

When most of us think of meditation, we think about sitting on the floor in quiet stillness, with the goal of emptying our mind of all thoughts. This practice is not for everyone and can be very difficult to achieve.

Meditation and mindfulness can also be reached through slow and fluid movements. Yoga, Tai Chi, and dance are very popular types of moving meditations. Not all moving meditations require specific steps or poses. A moving meditation can be completely your own creation.

No matter how you choose to move your body, it is important to remember to move at a comfortable pace. Start with about 30 minutes at a time. Focus on the movements and how your body feels while it is moving. Some people like to create variations in their breath—starting with a natural breath and slowly working to deepen it by expanding the belly and rib cage.

Below is a series of moving meditations that you can do standing or sitting. If music helps you relax, put on your favorite song to match your mood. For example, something inspiring for a more energetic practice or something soothing for a more calming practice. Make sure to tune in to your body. Only do what feels good and make sure to modify the movements to meet your body's needs.

### **Five examples of mindful movements:**

1. Each exercise should be done at least 5 times. Remember to focus on how your body is feeling and where you are feeling the movements. Allow the movements to be slow and fluid. Consider matching your movements to your breath.

2. Start with your feet hip-width apart. Take a deep breath through your nose, raising your arms over your head. Exhale as you bring your arms back down, and start again. Notice the weight of your arms and the movement in your shoulders. As you inhale deeply, notice how your belly is expanding. As you exhale, feel your body release the breath.
3. Start with your feet hip-width apart and your hands on your hips. With your eyes closed, begin gently twisting at the waist. Do this a few times, and then extend your arms out straight, allowing them to naturally swing as you continue twisting at the waist. Be aware of how your twisting waist is moving your arms.
4. Start with your feet hip-width apart and your hands on your waist. Gently bend at the waist, allowing your arms to naturally fall down toward the ground and your head to hang heavy. Consider putting a slight bend in your knees for comfort. With your eyes closed, begin gently swaying your arms left to right. Feel your spine begin to lengthen. When you feel ready, grab opposite elbows and continue to sway.
5. Challenging your balance is a great way to build awareness in how your body moves. Start with your feet hip-width apart and your arms by your side. Slowly lift your right knee to meet your left elbow. Bring your leg back down and raise your left knee to meet your right elbow. Do a few rounds of these. If it is too much, modify the movement so it feels good. If you fall off balance, start again.
6. You may choose to do this exercise either standing or seated in a chair. Be sure that you are either standing or sitting up straight with your hands at your waist or on top of your thighs. Begin by bringing your chin to your chest, allowing your head to hang heavy. Slowly begin moving your head up

and down. After a few rounds, begin moving your head left to right, noticing your chin grazing your chest. You may then decide to do a full neck rotation, moving your neck clockwise and then counter-clockwise.

**For more information:**

- University of Michigan Depression Center
- 1-800-475-MICH or 734-936-4400
- <http://www.depressioncenter.org/toolkit>

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