



**Free Article**

## **DO NOTHING**

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Most meditation techniques train you to become aware of your thoughts and feelings. This is to help you to get to know yourself so that you do not let your thoughts and feelings control you. But, once you become aware of thoughts and feelings, what do you do with them or what do you do with the awareness of them? The answer is: Nothing. You don't have to DO anything. In our culture we are very caught up in doing. We feel like we should always be doing something to make our lives worthwhile. But... what if we don't have to DO anything? *"If I don't do anything, I'll end up on the street."* Let me rephrase that: What if we don't HAVE TO do anything. In other words, what if we aren't obsessed with doing? What if we can make conscious decisions about what we actually *want* to do?

How do we do that? By spending time not doing. How do we do *that*? Just stop moving, sit still and breathe. Sounds easy right? For most of us it is one of the most difficult things to "do." Do doesn't seem like the right word here because we aren't doing, we are "being." There is probably a reason why our species is called Human Beings. Being implies consciousness. And that's what we want to cultivate. We want to be awake to who we are and what is going on inside us. The most direct route to peace and well-being is right through the center of our being. We won't find it outside anywhere. External things (including other beings) might make us feel good for a while, but our peace of mind will be dependent on what happens outside of us and so it is very tenuous.

Notice I said the most direct route. Notice I did not say the easiest route. Looking at yourself is probably the hardest thing you will ever do. However, it is also the most rewarding and the most important thing you could ever do, not only for yourself but for all beings. That's the beauty of being – it not only helps you, it also helps other people and you don't have to DO anything. I know it sounds crazy. But I invite you to try it. Don't believe me. Experiment for yourself and see what happens. *"But I don't have time to do nothing for hours a day. I have a job, kids, a house..."* You don't need hours. You don't even need an hour. Can you spare five minutes a day? If you can't, then I would ask that you take 10 seconds and contemplate this: *"I am saying that I can't spare five minutes a day to improve my life and the lives of those around me."* Then you can close this article that you have been reading for oh... how many minutes? or go on to another article or go about your day.

If you find that you can spare five minutes a day, try just "being" for five minutes. Sit quietly in a comfortable space. You can sit on the floor or on a chair, but make sure some part of you is in contact with a surface (the floor or the ground). So if you are sitting in a chair, make sure your feet are flat on the floor and you can really feel the floor. If you are sitting on the floor, make sure your legs are in contact with the floor. Sit with your spine as straight as possible and your shoulders and neck and face relaxed. There shouldn't be any strain. Relax your arms and rest your hands gently on your legs or in front of your pelvis, palms up or down or one palm resting on top of the other. You can close your eyes or leave them open using a soft focused gaze looking at the floor a few feet in front of you.

Then do these three steps.

1. Become aware of your breath. Just notice how your breath moves in and out of your body as you breathe. Notice if your breath is slow or fast, short or long, deep or shallow. Just notice. Remember, you don't have to DO anything. Whatever is there is fine. There is no problem and no need to do anything.
2. See if you can feel your body. Notice how different parts of your body feel. Bring your awareness to various parts of your body and just notice how those parts of your body feel or bring your awareness to one part of your body and just feel it, for example, your hands. Again, you don't have to DO anything. If you feel any pain or discomfort in your body, see if you can just allow it to be there and breathe without trying to do anything about it. There is no problem and no need to do anything.
3. Notice any thoughts that come up. Just notice the thought or string of thoughts and come back to your breath. Again, you guessed it – you don't have to DO anything with the thoughts. There is no problem and no need to do anything.

When the five minutes are up, think of something that you are grateful for and go about your day. Do this five minutes a day for a period of time and see what happens. Of course, if you want to do it longer than five minutes, you can. Or if you want to do it multiple times during the day, you can. There are no rules. You can even stop and do it during the day any time, any place – even in the car. However, if you are driving, please keep your eyes open. If you feel stressed, just stop and feel your breath and feel your feet on the floor or your sitting bones in the chair and focus on your breath for a minute until you feel calmer.

That's it! Simple right? Yes, it is simple. But, like I said, it is NOT easy. So be gentle with yourself. Do what you can and try not to judge yourself. Remember – there is no problem. Everything is okay as it is right now. You are okay no matter what is happening in your body or your mind. Just be with it – watch it as if you were watching a cloud float by or fish swimming in a tank. Just observe with detached interest. “Oh, look at that – my mind is racing like a hamster on a wheel – isn't that interesting. My back hurts. I have a headache. Isn't that interesting. I don't need to do anything about it. I just need to notice it.” When your “being practice” or “practice being” is complete, then maybe you'll stretch your back or take an aspirin for your headache. But it will be from a much more calm, balanced place than if you just ran to the medicine chest, gulped down the aspirin and ran out of the house, with your stomach churning. In my experience, very often the pain is gone by the time I finish sitting. Then I say, “Oh, isn't that interesting, my pain is gone.” I don't need to do anything about that either. It just is. I don't need to remember the formula so that I can repeat it every time or write it down or figure out why it happened. I just trust that when I can *be*, everything is okay. And if something needs to be done, I will be able to do it with conscious awareness.

One more thing... I believe that this is the most courageous thing that anyone could ever do. Please allow yourself to acknowledge and appreciate your courage and willingness to practice. As a fellow student once said in a class “this is not for the faint of heart, and it looks like we are just sitting in chairs.”

This is nothing short of heroic.  
May the force be with you.