Why Meditate?

Why would any of us want to step away from our usual activities and devote time simply to sitting down and becoming quiet? To just doing nothing?

Isn’t this wasting time? Or even being selfish? I could be advancing my career, or helping others in some way, or at least earning my living. Or, if I’m going to be unproductive for a time, why not give that time to my family and friends, read a book, watch television, see a movie, go jogging, or whatever?

What exactly is the point?

That’s a fair question, but rather like asking what the point of a mountain range is, or the surf breaking on a pristine beach, or a child’s awe at seeing the starry night sky. Or asking the point of tending a flower garden. We tend a flower garden because we love flowers, we love growing things, we love being alive in beauty. These loves are beyond explanation, but at the heart of a life truly worth living.

Just so, when we experience ourselves in stillness, the body and breath quieted, the mind calm and alert, we can experience a blossoming that moves beyond words. Isn’t a blossoming rose its own point?

In meditation, we step, intentionally, for a time, away from our busy lives. We begin to ground ourselves, center ourselves, and balance all the energies that make up a human being – physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual.

We can, for a time, settle into the center of our lives, releasing ourselves from the many pressures we feel—pressures to resolve something, act on something, fix something, be a better person, take care of someone. We give ourselves a time when we don’t even have to worry about how to amuse or relax ourselves.

Of course, as we meditate, thoughts and emotions will arise, again and again, like waves coming in from the ocean. But for this time of meditation we can simply observe the waves, observe exactly who we are in this moment, accept ourselves as we are and be with ourselves.

An immediate benefit of meditation is stress reduction—and an opportunity for physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. It has been estimated that more than half of all visits to a physician are for stress-related illness.
And as our meditation practice deepens, we can discover that simply spending a little time with ourselves each day can become, in and of itself, deeply satisfying. That for a time each day we can simply be exactly who we are—sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sometimes disturbed, sometimes calm—but free to be and know just who we are in that moment.

This is a gift each of us can give to ourselves, and it is a great gift to all those we live and work with, from family members to friends to colleagues. When our lives are more grounded, we help others around us to find their own balance.

Each of us is at the center of an immensely complex system called a human being—biological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. When we are at peace, when we feel unified and whole, that wholeness radiates out to those around us, just as a pebble dropped in a pool triggers endlessly radiating circles.