



# Tuning into the Moment

## a guided meditation method

An interview with creator Maneesha James

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**T**uning into the Moment is a CD for people who are interested in meditation – a tool for relaxation and beyond.

Do it in the morning – it'll leave you relaxed and alert for the day ahead, or do it before sleep, it only takes half an hour, and it'll make your sleep deep and restful.

We caught up with Maneesha to hear more about her experience with meditation and talk about this new release.

**Q:** Many people think that meditation is a form of concentration. What is your view on that?

**M:** This is a good question, as it pinpoints a common misconception. In my experience, concentration is a focused effort of the mind – three points which disqualify it from being the same as meditation! In fact it is just the contrary to meditation.

Firstly, because the art of meditation is that of conscious relaxation. Effort is totally antithetical to it! Secondly, in that state of relaxed awareness, it is as if the blinkers of our awareness are removed, so that instead of paying attention to one particular area, focusing on one particular activity e.g. listening or working on the computer, one's consciousness is expanded. I like to use the analogy of listening to music. If you focus on listening to music, you might be noting "Ah, that's the oboe; there's the cello; now here comes the viola" or "This piece is definitely in a minor key...maybe A minor or is it B?"

However, if you listen to the same piece of music simply with awareness – relaxed and yet still conscious, your listening capacity totally available and expanded – you register the music simply as an overall sensation...like the sound of waves, or birds chirping or bamboos bending in the breeze. There is no analysis going on and you are not trying in any sense; you are utterly at rest. So, meditation is neither a focusing nor an efforting.

Thirdly, meditation is not a mental effort. It is not mentation but awareness – a very passive, internal process of watching or witnessing whatever might be happening inside you or outside you. Nor is it an attempt to stop the mind. The mind is a thought-producing machine; try to change that and you're going to get into endless and unnecessary trouble. It's simply the nature of the beast! And we certainly need a mind to function in many areas of life. We need to think through situations. For example, the mind is needed when you compile your shopping list.

However, the mind is not needed when you are sitting enjoying a sunrise or sunset; when you are jogging or ironing or cleaning your teeth or making love. Trouble is, the mind is a workaholic and doesn't know when to quit.

Meditation allows us to be more aware of when the mind is working overtime and to not get caught up in its commentary. Meditation allows us to be aware of the body too, and of our emotions.

**Q:** The only quiet time that many people often have is in their car on their way to work. Can some kind of meditation technique be used then?

**M:** Absolutely! Just about any time is a good time to meditate! It's important at this point perhaps to say that sometimes we use the word "meditate" when we mean, "practice a meditation technique." Meditation can't be done. It's a very feminine, shy, subtle inner space that can only be invited, gently seduced; a space for which we can only create an invitation, an inner milieu. That's where the many meditation techniques come in. They don't directly create meditation – there is no cause-and-effect phenomenon here. What techniques can do is to help you relax into the space inside in which meditation is more likely to happen.

So, when driving to or from work, for example, you can use that time to listen to music, something classical or ambient. I would recommend any of

Osho's recorded audio tape talks too: they provide a great medium for a listening meditation. (My favorites include The Great Zen Master Ta Hui Ch 24 – "The Inescapable," The Path of the Mystic Ch 22 "The Watcher is Not Amused" – and The Dhammapada, Vol 5 Ch 5 "Love Yourself and Watch.")

Otherwise, simply remain aware of all that is involved in driving. Clearly you need to be alert, but that doesn't mean you have to be sitting on the edge of your seat, gripping the wheel and swearing every time you're caught by a red light. Be relaxed, be comfortable. Let those blinkers I spoke of earlier be dropped, so your awareness is expanded, and you are effortlessly taking in the fact that the traffic is backed up behind you, a car is driving very fast towards you, or someone is sitting on their horn and maybe triggering some irritation in you; the kids in the back need to be asked to sit still; the air in the car is too hot, too cold; you're a little tense because you have an important meeting coming up – and so on. And at that blocked intersection at rush hour when people have been known to leap out of their cars and shoot people? Road rage can spark off murder or migraine. Instead of resorting to either, if you are stuck in traffic, try gibberish. All you do is start speaking nonsense sounds – out loud, (or under your breath if you are concerned someone might hear you and think you are certifiable!) Just let any meaningless sound come out: it's a verbal release, and will release any pent up energy that is threatening to explode.

**Q:** Do you feel that meditation and relaxation are the same thing?

**M:** As I have said earlier, I understand meditation to be a state of relaxed awareness. So yes, it is relaxation plus. Usually when we relax we either go unconscious – falling asleep in front of the TV for example or sunbathing – or go on automatic pilot, when we space out and are not present. Meditation brings together what seem to be like polar opposites – complete "let go" and absolute, effortless presence or awareness. The method of "Tuning into the Moment" for example, is to help you relax consciously into the space inside in which meditation is more likely to happen.

**Q:** Do you find it important to change techniques to keep the experience of meditation fresh?

**M:** Not these days. Apart from an evening dancing and listening meditation using Osho's discourse tapes, my "technique" is to incorporate my awareness into whatever I am doing. The "freshness" comes with every new challenge that each day brings!

**Q:** Has meditation become easier for you over the years?

**M:** Yes, I am able to say that I am less identified with my bodymind – with mental, physical and emotional changes – these days.

An important key for me was understanding not to become inimical to the mind, but to see, as I have said earlier, that its nature is to think and I cannot stop that; nor do I need to. I am grateful that I have a fairly active, sharp mind. But I have come to see its shortcomings. I am more able to see "Okay, that's my mind being negative, pessimistic, critical etc. etc.-but I am not going to get caught up in it." This feels like a very significant, perhaps THE most significant, tool. In addition, the states of silence and stillness, the times of more-than-happiness, of what I can only call "isness" or simply being, that meditation has yielded, are immeasurably precious.

**Q:** You have been directly involved with the enlightened mystic Osho when he developed his meditation methods. What was it like to be part of his laboratory?

**M:** Amazing! I guess by nature I love to experiment, and to be involved on a one-to-one basis with a mystic's experimentation with meditation was a rare and unique privilege. Perhaps it was that experience which has instilled in me a special love for playing with different techniques, writing and talking about them and running meditation groups.

That, in addition to seeing consciousness made manifest in one man. I was lucky enough to sit literally by Osho's side for six years, night after night, in his meetings with thousands and thousands of seekers of different ages from around the world. In all that time, in private meetings, and over the entire 16 years I knew him, I only ever experienced in Osho someone who was totally graceful and harmonious in all he did and said, who was imbued with a clarity, love and compassion, a joy and light-heartedness that I had never known before and have not seen the like of since.

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