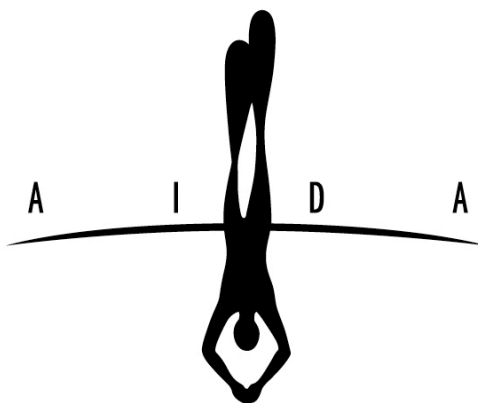
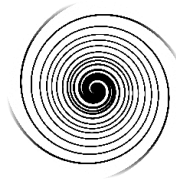


## AIDA Instructor Course Project

# Meditation - Go Deeper Inside and Outside

by Karsten Mohr



# **Meditation - Go Deeper Inside and Outside**

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## Preposition

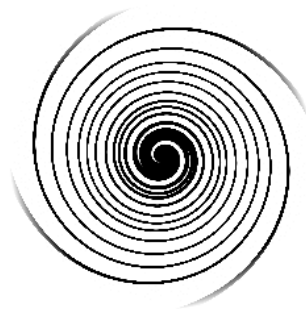
The intention of this paper is to emphasize the beneficial aspects of meditation for apnea divers. Since more than 30 years I am fascinated by mental techniques. At the time when I was a young athlete I learned visualization and autogenic training. Later I developed my focusing skills in martial arts by learning Yoga, Yoga Nidra. I got in touch with progressive muscle relaxation and other. Since over 20 years my interest in developing my consciousness goes more into a meditative direction. Meditation goes beyond pure relaxation techniques. It is not that meditation is better than the pure relaxation techniques. It is a different thing, which will be explained later in this paper.

There are many forms of meditation. At the end they all meet at the inexplicable quiet space in ourselves.

Meditation goes some steps further than techniques of relaxation and visualization. Therefore I see it as necessary to explain the basic structure how our psyche, our consciousness and our mind interact.

One of the many meditation forms I will explain later in this project. I want to illustrate how beneficial meditation and a meditative lifestyle can be for everybody and especially for freedivers.

Freediving is a fantastic sport. Combining it with meditation practice can result in even more depth – in the ocean and in yourself.



## 1. Definitions

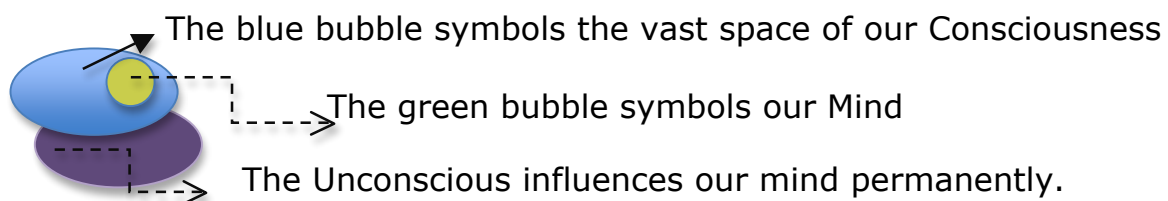
Writing about meditation is a little bit like explaining the inexplicable. To make this paper comprehensible it is important for me to fix some definitions.

If you look-up terms like „consciousness, mind, spirit, psyche, soul ... etc.“ you will find dozens and dozens of different explanations, concepts and definitions. These abstract nouns are not tangible as trees and stones and also they are subject to translations and different perceptions in different schools and cultures. At the end all concepts point to the same. Therefore it makes sense to first define some keywords. It will make it easier for the reader to follow.

It is important to understand how our mind and our unconscious are influencing us in our daily life and hence in our preparation for diving.

### 1.1. Consciousness

When I talk about consciousness I use this term as a simplified icon for the complex space of awake cognition and awake perception which is available for all human beings. The consciousness includes the mind. The following sketch simplifies the interaction between consciousness, mind and the unconscious.



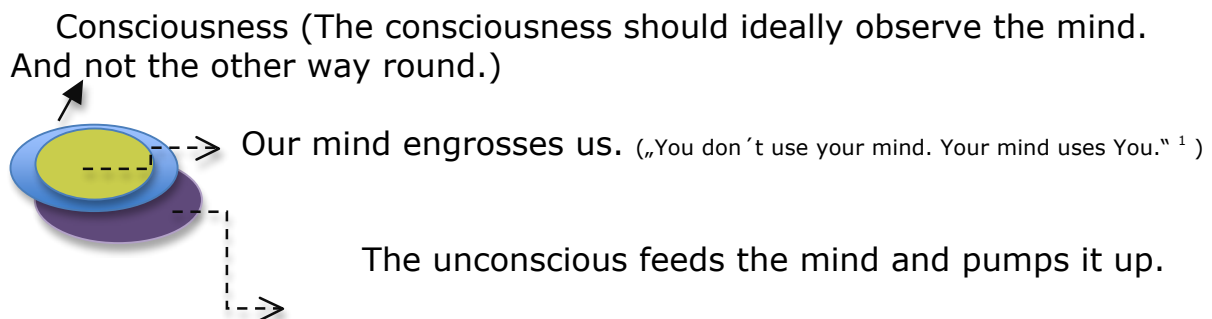
### 1.2. Mind

When I talk about the mind I mean the ingenious part of our consciousness, which creates all of our fantastic thoughts and words. It is the home of our intelligence, communication skills, logical thinking and many more having to do with our brainpower.

The mind is fed by our consciousness but also by the unconscious. We are able to consciously control our mind but most of the time our mind is unattended and produces permanently and automatically thoughts and mostly irrelevant ideas and opinions. These thoughts, ideas and opinions have mostly to do with kinds of worries and concerns and they are produced in the space, which is called the unconscious.

The problem is that all this thinking is so dominant during the day. It steals a lot of our calmness and serenity, which we want for our daily life.

And if you are a diver you want the calmness and serenity for your dives. The unattended thinking is hard to stop and sometimes captures all of our attention. But especially before diving we want to be calm and focused, no matter what happened during the day.



### 1.3. Feeling and Emotion

We all have our emotional life with all the true feelings like: anxiety, sorrow, love, joy, anger, enthusiasm, tiredness and many others. Simply speaking it is all inner life, which is sensible. At the same time there are all the body sensations. For instance: prickling, tickle, pain, cold, warmth, pressure, dragging, muscle reactions and many more. A true feeling always has a corresponding sensation in the body. You might notice this in diving. Fear during a dive corresponds with a signal in your body. Happiness of course does too.

### 1.4 Presence – Here & Now

You are in the state of presence when you are really and fully present in the „here & now“. Awareness and perception are totally in what happens here and now. You are in contact with your body. You are also in contact with your mind. But the mind is not the boss. The mind serves the consciousness. Maybe you think: „What is so special about it. I am always here and it is always now.“ Let me explain Presence with its opposite: Absence.

Absence is the more common state, which we are experiencing. Of course you are physically always where you are. But 99% of the day our mind takes us to somewhere else. Most of the time we just pay little attention to what truly is happening at a moment. Our body is here, we might even be in a conversation with a friend, but our mind is roaming somewhere else. Thinking about to be somewhere else, thinking of situations and settings in the past and the future.

We all know situations like the following: Driving in a car and not realizing what we have been passing the last 10 minutes. Go diving and think of a problem at home during the breath-up. Be in the water and already think of the time after diving. Go to dinner with friends and not paying full

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<sup>1</sup> Eckhart Tolle, The Power of Now

attention of the talk, because thinking off the dives in the afternoon or the work of tomorrow.

No big deal, we are all the same. Most of the time we spend in the state of absence – in the state of not being 100% in the Now, in the state of not being present.

## **2. Why Meditation –**

### **What have all this „psycho stuff definitions“ to do with Freediving?**

Presence is the key for a deep and true calmness. The unrest in our mind comes from not being present. Learning to be present brings you into a deeper state of calmness and relaxation. Which makes you happy and brings even more joy, safety and efficiency to your freediving.

Meditation is a deep reset of your whole entity - of your body and your mental activity. It is a training beyond the restlessly thinking mind. It improves your physical and psychological health. Meditation also trains discipline and willpower in a very enjoyable way.

In a state of presence and full consciousness you feelings and emotions don't overwhelm you. You are not a victim of what your mind produces.

The consequence on the physical side is lower heart rate and less usage of oxygen.

On the psychological side it is: Clarity, Serenity, Discipline, Courage, Willpower, Focus, Concentration, Commitment, Joy and Happiness.

## **3. Differentiation of Meditation and other Relaxation Techniques**

It is important for me to emphasize, that there is no right or wrong. There is just a difference. I like to explain it because especially in freediving a lot of people practice relaxation techniques and think of it as meditation. Some relaxation techniques can be used to lead into meditation but it is not the finale meditation.

Relaxation Techniques like Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Autogenic Training or Mental Visualization work with suggestion or autosuggestion, affirmations and images. There is a set goal. For instance: relaxing muscles, affirming not to smoke or to reach a set goal like diving down to your personal best. It is a suggestible work with your mind by consciously choosing affirmations, ideas and images, which we think do well for you. It is a little bit like a trance. It narrows consciousness and perception by focusing and concentrating. Nothing wrong with it.

Meditation does not use the mind. It is just the opposite. You want to clear your mind. During meditation you train self-observation. You observe what is happening in your body and in your mind and ideally let

the thinking go. There is no goal. You observe what you are experiencing at this particular moment. You observe what you feel, sense, notice, think. There is no imagination and visualization. Ideally after some time it calms down your mental activity. You then experience yourself and observe yourself beyond your thinking and beyond your judging mind. Meditation practice widens the consciousness. It regains the space, which is occupied by the unconscious thinking. See also sketches page 4 and 5. In the state of meditation the green bubble of the mind shrinks and the blue bubble of consciousness regains its space.

Relaxation and visualization methods, which work with suggestion and autosuggestion, are good for a quick body relax, setting goals and programming the mind for success or anything positive we desire. All this you can use for your freediving. These methods can "cure" the symptoms of our current condition. Meaning if we feel nervous or tensed we have techniques to get rid of the symptoms feel better and dive safe and relaxed. But it does not touch the cause of the symptoms.

Whereas meditation is a more long-termed method. Good for us freedivers to generally build up a high level of self-awareness, calmness and serenity. Frequent Meditation goes deeper and it has an effect on our general attitude towards life. An overall more placid relaxed lifestyle results in well-being. What we absolutely prefer for all our water- and dry-activities.

#### **4. Forms and Techniques of Meditation**

There are passive and active forms of meditation. Passive means classical sitting. The more famous methods are Vipassana and Zazen. Vipassana is reported to be the original way to meditate. Its origins go back more than 2000 years. There are several styles and although its Buddhist roots it is practiced in a non-religious context.

Zazen has its roots in Japan. Of course like in every serious meditation practice it is all about the unity of body, consciousness and soul. Sitting in upright posture observing the breath to find the truth beyond emotions and restless thinking.

Besides passive meditations there are whole lot active meditations existing. The basic and classic form is the walking meditation. But there are many others of all kind of traditions. Some have more a dancing character, some happen in free motion and others have a particular pattern of moves, which are repeated over and over. By active meditation it is sometimes easier to get connected to the inner body and to observe the mind. Active meditation is also very supportive for those having difficulties sitting still.

Methods, forms and techniques of meditation are as various as sports on this planet. Like in sports or music there is no bad sport or bad instrument. We are free to decide. According to our needs and preferences we can choose which meditation suits best for us at a special moment or in a particular life situation. And as in sports or music we are free to learn more than one.

### **5. What is the experience during a Meditation?**

Nothing , .... which could be described in easy and figurative words. Sure it doesn't help to expect something „special“. The sensations and impressions of meditators are multi-faceted.

Still I dare to describe a common ground: A lot of meditators report the sensation of an endless inner space. Connectedness, freedom of fear, the sense of an inner lightness and serenity.

For me this is all I need for safe and relaxed diving.

There are sure some common after meditation experiences, which the most meditators share. Some more long-term effects were already mentioned earlier. Just one more effect here: frequent meditation practice will also result in a more peaceful and benevolent attitude towards life. It doesn't mean you loose courage and strength. It is just the opposite. With frequent practice the mind looses the tendency to jump around like a monkey. This jumping around of the mind has a lot to do with worries, anxiety and fear. Meditation brings more clarity into life and therefore strength and courage get a sharper focus.



## 6. Practical Meditation Instruction

I am now describing a way of a sitting meditation, which I developed and which I teach. It is advisable to learn meditation from a teacher. Just using a manual like this won't develop meditative skills.

The composition of the meditation I choose in this project lets us sink deeper and deeper in ourselves, into an observing meditative state.

Meditation has some parallels with diving. Neither in diving nor in meditation you can drop from zero into the deep. At diving you have to consider several phases and follow the „rope“. Here come the corresponding phases and the „rope“ for a meditation. Phases 1-5 is a mix of relaxation, observation and concentration techniques, all necessary to reach the depth of meditation in Phase 6.

### **Phase 1: Gentle Exercise**

Coming from the daily routine it makes things easier if you do a walk for a few minutes to come down. And sitting is more comfortable if you do some stretching of your spine before you sit.

### **Phase 2: The Right Posture**

It is important to keep your back straight without backrest. Either kneeling or sitting on the floor or a pillow. You will find out why. The meditation turns out better in a graceful upright posture.

If you are not used to sit without a backrest, then you can start at the edge of a chair and lean back when it gets uncomfortable. Also lying on the ground can be an alternative for beginners. But lying down you will quickly find out that it is easy to doze off ... which is fun but not exactly meditation 😊. Finding the best posture is a little bit of trial and error. Most important is: You shouldn't feel pain. Especially in the beginning pain kills the meditative experience.

With the time it pays off to get little by little used to sit upright without backrest.

### **Phase 3: Connect to Your Body and Relax**

Take some deep breaths into abdomen, chest and shoulder. Inhale and exhale through the nose. Breathing through the nose calms us. Breathing through the mouth vitalizes. We want to calm down now. Exhale the double time as you inhale. This brings your heart rate down.

Feel where your body has contact with your seat, pillow or the floor. Really pay total attention to what you sense. No, this is no spectacular sensation. It is all about training your awareness of all the little body sensations and being present with them.

Stay in this full attention and now wander with it through your entire body. Start with your feet.

Say to yourself: „ I relax my feet, my feet relax, my feet are totally relaxed.“ Make sure that this is not only saying or thinking. It needs your full attention and feeling whether really all muscles and ligaments become relaxed.

Go step by step through your entire body. Each part of the body needs to get full attention to relax deeply. Continue with your lower leg: „ I relax my lower legs and knees, my lower legs and knees relax, my lower legs and knees are totally relaxed.“ And so on. Knee, thighs, hips, belly, back, chest, arms and hands, throat and neck and head ... all.

Observe and perceive even the tiniest impulses, relaxations, warmth, prickling. That is what it is all about. Training of total awareness of what happens in your body. Be a curious detective.

Jaws, lips, face around eyes and nose and the forehead are worth while staying a little longer, because the muscles moving our face always need a little while until the last wrinkles are smoothed out.

You will notice that thoughts pop up or even wash you away from your body scan and you end up thinking all kind of stuff you don't want to think about now. No problem, that's normal.

Thinking always goes together with an emotion. Be it happiness or sadness or anything else, fact is that every thought and emotion will tense a muscle in you or leave a track in form of a body sensation. Try to get aware whether your shoulder went up a little, a finger maybe is tensed or there is a sensation in the stomach. Just check for a couple of seconds. If you can't find tracks like tensed muscle or joints, no problem. Relax, just get back to the last body part you remember and continue your scan.

When you are done with the scan, then try to feel your entire body all at once and feel the relaxation.

#### **Phase 4: Feel Your Inner Body**

Now you are invited to focus into the inside of your right hand. Be totally in your hand. Detect all you can feel. There is maybe a little warmth, a little prickling, a little twitch or a pulsation. Be totally in your hand. It might not seem to be spectacular, but feeling the body from the inside is the key to consciously connect yourself with your body.

Now try the same with your left hand. After a while you want to feel the inside of both hands at the same time. Stay a little bit with feeling your hands inside.

Now extend the feeling for your inner body (and all the little things happening in it) to your forearms and upper arms. Always feel and notice what is inside. Then go on to shoulders, head, chest, belly, hips, legs and feet. Don't just think of one of the body parts. Feel it. Stop thinking for now and really really just feel what is there. It's a little bit harder to also feel inside your head. Because we are used to only think with it. But for now we only want to feel the inside.

Once you are done scanning your body from the inside, stay a little bit in this state and enjoy feeling your entire inner body all at once.

### **Phase 5: Conscious Breathing**

Stay in the perception for your inner body and observe your breath. And soon you will find out that your thoughts take over. Don't worry that's quite normal. But there is a trick, which helps you to stay focused.

Exhale deep (not to residual volume, just a little more than functional residual capacity.)

Inhale and count „1, 1, 1“.  
Exhale and count „1, 1, 1“.

Follow your individual relaxed breathing rhythm.

Inhale and count „2, 2, 2“.  
Exhale and count „2, 2, 2“.

Inhale and count „3, 3, 3“.  
Exhale and count „3, 3, 3“.

Always inhale and exhale without a break in one constant flow.

Inhale and exhale counting until „9“. If you reach 9 you restart at „1“. Provided you make it until „9“. Normally your mind finds a backdoor to break your concentration and it will flood your brain with a cascade of thoughts, ideas or opinions or judgments. Then your mind is the boss again. So don't be mad at yourself if your mind finds this backdoor before you reach 7 (or not even 4 ☺) . It happens. The rule says if you are lost in counting just restart at „1“. Smile and be happy.

Counting is the greatest tool to detect the backdoors of the mind. Counting is still a mental activity. But it is your conscious decision to do so and it is a total reduction for the mental activity. Counting gives you a clear indication of the progress you are making with your meditative efforts.

After 3 rounds of counting to 9 you can reduce the counting. Instead of counting 1,1,1 at each inhale and exhale just count 1 (then 2,3,4 ...) at each inhale and 1 (2,3,4 ...) at each exhale. After another 3 rounds just count the exhalations with one number and then, when you feel like release yourself from the chain of counting.

### **Phase 6: The Meditation**

Once you let go the counting you just feel your body, you are aware of breathing and enjoy the precious moments of consciousness and no mind.

Be happy if it is just some seconds or half a minute. In the beginning it won't be more. Even experienced meditators again and again have days and challenges in life where it is a blessing to find even these little gaps.

When the cascades of thoughts take over, go back feeling your body and your breathing. You even can do some more counts before you try again without. Stay in phase 6 until the end of your preset time.

### **Phase 7: Gong - The End**

When your meditation timer sounds the gong, you intensify your focus into arms and legs. Move and feel toes and fingers. Maybe you want to make a fist. Pay attention to your hearing, open your eyes keep the feeling for your inner body and take it into the day. Stretch out.

Depending on the time you can invest you can skip phase 3 or 4. But you will find out that your meditation goes deeper and more intense doing both. Try to use this "rope" with its 7 phases every day for 5-15 minutes. And with the time you might wish to get closer to 45 minutes or an hour.

## **7. Summary**

Meditation is an ideal way to cultivate a relaxed, peaceful, placid lifestyle. It also cultivates all other qualities you want for freediving: Clarity, Serenity, Discipline, Courage, Willpower, Focus, Concentration, Commitment, Joy and Happiness ... and being present, present, present. All these qualities are given to us by nature. But sometimes they got covered. Meditation helps to bring these qualities back or improve them.

It is a perfect training. If you learn to meditate and if you get routine to always stay connected with your inner body also in your daily life, try to feel your inside while diving ... and feel the difference.

For a newbie to meditation it might sound strange, that it is advisable to do so many phases before it comes to the state of "real" meditation but it is like in diving. It is very hard to jump into the water and go from zero to hero.

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*Most of my experiences in Meditation comes from lessons with my Meditation Masters and Yoga Masters and Academies and a more than 30 years experience.*

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