

# Meditation -Shmeditation

## I Wonder What's For Lunch

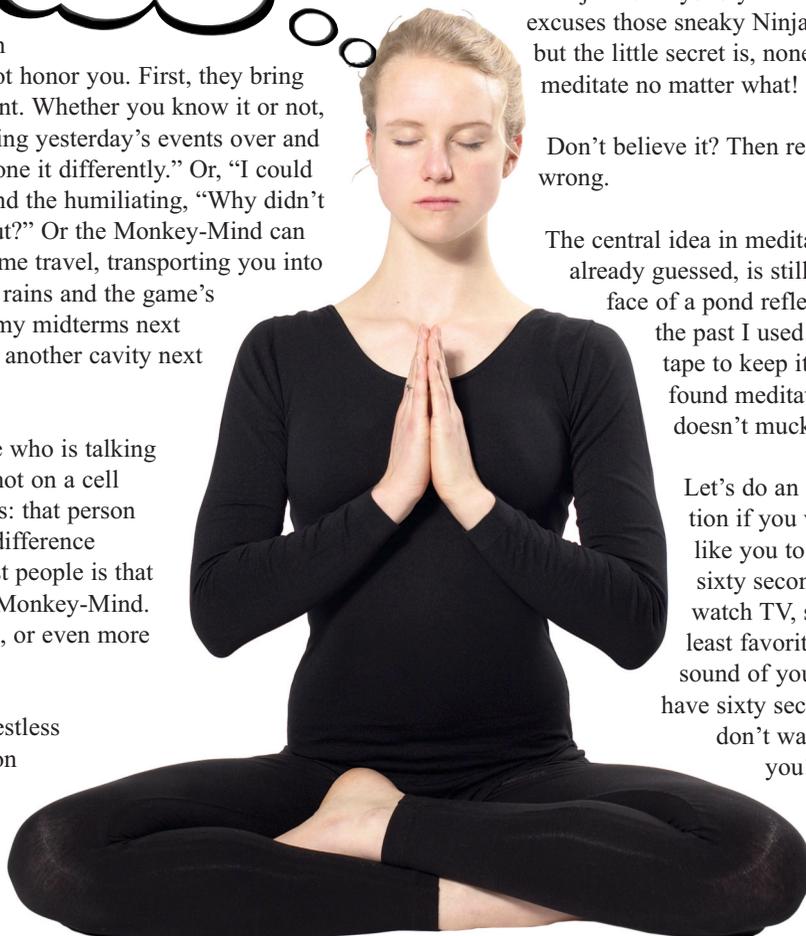
By Mitch Goldfarb

Have you ever noticed those rambling thoughts in your head? You know the type I mean, the little things that drive you absolutely bonkers, like, “I can’t believe I said that!” referring to a conversation you had yesterday. Or, “Oh my gosh, I’ll never have enough time to...” You fill in the blank. And I really love these, “I gotta pick up the kids. Then soccer practice. Dance. And the clothes at the dry cleaners. Oh, the bank. Gotta stop at the bank.” All this is banging around in your head, and it’s only nine-thirty in the morning!

These wonderful little thoughts making you crazy are fondly referred to as the “Monkey-Mind” in Buddhism. These incessant Monkey-Mind thoughts have a few things in common that, trust me, do not honor you. First, they bring you out of the present moment. Whether you know it or not, you’re off in the past, replaying yesterday’s events over and over again. “I should have done it differently.” Or, “I could have said it another way.” And the humiliating, “Why didn’t I just keep my big mouth shut?” Or the Monkey-Mind can have the magical power of time travel, transporting you into the future. “What’ll I do if it rains and the game’s cancelled?” “I’ll never pass my midterms next week.” “Will the dentist find another cavity next month?”

Have you ever seen someone who is talking to themselves in public and not on a cell phone? Your initial thought is: that person must be crazy. But the only difference between that person and most people is that he or she is vocalizing their Monkey-Mind. Yours might be just as active, or even more so.

You get the idea. There’s a restless whirlwind of activity going on upstairs in your head. The monkeys are hard at play. So now that you know you’re going bonkers, what can you do about it? Yeah, that’s right, you know



what I’m going to say—meditate! But don’t worry, I’m not going to suggest you should listen to sitar music and burn incense.

“But meditation is hard,” you might think. “I don’t have time in my busy schedule and the kids are always noisy. The phone rings. I’m too tired at the end of the day. How can I ever create a Zen environment to promote peace and serenity?” Can you see what’s happening? You’ve just been attacked by the Ninja Monkeys. Sly little devils, aren’t they? All the excuses those sneaky Ninjas came up with are true, but the little secret is, none of that matters. You can meditate no matter what!

Don’t believe it? Then read on and prove me wrong.

The central idea in meditation, if you haven’t already guessed, is stilling the mind, like the surface of a pond reflecting the heavens. Hey, in the past I used to wrap my head with duct tape to keep it from exploding, but then I found meditation. Much easier and it doesn’t muck up your hair.

Let’s do an experiment, an investigation if you will. It’s a little game I’d like you to play and it’ll only take sixty seconds. That’s it. Most of you watch TV, so when you do, pick your least favorite commercial, turn off the sound of your television set and you’ll have sixty seconds. Those of you who don’t watch the tube—good for you! You’re already on the right path, but try this experiment anyway.

Now during the next commercial break,

here's what I'd like you to do. Hit the mute button on your remote and just sit. You can even keep your eyes open. Simply sit and observe what happens. See what pops into your head. You might have a gazillion thoughts or none at all. Feel the fleeting little aches and/or itches that come and go in your body. Do not resist anything that happens. Just observe. Let your little scientist come out and play and investigate.

Now STOP! Do not read on until you've tried it. Some of you still have fifty-nine seconds left. Okay, I know a few of you probably cheated. That's all right. I won't hold it against you. I cheated myself when I first found this experiment. So here's the deal, what you were doing was mediation! Yeah, hard to believe. Doesn't feel like you're on the road to enlightenment following the wisdom of the ages, does it? But the truth is—you are!

So, if that's meditation, what's all this mumbo-jumbo about Nirvana? (Not the band—though I think they're great!) Nirvana isn't the point of meditation. Zen instructs that if you have an out-of-body experience or get that great flash from the heavens, to ignore it and go back to observing. Without getting too metaphysical, the whole point of Zen meditation is to observe the extraordinary in the ordinary, and that's just what you were doing!

Look at how amazing and creative your mind was, making up all that gobbledygook running around your brain—and all in sixty seconds! You've actually tapped into the "Source of creativity."

Now you're thinking, "This guy's bananas! He just fell out of the monkey tree." Well, I might be bananas, but to put it a better way would be to say, "I'm out of my mind!" That's the point, the exercise has gotten you "out of your mind." By simply observing your mind, you've separated yourself from your thoughts. You've observed them. You were no longer the thinker of the thoughts. You became the witness of the infinite creativity of your mind.

As soon as you stop and observe, bringing your mind into your body, you are meditating. It's that easy! Still too busy in your day-to-day to do this regularly? Well, here's the perfect solution for those of you who drive. The next time you're at a red light, put the car in park and observe your thoughts and feelings. "Oh no!" you protest. "What if I drift off and really get into it? I won't know when the light changes. Then what?" There's a simple solution for that, too. Trust me when I say this, the person in the car

behind will gladly let you know when the light has changed. They might even let you know you've risen to "number one" in their Monkey-Mind. But guess what? You've meditated.

Here's another little experiment you can do to stop the Monkey-Mind. When you hear the familiar gibber-jabbering of your chattering monkeys at play (and you no doubt will), simply take one conscious breath, deep into your abdomen. Feel yourself inhale. Feel your lungs expand. Feel it with every sense of your being. Hear the air rush in, then out. Ask yourself, "How do you feel?"

Now for Part Two. I'll bet you weren't able to think of anything when you were paying attention to your breath. Yeah, you've successfully stilled your mind for a nanosecond. Try it again. Feel your breath as you inhale and see if you can actually hold a thought while doing this. Also, try this when you're feeling tense. It's a great stress reliever.

The thing I found difficult with meditation at first, and most people will experience this, is that if you just sit for twenty minutes and try to still the mind, you can't. My brain kept asking, "What's for lunch," and my belly would answer with a rumble. The thing is, simply by changing your awareness of what's happening inside is enough. By shifting your consciousness to this wonderful gift we all have, our body, we can change our experience. It's hard to imagine that by simply sitting for sixty seconds a day, or by taking a deep breath and feeling it a couple of times a day, that one can actually change their life. Meditation can be a life-changing experience. You never know what it might bring. But it will bring more the more you do it. Guaranteed!

Now don't expect miracles when you begin to meditate, although they can happen. My wife says that she learned patience from her practice. That's because things happen slowly over time, and then one day you realize you are different. You are reacting to the same stress and noise of your day-to-day life in a way that you never thought possible.

If you're open to trying something new that dates back several thousand years, and you're ready for a potentially life-changing experience, then I strongly urge you to give it a shot. What have you got to lose? Missing a favorite (or not-so-favorite) TV commercial for something you really didn't need to buy anyhow? If you miss it that much, you can always catch its rerun, so try meditating. Take that conscious breath. You'll know in a short time it's an activity that lifts your Spirit.



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Along with writing, music, and his wife, teaching T'ai Chi and meditation are Mitch's great passions in life. His Taoist philosophy has helped to focus his creativity both in and out of the studio. Mitch has written over 100 songs, is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Pennwriters, Brandywine Valley Writers Group, and the Tri-State Literary Society. Mitch is currently a Professor at West Chester University in the Kinesiology Department and has recently finished a non-fiction guided T'ai Chi audio text for his students. He directs the T'ai Chi Arts School and teaches at various yoga studios as well as health and fitness centers in the greater Philadelphia area. His teaching background includes over three decades experience instructing at Philadelphia area colleges and universities. Mitch has been actively involved in writing and producing various healing and meditation recordings, including five CD's for Dr. Deepak Chopra. His latest CD "Native Path" for T'ai Chi, Yoga and meditation is available on iTunes.