while fostering a non-judgmental attitude.



Mindfulness is not about pushing thoughts away or isolating yourself from them. Instead, it involves making space for thoughts, observing them, and allowing them to be, with the breath serving as your anchor or “home base” for maintaining focus and calm.

NOTE: If you choose to sit on the floor, ensure your hips are elevated enough to prevent strain on your back and reduced blood flow to your legs. Use more cushions if necessary, or consider a meditation bench to elevate your hips at least six inches above your knees. If you encounter difficulties or need assistance, please get in touch with shery@sheryclein.com or WhatsApp: 0824588151.



Thank you for your valuable participation in the MindfulLiving™ program. We appreciate your dedication and commitment. We aim to help you address challenges and obstacles while enjoying the process. Feel free to reach out with any questions or for support.

Blessings. Stay Healthy 🧡 Love, Shery.



MindfulLiving™

Mastering Mindful Thinking: Clarity in Every Moment

+27 824 588151 | shery@sheryclein.com | www.sheryclein.com

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