

Open Monitoring and Awareness Meditation

What is Open Monitoring and Awareness Meditation?

Open Monitoring (OM) Meditation is a mindfulness practice that involves non-reactive awareness of thoughts, emotions, and sensory experiences without focusing on a single object. Unlike Focused Attention Meditation, which concentrates on a specific point (e.g., the breath), OM Meditation cultivates an open, receptive state, allowing all experiences to arise and pass naturally (Lutz et al., 2008).

Benefits of Open Monitoring and Awareness Meditation

- Enhances cognitive flexibility and creativity (Colzato et al., 2012).
- Reduces emotional reactivity and stress (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).
- Strengthens metacognitive awareness (Dunne et al., 2019).
- Improves attentional control and self-regulation (Slagter et al., 2007).

How to Practice Open Monitoring Meditation

1. **Find a Comfortable Space:** Sit in a quiet, relaxed position with a straight back.
2. **Settle into Awareness:** Begin by taking a few deep breaths, then allow your attention to rest in a state of open awareness.
3. **Observe Sensory and Mental Experiences:** Notice sounds, bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions as they arise naturally.
4. **Maintain Non-Judgmental Awareness:** Allow experiences to come and go without attaching to them or pushing them away.
5. **Return to Open Presence:** If you find yourself getting caught in a specific thought or emotion, gently return to an open awareness state.
6. **Conclude with Reflection:** Before ending, take a moment to appreciate your awareness and how it has shifted during practice.

Client Exercises for Practicing Open Monitoring Meditation

Exercise 1: Expanding Awareness

- Sit comfortably with eyes open or closed.
- Notice any sounds in the environment without labeling them.
- Expand your awareness to bodily sensations and thoughts as they arise.
- Maintain an open, accepting awareness for 5–10 minutes.

Open Monitoring and Awareness Meditation

Exercise 2: Thought Observation

- Sit quietly and observe thoughts as they appear in the mind.
- Imagine each thought as a cloud floating by—acknowledge it without engaging.
- If you get caught in a thought, gently return to an open state of awareness.

Exercise 3: Sensory Awareness Practice

- Choose a time during daily activities (e.g., walking, eating) to practice open awareness.
- Notice all sensations—sounds, smells, textures, and bodily movements—without focusing on one specific element.
- Allow all experiences to be present without judgment.

Tracking Your Progress

Keeping a meditation journal can help track shifts in awareness, emotional patterns, and mental clarity. Use the table below to log your experiences:

| Date | Duration | Focus Object | Notable Thoughts/Distractions | Observations & Feelings |
|------|----------|--------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Reflection Questions:

- Did you notice any patterns in your thoughts or emotions?

Open Monitoring and Awareness Meditation

- How did your awareness shift throughout the session?
 - Were you able to maintain an open, non-judgmental perspective?
-

References

- Lutz, A., Slagter, H. A., Dunne, J. D., & Davidson, R. J. (2008). Attention regulation and monitoring in meditation. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 12(4), 163-169.
- Colzato, L. S., Ozturk, A., & Hommel, B. (2012). Meditate to create: The impact of focused-attention and open-monitoring training on convergent and divergent thinking. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 3, 116.
- Vago, D. R., & Silbersweig, D. A. (2012). Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): A framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 6, 296.
- Dunne, J. D., Thompson, E., & Schooler, J. W. (2019). Mindful meta-awareness: Sustained and non-propositional. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 28, 307-311.
- Slagter, H. A., Lutz, A., Greischar, L. L., Nieuwenhuis, S., Davidson, R. J., & Gazzaley, A. (2007). Mental training affects distribution of limited brain resources. *PLoS Biology*, 5(6), e138.