

When Then Zen

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¹<https://write.as/excerpts/maybe>

²<https://write.as/excerpts/ebbs-and-flows>

³<https://write.as/excerpts/natural-selection>

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Meditation is something that is very easy to experience but very difficult to explain in any way that is understandable. Historically, things that man could not explain on his own get attributed to gods. As such, religious texts that describe meditation can be very difficult to understand without context in the religion in question.

I would like to change this and make meditation more accessible. As such, I have created the *When Then Zen*¹ project. This project aims to divorce meditation methods from the context of their spirituality and distill them down into what the steps to the process are.

A better way to teach meditation

At a high level, meditation is the act of practicing the separation of action and reaction and then coming back when you get distracted. A lot of the meditation methods that people have been publishing over the years are the equivalent of what works for them on their PC (tm), and as such things are generally described using whatever comparators the author of the meditation guide is comfortable with. This can lead to confusion.

The way I am teaching meditation is simple: teach the method and have people do it and see what happens. I've decided to teach methods using Gherkin². Gherkin can be kind of strange to read

¹<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen>

²<https://docs.cucumber.io/gherkin/>

if you are not used to it, so consider the game of baseball, specifically the act of the batter hitting a home run.

Feature: home run

Scenario: home run

As a batter

In order to hit a home run

Given the pitcher has thrown the ball

When I swing

Then I hit the ball out of the park

As shown above, a Gherkin scenario clearly identifies who the feature is affecting, what actions they take and what things should happen to them as a result of them taking those actions. This translates very well when trying to explain some of the finer points of meditation, EG:

```
# from when then zen's metta feature
```

```
Scenario: Nature Walking
```

```
# this is optional
```

```
# but it helps when you're starting
```

```
# physical fitness
```

```
As a meditator
```

```
In order to help me connect with the environment
```

```
Given a short route to walk on
```

```
When I walk down the route
```

```
Then I should relax and enjoy the scenery
```

```
And feel the sensations of the world around me
```

Philosophy

At a high level, I want to not only have the When then Zen project be an approachable introduction to meditation and other similar kinds of topics. I want there to be a more “normal person” friendly way to get into topics that I feel are vital for people to have at their disposal. I understand that terminology can make things more confusing than it can clarify things.

So I remove a lot of the terminology except for the terms that help clarify things, or are incredibly googleable. Any terms that are left over are used in one of a few ways:

1. Not leaving that term in would result in awkward back-references to the concept
2. The term is similarly pronounced in English

3. The term is very googleable, and things you find in searching will “make sense”

Some concepts are pulled in from various documents and ideas in a slightly kasmakfa³ manner, but overall the most “confusing” thing to new readers is going to be related to this comment in the anapana⁴ feature:

Note: “the body” means the sack of meat and bone that you are currently living inside. For the purposes of explanation of this technique, please consider what makes you yourself separate from the body you live in.

You are not your thoughts. Your thoughts are something you can witness⁵. You are not required to give your thoughts any attention they don’t need. Try not immediately associating yourself with a few “negative” thoughts when they come up next. Try digging through the chains of meaning to understand why they are “negative” and if that end result is actually truly what you want to align yourself with.

If you don’t want to associate yourself with those thoughts, ideas or whatever you don’t have to. My best advice to you is to just let things happen and see what it’s like. If something happens that you don’t like, banish it from your presence and it will go away.

Expectations

At some level, I realize that by doing this I am violating some of the finer points behind the ultimate higher level reasons *why* meditation has been taught this way for so long. Things are explained the way they are as a result of the refinement of thousands of years of confused students and sub-par teachers. A lot of it got so ingrained in the culture that the actions themselves can be confused with the culture.

I do not plan to set too many expectations for what people will experience. When possible, I tell people to avoid having “spiritual experiences”⁶.

³<https://write.as/excerpts/practical-kasmakfa>

⁴<https://christine.website/blog/when-then-zen-anapana-2018-08-15>

⁵<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen/blob/master/bonus/noting.feature>

⁶<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen/blob/master/bonus/quantum-pause.feature#L12-L16>

Other Topics I Want to Cover

The following is an unordered and unsorted brain-dump of the topics I want to cover in the future:

- Yoga
- Social versions of most of the other meditations
- Thunderous Silence
- The Neutral Heart⁷
- The finer points of leading meditation groups

I also want to create a website⁸ and eventually some kind of eBook for these articles. I feel these articles are important and that having some kind of collected reference for them would be convenient as heck.

As always, I'm open to feedback and suggestions about this project. See its associated GitHub repo⁹ for more information.

Thank you for reading and be well. I can only hope that this information will be useful.

⁷<https://write.as/excerpts/the-neutral-heart>

⁸<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen/issues/2>

⁹<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen>

Chapter 2

Terms

As the `When Then Zen` project attempts to extract techniques out of esoteric sources

In order to make these accessible to people who don't subscribe to metaphysical views

Given an open mind and a willingness to learn

And the willingness to try things that may lead you out of your comfort zone

When you read the features in this repository

Then this document contains terms and plain English definitions.

This project aims to target the average software developer, and as such terms such as `stateful` and `side effects` will be used.

Meditation

Meditation is some action that improves state of being somehow, be it by a specific kind of relaxation method or other generic work to improve well being. There are many different methods of meditation, some of them are explained in ways that are clearer or less clearer for outsiders to understand.

This definition is incredibly vague, but intentionally so. This is because meditation itself is kind of a nebulous concept. This project intends to remove a lot of the barriers to understanding meditation methods, but every person will end up creating their own method based on parts of others combined.

Side Effects

Side effects are the events that happen as a result of state-changing actions in programs. An example of a side effect is printing data to the standard out file descriptor.

State

State is effectively equivalent to human memory in the context of computer programs. An example JavaScript program that manages state follows:

```
// number is set to zero
let number = 0;

// number is incremented to one
number = number + 1;

// prints `1`
console.log(number);
```

The variable named `number` is the state of this code.

The Body

The body refers to the body that you, the reader, are currently living inside. This guide to meditation takes the stance that a person has some kind of inner core essence of some kind (of which is largely irrelevant for the explanation of the majority of the techniques in this repository, any features that actually do benefit from those metaphors to explain the technique will have the metaphor and a detailed explanation as to what the metaphor is signifying and how to understand it).

This helps when explaining anapana meditation among other things, referring to the body in the third person sets a sort of “soft” expectation that something else is controlling the breathing. The thing that is controlling the breathing (likely your subconscious) doesn’t matter, just the fact that **SOMETHING** is.

Chapter 3

Anapana

Introduction

Anapanasati (Pali: Sanskrit: anapanasmṛti, English: mindfulness of breathing) is a form of meditation originally taught by Gautama Buddha in several places, mainly the Anapanasati Sutta (English: passages). Anapana is practiced globally by meditators of all skill levels.

Simply put, anapana is the act of focusing on the sensations of breath in the body's nasal cavity and nostrils. Some practices will focus on the sensations in the belly instead (this is why there's fat buddha statues), but personally I find that the sensations of breath in the nostrils are a lot easier to focus on.

The method presented in this article is based on the method taught in *The Art Of Living* by William Hart and S.N. Goenka. If you want a copy of this book you can get one here¹. Please do keep in mind that this book definitely leans towards the Buddhist lens and as it is presented the teaching methods really benefit from it. Also keep in mind that this PDF prevents copying and duplication.

Note: "the body" means the sack of meat and bone that you are currently living inside. For the purposes of explanation of this technique, please consider what makes you yourself separate from the body you live in.

¹<http://www.cicp.org.kh/userfiles/file/Publications/Art%20of%20Living%20in%20English.pdf>

Background Assumptions of Reader

Given no assumption about meditation background
 And a willingness to learn
 And no significant problems with breathing through
 the body's nose
 And the body is seated or laying down comfortably
 And no music is playing

Given no assumption about meditation background

The When Then Zen project aims to describe the finer points of meditative concepts in plain English. As such, we start assuming just about nothing and build fractally on top of concepts derived from common or plain English usage of the terms. Some of these techniques may be easier for people with a more intensive meditative background, but try things and see what works best for you. Meditation in general works a lot better when you have a curious and playful attitude about figuring things out.

I'm not perfect. I don't know what will work best for you. A lot of this is documenting both my practice and what parts of what books helped me "get it". If this works for you, please let me know². If this doesn't work for you, please let me know³. I will use this information for making direct improvements to these documents.

As for your practice, twist the rules into circles and scrape out the parts that don't work if it helps you. Find out how to integrate it into your life in the best manner and go with it.

For now, we start from square one.

And a willingness to learn

At some level, you are going to need to be willing to actually walk the path⁴. This can be scary, but that's okay as long as you're willing to acknowledge it and not let it control you.

If you run into some dark stuff doing this, please consult a therapist as usual. Just know that you don't walk this path alone, even when it feels like you must be.

²<https://christine.website/contact>

³<https://christine.website/contact>

⁴<https://write.as/mya249cn84nosg9r>

And no significant problems with breathing through the body's nose

Given that we are going to be mainly focusing on the nasal reactions to breathing, that path being obstructed is not gonna result in a very good time. If this is obstructed for you, attempt to clear it up, or just use the mouth, or a different technique entirely. It's okay for anapana to not always work. It's not a universal hammer.

And the body is seated or laying down comfortably

Some people will assert that the correct pose or posture is critical for this, but it's ultimately only as important as the meditator believes it is. Some people have gotten the association somehow that the meditation posture helps with things. Ultimately, it's suggested to start meditation sitting upright or in a chair as it can be easier for you to fall asleep while doing meditative practice for the first few times. This is a side effect of the brain not being used to the alternative state of consciousness, so it falls back on the "default" action; this puts the body, and you, to sleep.

And no music is playing

You should break this rule as soon as possible to know if it's best to ignore it. Some people find music helps; I find it can be a distraction depending on the music track in question. Some meditation sessions will need background music and some won't. That's okay.

Scenario: Mindfulness of Breathing

As a meditator

In order to be mindful of the body's breath

When I inhale or exhale through the body's nose

Then I focus on the sensations of breath

Then I focus on the feelings of breath through the nasal cavity

Then I focus on the feelings of breath interacting with the nostrils

Then I repeat until done

As a meditator

This is for you to help understand a process you do internally, to yourself.

In order to be mindful of the body's breath

It is useful in the practice to state the goal of the session when leading into it. You can use something like "I am doing this mindfulness of breathing for the benefit of myself" or replace it with any other affirmation as you see fit.

When I inhale or exhale through the body's nose

You can use the mouth for this. Doing it all via the mouth requires the mouth to stay open (which can result in dry mouth) or constantly move (which some people find makes it harder to get into flow). Nasal breaths allow for you to sit there motionless yet still continue breathing like nothing happened. If this doesn't work for you, breathe through your mouth.

Then I focus on the sensations of breath

There are a lot of very subtle sensations related to breathing that people don't take the time to truly appreciate or understand. These are mostly fleeting sensations, thankfully, so you really have to feel into them, listen for them or whatever satisfies your explanation craving.

Listen in to the feeling of the little part of cartilage between nostrils whistling slightly as you breathe all the way in at a constant rate over three seconds. It's a very very subtle sound, but once you find it you know it.

Then I focus on the feelings of breath through the nasal cavity

The sound of breath echoes slightly through the nasal cavity during all phases of it that have air moving. Try and see if you can feel these echoes separate from the whistling of the cartilage; bonus points if you can do both at the same time. Feel the air as it passes parts of the nasal cavity as your sinuses gently warm it up.

Then I focus on the feelings of breath interacting with the nostrils

The nostrils act as a curious kind of rate limiter for how much we can breathe in and out at once. Breathe in harder and they contract. Breathe out harder and they expand. With some noticing, you can easily feel almost the exact angle at which your nostrils are bent due to your breathing, even though you can't see them directly due to the fact they are out of focus of our line of sight.

Isn't it fascinating how many little sensations of the body exist that we continuously ignore?

Scenario: Attention Drifts Away From Mindfulness of Breathing

As a meditator

In order to bring my attention back to the sensations of breathing

Given I am currently mindful of the body's breath

When my attention drifts away from the sensations of breathing

Then I bring my attention back to the sensations of breathing

In order to bring my attention back to the sensations of breathing

When this happens, it is going to feel very tempting to just give up and quit. This is normal. Fear makes you worry you're doing it wrong, so out of respect of the skill you may want to just "not try until later".

Don't. This is a doubt that means something *has been happening*. Doubt is a sick kind of indicator that something is going on at a low level that would cause the vague feelings of doubt to surface. When it's related to meditative topics, that usually means you're on the right track. This is why you should try and break through that doubt even harder if you can. Sometimes you can't, and that's okay too.

Given I am currently mindful of the body's breath

This is your usual scenario during the mindfulness practice. You will likely come to deeply appreciate it.

When my attention drifts away from the sensations of breathing

One of the biggest problems I have had personally is knowing when I have strayed from the path of the meditation, it was hard for a time to keep myself in the deep trance of meditation and keeping detached awareness of my thoughts. My thoughts are very active a lot of the time. There are a lot of distractions, yet it's hard to maintain focus on them sometimes.

One of the biggest changes I have made that has helped this has been to have a dedicated "meditation spot". As much as possible, I try to do meditative work while in that spot instead of my main office or bed. This solidifies the habit, and grows the association between the spot and meditative states.

Then I bring my attention back to the sensations of breathing

This, right here, is the true core of this exercise. The sensations of breathing are really just something to distract yourself with. It's a fairly calming thing anyways, but at some level it's really just a distraction. It's a fairly predictable set of outputs and inputs. Some sessions will feel brand new, some will feel like old news.

Meditation is sitting there only letting yourself think if you truly let yourself. Mindfulness is putting yourself back on track, into alignment, etc., over and over until it happens on its own. If you get distracted once every 30 seconds for a 5 minute session, you will have brought yourself back to focus ten times. Each time you bring yourself back to focus is a joy to feel at some level.

Scenario: mindfulness of unconscious breathing

As a meditator

In order to practice anapana without breathing manually

When I stop breathing manually

Then the body will start breathing for me after a moment or two

Then I continue mindfulness of the sensations of breathing without controlling the breath

In order to practice anapana without breathing manually

While observing the body's unconscious breath, you start entering into what meditation people call the "observer stance". It is this sort of neutral feeling where things are just happening, and you just see what happens. There is usually a feeling of peacefulness or equanimity for me, but usually when I start doing this I radiate feelings of compassion, understanding and valor.

Keep in mind that doing this may have some interesting reactions, just let them pass like all the others.

When I stop breathing manually

You gotta literally just cut off breath. It needs to stop. You have to literally stop breathing and refuse to until the body takes over and yanks the controls away from you.

Then the body will start breathing for me after a moment or two

There's a definite shift when the body takes over. It will sharply inhale, hold for a moment and then calmly exhale. Then it will breathe very quietly only as needed.

Then I continue mindfulness of the sensations of breathing without controlling the breath

The body does not breathe very intensely. It will breathe calmly and slowly, unless another breathing style is mandatory. The insides of the nostrils moving from the air pressure is a still a noticeable sensation of breathing while the body is doing it near silently, so you can hang onto that.

Scenario Outline: meditation session

As a meditator
In order to meditate for \$time
Given a timer of some kind is open
And the time is set for \$time
When I start the timer
Then I clear my head of idle thoughts
Then I start drifting my attention towards the sensations of breathing
Then I become mindful of the sensations of breathing
Then I continue for a moment or two
Then I shift into mindfulness of unconscious breathing

\$time can be, say, five minutes to start out.

In order to meditate for \$time

The time is intentionally left as a variable so you can decide what session time length to use. If you need help deciding how long to pick, you can always try tapering upwards⁵ over the course of a month. I find that tapering upwards helps A LOT.

Given a timer of some kind is open

One of the old-fashioned kitchen timers will do even.

And the time is set for \$time

You need to know how to use your timer of choice for this, or someone can do it for you.

When I start the timer

Just start it and don't focus on the things you're already thinking about. You're allowed to leave the world behind for the duration of the session.

⁵<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen/blob/master/skills/tapering-upward.md>

Then I clear my head of idle thoughts

If you're having trouble doing this, it may be helpful to figure out why those thoughts are lingering. Eventually, addressing the root cause helps a lot.

Then I start drifting my attention towards the sensations of breathing

Punt on this if it doesn't help you. I find it helps me to drift into focusing on the breath instead of starting laser-focused on it.

Then I become mindful of the sensations of breathing

Focus around the nostrils if you lose your "grip" on the feelings.

Then I continue for a moment or two

You'll know how much time is right by feel. Please study this educational video⁶ for detail on the technique.

Then I shift into mindfulness of unconscious breathing

The body is naturally able to breathe for you. You don't need to manually breathe during meditation. Not having to manually breathe means that your attention can focus on passively, neutrally observing the sensations of breath.

Further Reading

This is all material that I have found useful while running into "problems" (there aren't actually any good or bad things, only labels, but that's a topic for another day) while learning or teaching anapana meditation or the concepts of it. All of these articles have been linked in the topic, save three I want to talk about specially.

- To Walk on the Path⁷

⁶https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCC_b5WHLX0

⁷<https://write.as/mya249cn84nosg9r>

- Tapering Upward⁸
- Listen To Your Heart - Roxette⁹
- Maybe¹⁰
- Ebbs and Flows¹¹
- Natural Selection¹²

Maybe¹³

This is an old Zen tale. The trick is that the farmer doesn't have any emotional attachment to the things that are happening to him, so he is neither labeling things happy nor labeling things sad. He is not stopped by his emotions.

Ebbs and Flows¹⁴

This touches into the true "point" of meditation. The point isn't to just breathe. The point is to focus on the breathing so much that everything else stills to make room. Then what happens, does. The Alan Watts lectures are fascinating stuff. Please do give at least one a watch. You'll know which one is the right one for you.

Natural Selection¹⁵

This is excerpted from almost the beginning of the book *Why Buddhism is True*. Robert Wright really just hit the nail on the head when describing the level of craziness that simply exists. Natural selection means that, effectively, whatever causes populations to be able to breed and survive the most means the traits of those doing the most breeding become more common. Please read the entire book.

⁸<https://github.com/Xe/when-then-zen/blob/master/skills/tapering-upward.feature>

⁹https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCC_b5WHLX0

¹⁰<https://write.as/excerpts/maybe>

¹¹<https://write.as/excerpts/ebbs-and-flows>

¹²<https://write.as/excerpts/natural-selection>

¹³<https://write.as/excerpts/maybe>

¹⁴<https://write.as/excerpts/ebbs-and-flows>

¹⁵<https://write.as/excerpts/natural-selection>

Chapter 4

Feature: Loving-kindness (Metta) Meditation

Metta is a loving-kindness form of compassion meditation. There are many ways to perform it, but this feature currently focuses on a chanting understanding method. At a high level a lot of the “magic” will boil down to the four following mantras:

1. May I/they be safe
2. May I/they be healthy
3. May I/they be at peace
4. May I/they be happy

The trick to speaking them out correctly is to not only to say them out loud, but to break them apart into what they mean as they are spoken. Effectively, you have to understand that you are truly wishing for that person to be free from that burden or that they will take care of themselves.

If you start to run into issues as you work out this, it is maybe a sign that you should forgive the person who you are having trouble giving metta to. Even if that person is yourself. Generally as you are starting out it is best to choose people you consider loveable as targets for metta.

The method in this feature is based on metta as described in http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/allmetta.pdf This book HEAVILY slants into the Buddhist lens. If you read it, please be prepared to scrape out the wisdom from its casing.

The term “enforce” as used in this feature is a bit of a macro for doing the following things to a mantra:

- speaking it aloud
- breaking apart the ideas into the concepts
- agreeing and accepting them into your heart

Background:

Given no assumption about meditation background
And a willingness to learn
And I am seated or laying down comfortably

Scenario: Nature Walking

As a meditator
In order to help me connect with the environment
Given a short route to walk on
When I walk down the route
Then I should relax and enjoy the scenery
And feel the sensations of the world around me

This is optional
but it helps when you're starting
physical fitness.

Scenario: Giving Metta to Yourself

As a meditator
In order to give metta to others, I must first give it to myself
Given envisioning yourself in your head
And a five minute alarm
When you start to give yourself metta
Then enforce the mantra “May I be safe”
Then enforce the mantra “May I be healthy”
Then enforce the mantra “May I be at peace”
Then enforce the mantra “May I be happy”
And let this metta radiate out of you
Then repeat until the alarm goes off

Adjust any numbers as needed, of course; these numbers are suggestions.

SCENARIO: NEGATIVE HARMONIC AFFIRMATIONS FOR METTA MANTRAS TO SELF

This is done for three basic reasons:

1. Setting yourself right. You can't love others if you can't love yourself
2. Understanding metta. You can't understand giving metta if you never experience it for yourself
3. It's a good warmup for loving others

Scenario: Negative Harmonic Affirmations for Metta Mantras to Self

As a meditator

In order to figuratively increase perception of metta

When you start to give yourself metta

Then enforce the mantra "May I be safe"

And empty your thoughts of compassion for yourself

Then enforce the mantra "May I be healthy"

And empty your mind of friendliness for yourself

Then enforce the mantra "May I be at peace"

And empty your heart of empathy for yourself

Then enforce the mantra "May I be happy"

And let this metta radiate out of you

This is optional, I find it helpful on really bad days. The general idea is that your mind should be filled with the opposite of what the mantra suggests. IE: danger -> compassion, mental suffering -> friendliness, etc. The difference between what is spoken, felt and thought serves as a harmony of sorts. It can be very powerful.

Scenario: Giving Metta to Someone Else

As a meditator
In order to give metta to someone else
Given envisioning that person in your head
And aspects about them
And a ten minute alarm
When you start to give them metta
Then enforce the mantra "May they be safe"
Then enforce the mantra "May they be healthy"
Then enforce the mantra "May they be at peace"
Then enforce the mantra "May they be happy"
And let this metta radiate out of you
Then repeat until the alarm goes off

Increase the session length with practice.

Scenario: Affirmations for Metta Mantras to Others

As a meditator
In order to figuratively increase perception of metta
When you start to give them metta
Then enforce the mantra "May they be safe"
And fill your thoughts with compassion for them
Then enforce the mantra "May they be healthy"
And fill your mind with friendliness for them
Then enforce the mantra "May they be at peace"
And fill your heart with empathy for them
Then enforce the mantra "May they be happy"
And let this metta radiate out of you

Scenario: Giving Metta to All Beings

As a meditator

In order to give metta to all beings

Given envisioning all beings

And aspects about them

And a ten minute alarm

When you start to give them metta

Then enforce the mantra "May all beings be safe"

Then enforce the mantra "May all beings be healthy"

Then enforce the mantra "May all beings be at peace"

Then enforce the mantra "May all beings be happy"

And let this metta radiate out of you

Then repeat until the alarm goes off

Increase the session length with practice.

Chapter 5

Feature: Noting

Noting is a meditative practice where you give names or labels to the feelings or sensations without other comment. It is something that is very easy to know, but can take a few times trying it to really understand it.

This practice is well-known to Buddhists, where it has some other name, but I'm calling this practice noting because I feel like the name in its original Pali would be too much of a distracting buzzword. It is also known as satipatana.

When you are noting something, try and reduce it to the most vague label you can. If you hear a sound, note hearing. If you feel thoughts, note thinking. Don't judge any thoughts that come up, you are probably used to having idle thought from the so-called "monkey mind". Practices like this have been known to aggravate peoples "monkey minds", so forgive any feelings of frustration or anger that may pop up. It's just an adjustment, like anything else.

Definitely start with basic sensory noting before jumping into the free noting. You'll know when it's time.

If you want to read more, look here: <https://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/articles/articles/mental-noting/>

Background:

Given no assumption about meditative background
And a willingness to learn

And I am seated comfortably
 And no music is playing

Scenario Outline: basic sensory noting

As a meditator
 In order to be mindful of the basic sensory sensations
 that arise
 When I notice input from the body's \$sense
 Then I will note \$sense mentally or aloud
 Then I let it pass
 Then I repeat until done

Examples:

sense

hearing
 seeing
 thinking
 smelling
 tasting
 touching

Scenario: free noting

As a meditator
 In order to be mindful of any sensations that arise
 When I notice something happen
 Then I note it mentally or aloud
 Then I let it pass
 Then I repeat until done

Scenario Outline: meditation session

As a meditator
 In order to meditate for \$time
 Given the Clock app is open on a phone or tablet
 And the timer function is open
 And the time is set for \$time
 When I start the timer

Then I clear my head of idle thoughts
Then I start drifting my attention towards noting the
sensations that arise
Then I become mindful of the sensations that arise
Then I note the sensations
If I get distracted
Then I turn my attention back to the meditation

Examples:

time

five minutes

Chapter 6

Feature: The Quantum Pause

The Quantum Pause is a meditative technique that serves as a very convenient tool for reaching a special space of neutrality and intention from which you can work on whatever you'd like internally. It is designed to reach a space of contact with your inmost self, allowing you to work through situations by their wisdom, and reinforcing their presence in the life of the individual.

A longer introduction to this process is here¹

At a high level this is metta mixed with box breathing mixed with mindfulness.

The purpose of this exercise is not to leave the body, have a “spiritual” experience, or even to conjure any “positive” experience when you are finished. It is not designed to create an experience of your mind or give you visualizations of another world. If you feel, sense or experience anything that is unrelated to your purpose: gently, but firmly remove it.

Some people may find that the pause after the out-breath causes a sense of panic. If you feel this happen, pause for a shorter amount of time. I have found this works best when you breathe ALL the way in (until you can't) and ALL the way out (until you can't). Play around with the process.

As used in this feature, the I AM is the feeling of being infinite

¹<http://wespenre.com/pdf/Appendix-cognitive-section-quantum-pause-breathing-exercise.pdf>

and sovereign. The WE ARE is the feeling of connectedness, wholeness, equality, and integration of all other beings and life. These are optional, but I have found they help immensely.

Background:

Given no background in meditation
 And a willingness to learn
 And no immediate problems breathing through the
 body's nose
 And I am seated or laying down comfortably
 And no music is playing

Scenario Outline: declarative purpose

As a meditator
 In order to start this process
 When I have a purpose in mind
 Then I declare it aloud, saying “\$intent”.

tl;dr: declare your intent before the first breath

Examples:

intent

I am doing this for the whole of humanity.
 I am doing this for myself.
 I am doing this for my friends.
 I am doing this for my family.
 I am doing this for the readers of this article.

Scenario: breathing cycle

As a meditator
 In order to bring myself into the Now
 When I begin
 Then I breathe in through the body's nose until I cannot
 anymore
 Then I pause for a moment
 Then I exhale through the body's mouth until I cannot

anymore
Then I pause for a moment
Then I continue for two to four measures

Avoid the temptation to visualize, think or feel anything. Just let it happen without comment. The first pause is known as the I AM and the second is known as the WE ARE. Continue for as long as your gut says.

Scenario Outline: consolidation

As a meditator In order to consolidate things
When I notice things bubble up
Then I take a fresh look at them
And decide what I want to do with them
Then I perform \$action
Then I repeat this for a few minutes
Then I use my intuition to guide

Again the numbers are not hard; please play with them and see what works best for you.

Examples:

action

simple awareness and acceptance
loving-kindness (metta)
conflict resolution techniques
appreciation
compassion
forgiveness
humility
valor
understanding

Scenario: meditation session

As a meditator
In order to perform a Quantum Pause session
Given I have a comfortable space
And I have some time to myself
Then I start with the declarative purpose

Then I do 2-4 measures of the breathing cycle
Then I consolidate
Then I repeat the breathing cycle and consolidation a
few times
Then I thank the session for happening
Then I end it

Chapter 7

Feature: Void Meditation

Void meditation is what is known as “stilling the mind”. This practice helps enable you to learn how to control your thoughts instead of your thoughts controlling you.

The overall goal of this is to turn off all of your thoughts at once and envelop yourself in the here and now. You get your mind to be completely still for a set amount of time.

In the beginning, this will feel extremely difficult but with time it will become easier and easier, as your “monkey mind” will fill your head with idle thoughts within a millisecond of you trying to calm it entirely. This is normal and should be somewhat expected. It is okay to fail while you are getting the hang of it, you aren’t used to quieting your mind like this and it is a bit of a significant difference.

This method of meditation can make you fall asleep if you are tired. Please don’t use this method while tired unless you are okay with the possibility of falling asleep during meditation.

This method is based on a method handed around occult practice IRC channels and is adapted from this pastebin link¹.

Please note that the pastebin link is written in more of an occult/magickal lens and as such will use in-lens terminology.

¹<https://pastebin.com/7JCfUJKZ>

Background:

Given I am alert
 And fully awake
 And I am not under the influence of any substances
 And no assumption about my meditative background

Scenario Outline: Relaxation

As a meditator
 In order to relax
 Given I can breathe without any issues
 When I do \$action
 Then I do this for a count of \$count
 Then I feel just that little bit more relaxed
 Then I continue

Examples:

action	count
breathe in	six
hold my breath	six
exhale	six

It is okay if you need to change the count for any reason, I that six is what works for me. Make sure the counts are uniform. If you feel uncomfortable while doing this technique, please stop and continue later.

Scenario: Focus on the here and now

As a meditator
 In order to focus on the here and now
 Given I am relaxed
 And I have a time limit in mind
 And I have set a timer of some kind for that limit
 When I focus on the here and now
 Then I completely blank my mind until the time limit is up
 But if my focus strays away from the here and now

Then I pull myself back to the here and now

This part is the part that is kind of hard to describe, but effectively you need to root yourself so deeply into the current moment and nothing else. This is only as difficult as you believe it is, and as such gets easier with practice.

Chapter 8

Feature: Social Breath Counting

This feature contains social breath counting exercises that have been tried and proven in small (2-3) and large (6-8) groups. If in a larger group, be sure to increase the count cap to a larger number, keep it less than 15 to help avoid the numbers popping out of people's short-term memory (this can be waived depending on the group, practice will give you the context you need to understand this the best).

Background:

Given no assumption about meditation background
for any participant
And an open mind
And a willingness to learn

Scenario: 10 Minute Social Breath Counting (participant)

As a participant
In order to be mindful of the body's breath
Given I maintain a counter of breaths
And I take a nice, peaceful breath in at my own pace
When I exhale, at the end of the exhale

Then I increment the counter and speak the newly updated value
But if someone else speaks at the same time
Then I continue as if nothing happened
But I don't increment the counter
Then if the counter hits ten, the next number is one
Then repeat until the organizer ends the session

Scenario: 10 Minute Social Breath Counting (organizer)

As an organizer
In order to help facilitate the participant's breath counting
Given I set a timer for ten minutes somehow
And I start it when everyone is ready
And I start the process of counting breaths
When something interferes and people get out of flow
Then I will help guide the group back into mindfulness
When the timer goes off
Then I will silence it ASAP
Then I will help lead the group to the next count of 10
Then I will end the session
Then I will talk with the participants about their meditative path
But I will not judge their stories

Chapter 9

Feature: Social Noting

Noting of sensations is a very meditatively relaxing thing to do. At a high level it is very simple. Everyone continuously pays attention to the sensations they experience, and when it is their turn they say out loud what the sensation is.

Early on in the process, it is useful to limit descriptions to the six senses:

- Touch
- Taste
- Sight
- Sound
- Scent
- Thought

After people have gotten used to the act of noting things socially, you can open this up for more detailed descriptions. If you are sensing touch from a laptop, it could be noted as metal or smooth.

After each social noting session, talk with the participants about what they felt, what helped them get into flow and what brought them out of flow. The facilitator should make sure everyone who wants to say something gets to say it.

Repeat the five minute noting session and debrief twice in a session.

Scenario: Positive Intent

As a facilitator
 In order to establish the positive intent of this session
 Given a rough idea of the group you are leading for
 When you establish the positive intent
 Then you target the group with it
 And let your positive intent guide the session

This is as simple as saying out loud or in mindvoice “With this group meditation session, I intend to help the group understand themselves” or similar. Adjust as needed based on the topicality of the group in question and the context of the world that day in general.

In a pinch just target them with metta.

Scenario: Brief

As a facilitator
 In order to help the group prepare for the meditation
 When I am explaining this exercise
 Then I will go over part of the instructions above
 But make sure everyone understands what to do

Scenario: Five minute social noting (mediator)

As a meditator
 In order to note sensations as a group
 Given the timer has started
 When it is my turn
 Then I sense sensations
 And I note the sensation I am experiencing
 But if I can't give a word to it I pass
 And it goes to the next person in order

Scenario: Five minute social noting (facilitator)

As a facilitator
 In order to help the group note sensations

Given everyone is ready
And I have established an order
And a timer is set for five minutes
When I start the timer
Then I sense for sensations
And I note the sensation
And the next person continues

Scenario: Debrief (meditator)

As a meditator
In order to help the group understand the session
Given questions or experiences to report
When it is my turn
Then I ask my question or relay my experiences
And I help answer others questions when I can
experiences when meditating are subjective, man
But I don't judge
And I don't interrupt

Scenario: Debrief (facilitator)

As a facilitator
In order to help the group understand the session
Given an order of people to ask
When you ask someone
Then you wait for them to reply
And tell us about their experiences
And if you have any insight that may help
Then you share it freely

Chapter 10

Paracosm Immersion

A paracosm (also known as a mental wonderland) is a kind of thoughtspace that you can create, control and immerse yourself into. It is a lot less hard to create and immerse yourself into than people expect, almost deceptively so.

The method explained in this document is roughly based on literal philosophical metaphysical analysis¹, or in simpler terms: to answer the following two questions with as much detail and as generally as possible.

1. What is *there*?
2. What is *it like*?

The method used here is a combination of a sensory grounding technique and something I found to help mitigate feelings of aphasia. The parts of this technique can be thusly taken out of the context of this exercise and used to either help you ground yourself or for helping you feel like you can visualize and experience things better.

It's really not hard unless you make it hard. Make it easy and it will be trivial. I have been noting my progress here: <https://write.as/ma-insa/>

If you want to read more on the topic, look here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paracosm>
This subreddit may also be useful: <https://www.reddit.com/r/paracosms/>

If you want to view paradise
Simply look around and view it
Anything you want to, do it

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics>

Want to change the world?
There's nothing to it

- Pure Imagination: <https://youtu.be/SVi3-PrQOpY>

Background

Given you have a mental world in mind
Or an image of what you would like to experience
Or even just a simple idea
And are willing to let the sensations of that world over-
whelm you
And have some time to yourself
And you have some writing device

Feel free to punt on the last part if it's distracting

Scenario: Picking Somewhere in the Space

As a visitor of that world
In order to get an idea of where you want to go
When you pick a place
Then keep it in mind as you go forward

Scenario: Grounding

As a visitor of that world in the location you picked
In order to help ground yourself into that world
When you take in the sensations that would make
sense for it
Then you note five things you can see
Then you note four things you can hear
Then you note three things you can touch
Then you note two things you can smell
Then you note one thing you can taste
Then you note additional sensory reactions to things
as they come into your focus

Scenario: feature analysis for random things you noted

As a visitor of that world in the location you picked
In order to get more detail in mind about some random thing you noted
When you focus on that thing in particular
Then you note what group or category that thing is in
Then you note what common uses exist for that thing
Then you note what inherent actions are common for that thing
Then you note what properties that thing has
Then you note what the most common location for that thing is
Then you note any other associations that come up when thinking about that thing
Then you repeat this a few times as makes sense

Scenario: daily practice

As someone who wants to immerse in a mental world
In order to help train this skill
When you are planning your day
Then add some time for this practice
Then (if it helps) set a timer to help limit your sessions
Then pick a place you want to immerse yourself into
Then ground yourself in that place
Then describe a few things using feature analysis
Then (if it helps) put your notes into a blog or diary of some kind

I personally find it helps to do this in the morning, and for up to 30 minutes maximum. Going through my normal routine usually gets me to 30 minutes.

Chapter 11

Feature: Tapering Meditation Length Upwards Gracefully

As someone is beginning in a meditative path, it can feel difficult at first to meditate for long periods of time at once. This feature offers a method of tapering meditation lengths upwards so that you may build up to whatever your target is gradually.

The overall guiding principle here is to gracefully taper up. Initially it is going to feel like you failed. If you get distracted every 30 seconds during a 30 minute meditation and refocused your attention back to the meditation every time, you were mindful of your meditation session 60 times in half an hour. The overall goal of this entire practice is not to perfectly meditate every single time, that is impossible. The goal is to improve your skills over time. Being mindful of your meditation session is one of the easiest ways to consistently improve your skills.

Background

Given no assumption about meditative background
And somewhere to record progress notes

This “somewhere to record progress notes” should be simpler than you are probably thinking. Think paper. Think Notepad. Think simple. You don’t want this to be a chore, or you will

simply just not do it. Use whatever you're more comfortable with.

Again, cut this out if it doesn't work out for you.

Scenario Outline: Tapering up From 5 Minutes to 30 Minutes over Two Weeks

As a meditator

In order to get better at meditation in 14 days

When it is day \$day

Then my meditative goal for the day will be \$goal minutes of meditation

Then I make sure to record things I learn in my progress notes

Examples:

day	goal
1	5
2	7
3	9
4	11
5	13
6	15
7	17
8	20
9	22
10	24
11	26
12	28
13	29
14	30