

As a teacher of meditation, I often hear the same kinds of complaints and questions from students. It is hard for experienced meditators like myself to remember what it is like to just be starting on the path. Beginning takes a truly epic amount of discipline. Even the most rudimentary meditation techniques can be excruciating after 5 or 10 minutes. For many people, it is hard to just close the eyes and keep the mind alert at the same time.

I used to teach very complex meditation techniques involving lots of difficult and intricate imagery, but as I have progressed as a teacher, I have simplified them. I find that all but the most dedicated students tend to give up when a meditation technique is too hard. It can be almost painful for them to continue to sit there and focus on their breath while keeping an image of the Buddha in their minds. Experimenting on my own, however, I have found that there are a variety of simple meditation techniques that work every bit as well as the more difficult and advanced ones.

A lot of people out there will tell you that you have to use their meditation technique. Many of these so-called experts believe that there is only one way to do things: their way. Although most of them really do have valid meditation techniques, they fail to grasp the larger picture. Anything that puts your mind in a peaceful state, and helps to sustain that state throughout the day, is a good meditation technique. Different schools have different meditation techniques, but they are only as good as the peace they give to the practitioner. Ultimately, the only guide to whether a technique in meditation is worthwhile is you.

Of course, that is not to say that there aren't some basic meditation techniques that everyone should learn. I have never seen a meditation method, for example, that does not involve focusing on the breath. If you do not learn to keep the mind clear while focusing on your breath, you will never get the maximum benefit from your meditation. The meditation techniques that you use to achieve these results are up to you. You can simply listen to your breath, or you can picture it as a wave of energy flowing in and out of you. Make it as simple or as complicated as you want it to be. It doesn't matter as long as it works for you.