

Mindful Misunderstandings

“Meditation is a technique I’m learning to help me to relax”

It’s more of a *practice* than a technique. As we practice, we do become calm and relaxed, but this is mainly a by-product of paying attention Mindfully to all our thoughts feelings and sensations.

It’s just a practice for becoming more aware.

“I don’t have any thoughts when I meditate - my mind’s a blank”

Even knowing you have a blank mind is a thought!

“When I meditate, I can’t stop my mind from wandering”

Nor can anyone – it’s what minds do. They have to stay busy and vigilant so that they can take care of us and protect us from threat and danger.

“I’ve got to try harder to get this meditation right”

Sometimes the more we try to control things, the harder they get. Maybe there is nothing to get right – just to practice being more aware is enough.

“When I meditate, I’m not sure I’m getting the right effect”

We’re not aiming to achieve any state or effect, to make our mind do anything or go blank, we’re just calmly observing so that we can be more aware and more present.

“I just feel like falling asleep when I meditate”

That may be because you meditate at the wrong time of day,
or that you need to get more sleep.

Or maybe you’re not allowing yourself to pay attention in each moment.

“When I meditate, I like some experiences more than others”

It seems that you're still attached to preferences. You need to practice so that you can see and let go of preferences and judgments.

“I meditate and really try hard to solve my problems”

We practice Mindful meditation to get used to the idea of non-doing.

We learn to see our problems as just passing mental events.

Just thoughts, just feelings and just sensations.

No need to try to solve, fix or operate on anything at all.

Most things fix themselves in their own way and time,
if we don't try so hard in the set and habitual ways we have.

“Meditation is a form of prayer - a devotion based on religion”

It can be, if you want to make it part of your religious practice, but it doesn't have to be.

Meditation is about paying attention

to the present moment and learning as best you can,

to spend more of your time in that place. The present moment is where life is.

“I can see stuff in meditation, but I can't let it go”

Seeing everything as an observer is the first step - practicing looking and bringing yourself back to the present moment – you need to do that before you can let stuff go.

“I don't know how to get insight by meditating”

This is one of the paradoxes of meditation, insight comes from just

staying focused on one simple theme, word or image,

and by keeping calmly returning to it without trying to achieve anything at all,
then gradually solutions and/or choices will often unfold.