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# Setting Up a Home Meditation Practice: Your Guide



**YOUR GUIDE**

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# Setting Up a Home Meditation Practice

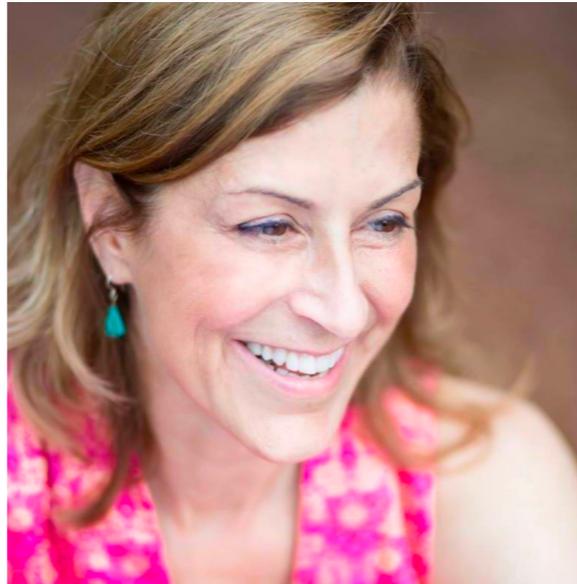
By Susan Piver

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# Welcome!



*Hello. Thank you so much for your interest in meditation. This guide is a step-by-step overview of setting up your own home practice. It includes suggestions for creating your meditation space, figuring out your practice schedule, and some tips for establishing the posture correctly.*

*The main thing to remember is this: Simplicity is key. Everything related to meditation practice--your practice space, the attitude you take, the expectations you may have, and the way you approach the practice--should be kept very, very simple. The simpler, the better. Did I mention simple?*

*The Open Heart Project is delighted to support you on this most important journey, the one you take home to yourself.*

*Enjoy!*

*With love, Susan*



# Essential Principles

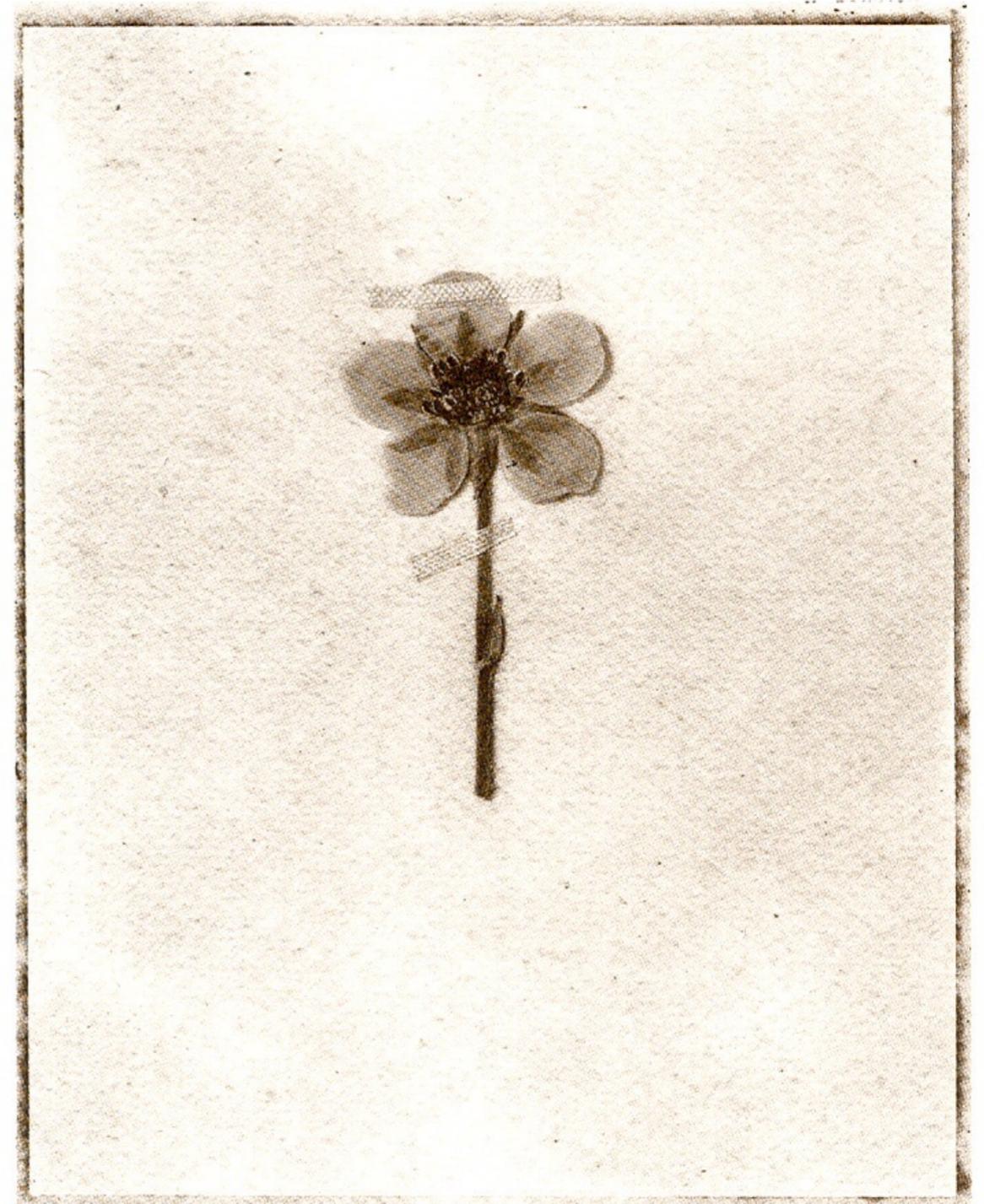


- 1. Try to practice at the same time each day.** Most people find that the morning works out best, but some of you may have a dozen kids to get off to school or a job that requires your presence at 6:00 A.M. Or you may simply be a night owl and find it better to practice when you get home from work or before bed. You can experiment with times of day, but whatever seems best, stick with it. There is nothing magical about this, it just seems that habits thrive on routine.
- 2. Establish a realistic goal.** Don't say to yourself, "I'm going to meditate every single day for 20 minutes." Why? Because you won't. Then, when you fall off the wagon, you'll feel bad and become even less likely to practice. Instead, set up something completely doable—for you. For example: promise yourself to practice for 10 minutes per day, M-F for 4 weeks. At the end of that time, reassess. If 10 minutes is too long, do 5. If M-F is extreme, just do the weekends. You get the idea.
- 3. Consistency over duration.** It is better to practice for 10 minutes per day, 5 days a week than 50 minutes, 1 day a week.
- 4. Before practice, affirm your commitment** to what you are about to do by saying to yourself, "now is my time for practice—everything else can wait." Because it can.

4. **Establish a place for your practice.** No need to get fancy. Place your meditation cushion or chair in a spot you feel happy to be in—perhaps in a part of your house that gets gorgeous light or a corner of your bedroom that is quiet and peaceful. If you like, you could have a small offering table or shrine with fresh flowers or a candle or a photo of someone or something inspiring. This is optional.

5. **Follow the 12-second rule.** This rule states that when you screw up (i.e. miss a day or a week or a month on the cushion), you must feel awful, guilty, and ashamed—but only for 12 seconds!! Then you have just got to CUT THAT BS OUT!! It's thoroughly NOT useful. The only thing worse than slacking off in your practice is feeling like crap for slacking off in your practice. Don't do that.

Optional: Have a book about meditation nearby and read a paragraph, page, or chapter before or after your practice. When we marry even the slightest bit of study to our practice, our practice deepens.



# On Posture



**Good posture for sitting on the floor:** Knees and pelvis create a supportive triangle. For some people, this is the best posture, or the best one to work toward. In the side view (see stick figure 2), notice the straight line of the neck and relaxed palms:

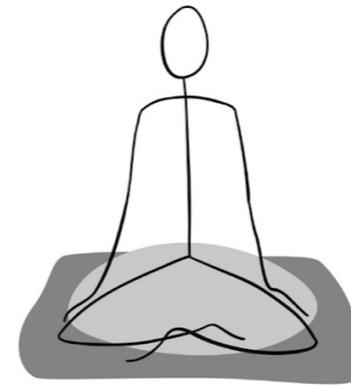


FIG. 1

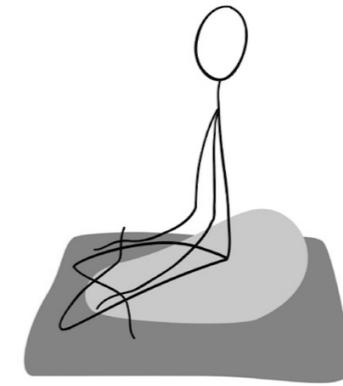


FIG. 2

**Bad posture for sitting on the floor:** Don't arch or round your back too much—look at the potential for neck strain in both cases:

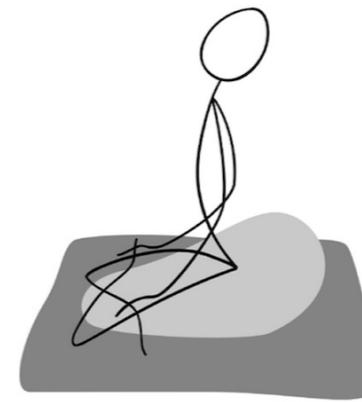


FIG. 3



FIG. 4

Sitting with the knees slightly elevated is fine if you prefer that. **Good posture for those who prefer to sit with the knees slightly elevated:**

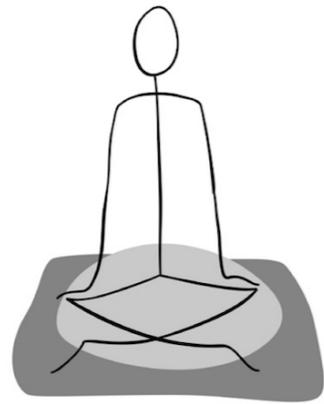


FIG. 5

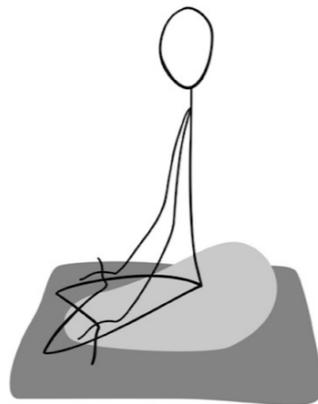


FIG. 6

Some people prefer to sit on a meditation bench, knees down and in front. **Good posture for those who prefer to sit on a meditation bench:**

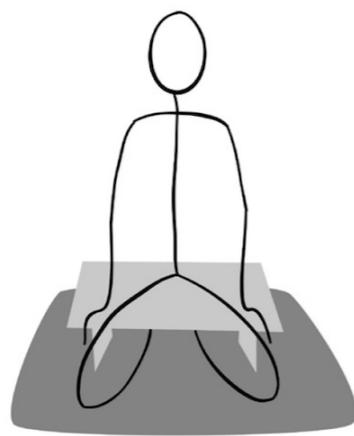


FIG. 7

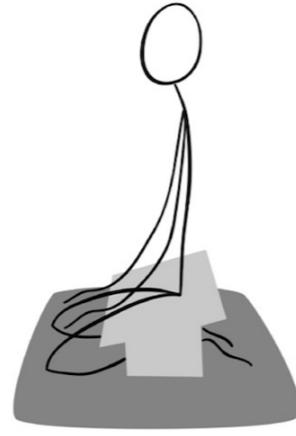


FIG. 8

**Bad posture for those who prefer to sit on a meditation bench:** But there's still no need to slump.

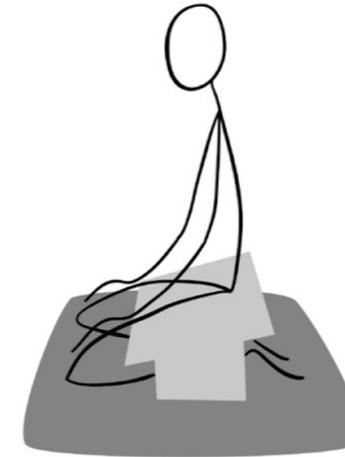


FIG. 9

**Sitting on a chair:** If you choose to sit on a chair, that is great. Sit with your feet flat on the floor and scoot forward so that your back isn't leaning on anything. If you find any back strain in this position, experiment with placing a cushion underneath your feet to raise your knees to be level with your hips.

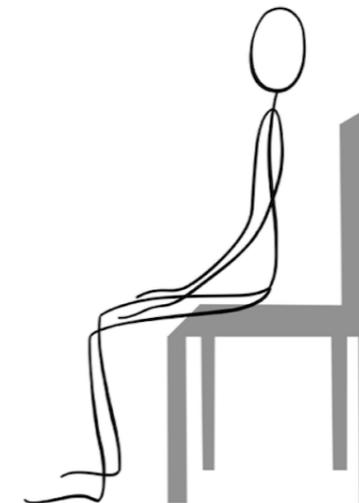


FIG. 11

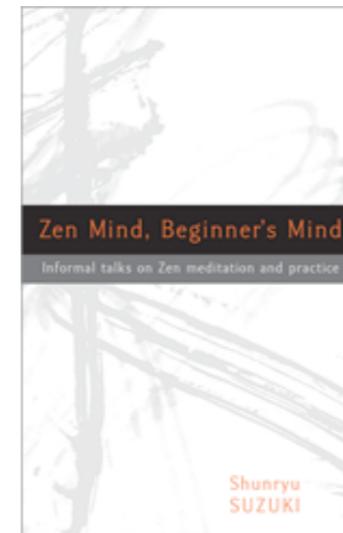
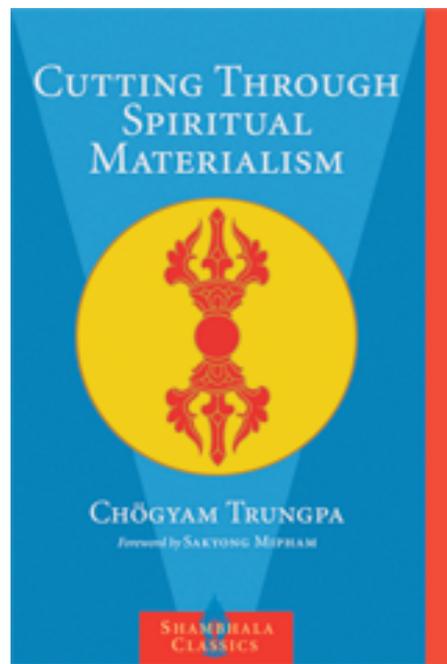
# Recommended Reading

If you wish to learn more about our practice here are a few books I recommend:

## Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism

by Chogyam Trungpa

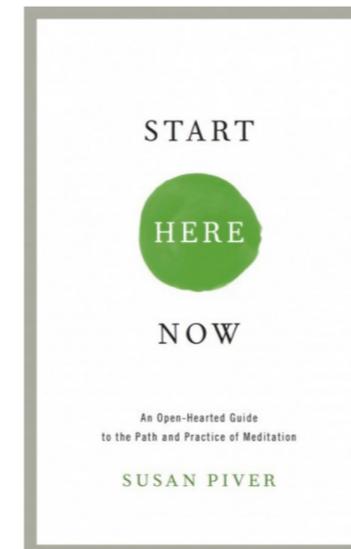
Early in my practice, I asked my instructor what I should read to gain additional insight into the practice. Without hesitation, this book--and Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind by Shunryu Suzuki (below). Now, as a meditation instructor myself, I make the same suggestions. This book is a primer for making your practice a route to liberation rather than additional confusion.



## Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind

by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

This book also stands as one of the best books ever written about the practice of meditation. Although I don't practice zazen, I find that every word also applies to my own practice because Suzuki Roshi cuts through cultural forms to reveal the heart essence of meditation practice. Thank you, Suzuki Roshi.



## Start Here Now

by Susan Piver

Sets out the Open Heart Project view of meditation, on which this program is based.



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## Going Forward

If you would like to practice together daily, please join the Open Heart Project Sangha.

Sangha membership benefits include:

- *Get started with a 7-Day Meditation Quickstart audio program*
  - *Keep your practice going with a daily audio meditation*
- *Go deeper with our 30-minute live video talks with a Buddhist teacher every weekday*
  - *Attend a monthly live class with Susan to ask questions and share reflections*
  - *Continue the exploration through free access to many online classes with Susan*
- *Access to hundreds of on-demand meditation videos and talks in the meditation library*
  - *Connect with fellow Sangha members via our private forum*

***A free OHP t-shirt + signed copy of **Start Here Now** and **The Four Noble Truths of Love**  
for new annual members***