

# Ten-Step Agenda for a Sitting of Natural Meditation

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Caution: This text comes from “Day 1” in the book, *A Course in Meditation*. There are *seven* days of careful instruction in the *Course*. Anyone who follows the 10 steps by reading these two pages can expect to have a comforting meditative *experience*. But really *learning to meditate* requires dynamic skills, such as how to handle thoughts, feelings, wandering, sleepiness, boredom, and how to make it a daily practice. A Guide and the longer texts in the *Course* will help you build that.

A sitting of Natural Meditation has a continuous flow, yet also has structure. Like a flowing river, it has a beginning, middle and end. The meditative function (see Day 3, Chapter 6, Chapter 8) needs a set of distinct intentions and actions to get it started, a different set to maintain it, and yet another set to bring it to a graceful close. This flowing structure can be conveniently described in 10 steps spread over three phases. We call the structure the 10-step agenda of a sitting.

## Starting

### 1. *Sit comfortably with your head free from supports.*

The best way to support the meditative function is by sitting comfortably. Place your body safely on a chair or couch in a comfortable position so that you can, in effect, leave it alone. Your back should be fully supported, but your head should be free and not resting back on anything. You can fold your legs if you are sitting on the couch. If the fully folded leg (lotus) position is comfortable for you and you have already been meditating that way for a while, you can come back to it in your Natural Meditation sittings after you have given the meditative function a good chance to blossom. You may remove your eyeglasses if that feels better.

### 2. *Decide when you will stop meditation and make a timepiece visible.*

As you settle into position, determine what the clock face will read when it is time to stop. Arrange your clock so that you can peek at it without having to move much. If you need to put eyeglasses on to see it, keep them near at hand so the movement is minimal.

### 3. *Close your eyes.*

When you are all set with the seating and timepiece, close your eyes. If you feel any strain in doing this, then lower your eyes and close them when you are ready. Closing the eyes helps the inward movement of attention and the gentle release of personal striving.

### 4. *Wait half a minute.*

Begin the release of personal striving by letting your thoughts flow as they will without judgment or control. When you think half a minute has passed, move to the next step. If you go over half a minute, don't consider it wasted time and don't adjust the ending time.

## Meditating

### *5. Recall a thought or word (“I Am”) without doing anything to it.*

The verb we use in the instruction is *recall*, but you can substitute *hear* if you like. You actually begin Step 5 in the moment you end Step 4. Why? Because recalling the phrase “I Am” (which is our mantra) can be as simple and transparent as just remembering that it exists, or that you are meditating. So, at the end of Step 4, just by thinking that half a minute is up, you have already recalled that the mantra exists, and that is a good, transparent way of having it in the mind without doing anything to it.

### *6. Recall it (“I Am”) again and then whenever awareness allows.*

We might have said, “Repeat ‘I Am’ over and over until time is up.” But that would encourage a mechanical procedure or concentration. Instead, we want to encourage nature’s process, with its gentle opening of the windows of the mind. If we take a light approach to this, there will be times that awareness will shift and not quite allow us to recall the mantra (“I Am”). We must allow that to happen and not forcibly hold on to it. If we feel the urge to sleep, we do not fight that. After a period of sleep, awareness will return on its own allowing you to recall the mantra.

### *7. Don’t try to become different, to mentally go anywhere, or to stay still.*

This “step” actually is a suggestion about style. It goes with Step 6 throughout the body of the meditation. The style is to let nature do the work and not to try to make it seem like meditation.

### *8. Observe the clock when it seems to be time to end.*

Eventually, you will have the thought that time is up. Just check your clock, and if time remains, close your eyes and continue. Don’t use a timer that sounds an alarm. It can be quite jarring.

## Returning

### *9. When it is time to end, keep your eyes closed for three minutes.*

You are still out on the lake of meditation. Your metabolism is lowered and your consciousness is delicate and open. So, *don’t just stand right up*. Sit with eyes closed, moving and stretching for about three minutes. If you’re called out of meditation suddenly for an emergency, be smart about it. Get going right away, but go slowly enough to be sure you are safe.

### *10. Move a bit and then get up gently.*

As you get up, expect yourself to be slower and softer for a few minutes. Then you will most often move and think with renewed energy and alacrity. Some days you might enjoy staying in your chair a while longer enjoying the light, praying, thinking about a problem, reading, or saying an affirmation.

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