

Five sure-fire tips to get yourself on the cushion every day

~Brad Warner

So now you're convinced. You've read the Wikipedia page about Buddhism, watched a few videos of famous masters on YouTube, gone to the local New Age bookshop and bought a couple of Buddhist magazines, and now you're ready to try some meditation for yourself. You visited the local sangha and sat with the group and listened intently as the teacher there told you the secret to practice was to meditate every single day. So you took the plunge and went to the gift shop and bought yourself a genuine meditation cushion. You set it up in the corner of your bedroom, where it waits for you every morning, lonely, sad, and neglected.

The problem is, you just can't seem to find the motivation. Your will is strong. Your belief is there. But darn it all, you just never seem to be able to get it together to meditate. Whenever you find a moment to meditate, you seem to do something else instead.

I hear you. I too suffered from the same problem. So I'd like to share with you my five sure-fire tips to get you on the cushion every day.

{ 1 } There are no sure-fire tips to get yourself on the cushion every day



That was just a come-on to get you to read the rest of this. If there's one lesson that runs through pretty much every Buddhist tradition, it's this: there are no magic solutions. Our belief in magic solutions that

may happen some day in the future keeps us from doing what we really need to do right here and right now. So forget about sure-fire tips to get yourself on the cushion every day. That's my first sure-fire tip.

{ 2 } Motivation is overrated. While it's nice to be motivated, the people who really manage to get things done are those who find a way to work at whatever it is they're interested in even when they don't really feel like doing it. This goes for musicians, athletes, world-class chefs and all the rest. And it goes double for meditators.



I meditate every morning and every evening, and to tell you the truth, there are plenty of times when I just hate it. Meditation doesn't always feel like bliss and peace. Sometimes it feels like a five-car pileup in the middle of World War III during an alien invasion and a peewee football game gone mad. My head is buzzing with nervous energy and my body just can't seem to find anything even close to comfort. But I meditate anyway. Discipline is being able to do things when you don't want to do them.

{ 3 } Don't worry about results. You might have heard that



the secret to meditation is to have no gaining ideas. But you have all kinds of gaining ideas! You want peace of mind, you want

reduced stress, you want enlightenment. You never can seem to get rid of these desires. Should you just give up?

Nope. Everybody has gaining ideas. Everybody. Including the Buddha himself. It's not that you need to make these ideas go away. You just need to stop worrying about them. Whatever you might gain from your practice won't be anything like what you imagine it will be. So just leave those ideas as they are. They'll pass of their own accord if you let them. And if they don't, that doesn't matter either. Sit with your gaining ideas.



{ 4 } Meditate before breakfast. This is the only thing resembling a technique that I really have to offer. I discovered this trick long ago, and it seems to work. I'm not allowed to eat breakfast until I finish my morning sitting. I'm pretty strict with myself on this one. There are no Fruity Pebbles for Brad until he is done with meditation, and that's final.

Maybe breakfast doesn't work for you the way it works for me. But there's something in your life you like to do every day. So tie that in with your practice. You don't get to do whatever that thing is until you finish your meditation.

{ 5 } Wake up half an hour earlier. You're busy. I know. So am I. So is everyone. But when I decided to commit myself to a daily practice, I looked honestly at what I did each day, and I saw a lot of wasted time. I did all kinds of things in the name

of “leisure” or “relaxation” that weren’t really that relaxing. I shopped. I watched inane television shows. I goofed off in a myriad of ways. So I revised my schedule and started going to bed a little earlier and waking up a little earlier so that I could



meditate. Maybe the same thing can work for you. That one last thing you need to look up on the internet can wait.

These days, meditation for me is like brushing my teeth. Remember how it was when you were young? Your parents had to force you to brush your teeth. But now you do it every morning and night without being asked. Why? You do it because you know how much better you feel after you finish. You do it because you’d never get a date if you didn’t. You do it because you’d be embarrassed to talk to your coworkers with stinky breath and stuff stuck to your teeth. So you do it for yourself and you do it for others.

Do your meditation for the same reasons. Do it because you know how much better your interactions with others are on days when you do your meditation as opposed to days when you find some excuse to skip it. Do it because it makes your mind feel minty fresh! Then you won’t need any sure-fire tips.