

Portable Mindful Strategies for Stress Management and Self-Care: *Mantram Repetition Program*

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Objectives

1. Identify the difference between a “mantra” and “mantram”— one component of the Mantram Repetition Program, a spiritually-based intervention to manage symptoms.
2. Describe components of the Mantram Repetition Program and its application for training attention and calming the mind, body, and spirit.
3. Describe research that demonstrates positive health outcomes of the Mantram Repetition Program in a variety of groups.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. **What is a mantram?** A mantram is a spiritual word, phrase, or brief prayer that we repeat silently to ourselves to calm the body, quiet the mind and improve concentration to restore the spirit. It can be repeated at anytime, anyplace, and intermittently throughout the day.
2. **Can I use any word or phrase?** We recommend using a word or phrase that has spiritual connections and has been handed down for generations—it has passed the “test of time.”
3. **How do I choose a mantram?** See list attached. Pick one that has a positive feeling, meaning, or even sound. Try it out and see how it feels to you.
4. **How do I use a mantram?** Use it simply by repeating it to yourself as often as you can—silently, aloud, or in writing. Use it at times when you are calm and relaxed at first.
5. **When can I use it?** Anytime! In the beginning, repeat it when you don’t need it. With practice, you’ll be able to use it during stressful times. Repeat it every night before sleep, and when you are waiting in lines, while walking, etc.
6. **How often will I need to use my mantram?** The more you use it, the better results you’ll notice. Build the mental muscle of your mind. Make it a daily habit.
7. **Will it help me feel less stress? To sleep better? To improve quality of life?** With practice and persistence, yes! The more you use it, the better you’ll feel, think, and be.



How to Choose a Mantram

Much care should be taken in choosing a mantram. Take your time and choose it wisely. Avoid words that evoke negative associations or bad memories. Choose one that appeals to you or offers strength and support. Choose one that is compatible with your religious background and/or spiritual beliefs. Some people have no difficulty choosing a mantram, such as when a word or phrase jumps out at them immediately. Others have to “try it on” and practice repeating it silently for a few days or even weeks, to see how it feels, only to discover that when they decided to pick a new one—they couldn’t! Their minds automatically reverted to repeating the first one! Using that mantram had already become a habit.

Using a Mantram for Slowing Down

Our culture values speed and doing many things at once or multi-tasking. People groan that there are “not enough hours in the day” to accomplish all they want. Such thinking promotes a sense of urgency and the need to hurry through life. Slowing down involves discrimination. Yes, there are many things to attend to—daily maintenance of household and career, caring for relationships with family and friends. Discrimination is needed to decide what is most important, and then do those things at a moderate pace to avoid carelessness and error. Contrary to what most of us believe, slowing down means efficiency! One makes fewer mistakes, has fewer accidents, and becomes more creative.

Discrimination really means setting priorities and learning to “let go” of the non-essentials. This alone takes time for reflection and evaluation, and for some people, it involves risk-taking. It may feel threatening to evaluate one’s pace and realize the need to change and slow down. Nevertheless, slowing down involves making a conscious effort to choose wisely each day and in each activity—all aspects of life. The end result is living more fully, consciously, and intentionally.

Using a Mantram for Developing One-Pointed Attention or Mindfulness

Mantram repetition forces the mind inherently to become one-pointed with focused attention and serves to raise awareness of the thinking process. Many times, people are unaware of their thoughts and how poor decisions and bad habits are made. The mantram is a very concrete, practical tool whereby “you know when you are repeating it, and you know when you are *not*.” Each time your mind wanders and you bring it back to focus on the mantram, you have an opportunity to increase mindfulness and your ability to control attention. Attention, explained in this way, is a valuable resource that is often wasted. Just as sunlight can be focused through a magnifying glass to create a laser sharp point capable of burning a leaf, attention can be focused on completing one task at a time with efficiency and carefulness.

Stages of Mantram Practice



List of Commonly Recommended Mantrams

Mantrams (pronunciation)	Description
One	Used by Herbert Benson for relaxation response
Om mani padme hum (Ohm mah-nee pahd-may hume)	An invocation to the jewel (Self), in the lotus of the heart
Namo Butsaya (Nah-mo Boot-see-yah)	I bow to the Buddha
My God and My All	St. Francis of Assisi's phrase
Maranatha (Mah-rah-nah-tha)	Lord of the Heart (Aramaic)
Kyrie Eleison (Kir-ee-ay Ee-lay-ee-son)	Lord have mercy
Christe Eleison (Kreest-ay Ee-lay-ee-son)	Christ have mercy
Jesus, Jesus	Son of God
Hail Mary or Ave Maria	Mother of Jesus
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me	Jesus Prayer
Rama (Rah-mah) # (see longer version below "Haré Rama, Hare Krishna)	Eternal joy within (Gandhi's mantram)
Om Namah Shivaya (Ohm Nah-mah Shee-vah-yah)	Invocation to beauty and fearlessness
Om Prema (Ohm Pray-Mah)	A call for universal love
Om Shanti (Ohm Shawn-tee)	Invocation to eternal peace
Shalom (Shah-lome)	Peace, completeness
So Hum (So Hum)	Hindu for I am that Self within
Barukh Atah Adonoi (Bah-rookh At-tah Ah-doh-nigh)	Hebrew for Blessed art Thou, King of the Universe
Ribono Shel Olam (Ree-boh-no Shel O-lahm)	Hebrew for Lord of the Universe
Bismallah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim (Beese-mah-lah ir-Rah-mun ir-Rah-heem)	Arabic—In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful
Salaam (Sa-lahm)	Peace
Wakan Tanka (Wah-Kahn Tahn-Kah)	O Great Spirit
# Haré Rama, Haré Rama, Rama Rama, Haré Haré, Haré Krishna, Haré Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Haré Hare	Sanskrit names of 3 Supreme Beings: "Hare," "Krishna," and "Rama"

***Note: This is not an all inclusive list.**

For Easwaran's mantrams: <https://www.bmcm.org/learn/recommended-mantrams/>

Ways to Use Your Mantram

Practice repeating mantram first when relaxed and before sleep *every night* for relaxation and to create a mind-body connection. Then use it intermittently throughout the day or night, as often as possible, every day including:

While waiting (for anything)

- For a job interview, or in a grocery or ticket line
- For the bus, plane, train, taxi, or other transportation
- For a doctor's appointment or lab tests
- For people who are late

To manage workplace stress

- Prior to dealing with difficult people
- To refocus attention on the task at hand
- To interrupt the stress response and relax

While exercising

- Walking
- Jogging, swimming or bike riding
- Doing any exercise repeatedly

When dealing with annoying situations

- Getting cut off in traffic and to manage "road rage"
- Tackling an unpleasant job
- Struggling with insomnia or nightmares
- Dealing with difficult people
- While on hold on the telephone
- When bored

To manage unwanted emotions *including PTSD* and/or physical cravings

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Hyperarousal | • Re-experiencing | • Avoidance/Numbing |
| • Depression | • Frustration | • Anger |
| • Fear | • Anxiety | • Guilt |
| • Resentment | • Impatience | • Irritability |
| • Greed | • Addictions | • Over-excitement |

While doing mechanical tasks to bring attention back to that task

- Washing dishes, sweeping, vacuuming, dusting
- Sweeping, raking, gardening, watering plants
- Brushing teeth, combing hair, bathing or showering
- Digging, hauling, painting

Other times

- Before meals or going to sleep
- While walking anywhere
- While in the presence of a dying person
- For dealing with pain, illness, or surgery
- When dealing with likes or dislikes
- For ruminating thoughts, compulsions and/or addictions

Recommended Resources

WEBSITES:

Jill Bormann, PhD, RN, FAAN: <https://www.jillbormann.com/>

Blue Mountain Center of Meditation and Eknath Easwaran's work: <https://www.bmcm.org/>

BOOKS:

Easwaran, E. (2013). *Strength in the storm: Transform stress and live in balance and peace of mind*. Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press.

Easwaran, E. (2008). *The mantram handbook* (5th ed.). Tomales, CA: Nilgiri Press.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mantram_Handbook

The Power of the Mantram (free newsletter from Blue Mountain Center of Meditation)

<http://bmcmwebsite.s3.amazonaws.com/assets/bm-journal/2013/2013Autumn.pdf>

Mantram Repetition Program in 4-part videos

(How to Choose and Use a Mantram; Slowing Down; One-Pointed Attention; Putting it All Together)

<https://www.jillbormann.com/mantram-repetition-resources>

VIDEOS:

Interview about the History of Mantram Repetition Program research with Jill Bormann by Dr. Rick Holm, the Prairie Doc, June 14, 2018 (8 mins):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZb00TVJDZs>

How to Choose and Use a Mantram Everyday: <https://vimeo.com/85223994>

Vets Find Mantram Repetition Helps PTSD Symptoms – YouTube (KPBS April 3, 2012)

5-minute video by veterans with PTSD using mantram repetition for symptom management.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1W87-18ZeWw>

Author's Spotlight featured in the American Journal of Psychiatry (October 1, 2018): "Individual Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Using Mantram Repetition: A Randomized Clinical Trial."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5ixbWeyl_4#action=share

AUDIO/RADIO:

Using Mantram Repetition for Veterans with PTSD: 15-minute interview with Dr. Bormann April 5, 2018 "In the Moment" South Dakota Public Radio

<http://listen.sdpb.org/post/jill-bormann-offers-mantram-research-update>

Research: PubMed of Mantram-related Research Studies

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=mantram&cmd=DetailsSearch>