

HOW TO BE A TINY BIT BETTER AT MEDITATING, EVEN IF YOU HATE SITTING STILL



By [Kristin Wong](#)

We tend to think of meditation as an exercise in stillness. You climb atop a quiet mountain, cross your legs, breathe in, breathe out. Stay. But what if, hypothetically speaking, you're terrible at sitting still?

Mindfulness meditation has become somewhat of a productivity trend, which makes it easy to forget what it's about at its core. Mindfulness is simply a state, a "moment-to-moment awareness of one's experience," as psychology writer Oliver Burkeman has phrased it in [The Guardian](#); meditation is just the tool you use to reach that state. And yet for many people, sitting still has the opposite effect, making them anxious to the point of distraction and thus rendering the whole thing pointless.

Instead, consider meditative movement, a practice you may already know if you're familiar with tai chi, chi kung, or yoga. [Some research](#) even suggests the therapeutic effects of meditative movement can be useful for dealing with depression or anxiety. "Modern neuroscience fully supports the basic premise of meditative movement," said Peter Payne, a researcher at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth, in an email. Payne studies the cognitive effects of meditation and co-authored the paper [Meditative Movement for Depression and Anxiety](#) with Dr. Mardi Crane, another researcher and assistant professor at the Geisel School of Medicine. "Recent advances in affective neuroscience, or the neuroscience of emotion, make it clear that movement, sensation, feeling, imagery, and thought form a dynamic whole, and that health and well-being are best supported by addressing all of these aspects," he added.

Meditative movement differs from exercise in that, instead of just counting reps like you would in a gym and going through the mechanical motions, you focus on the movement itself. "When you can actively feel the movements, you give your mind something to focus on so it doesn't wander," said Ryan Hurst, co-founder and head coach at GMB Fitness, who teaches his clients meditative movement. You don't have to overthink this: You can start with some basic tai chi moves, like the [pushing hands exercise](#), or some simple crawling movements, [like this one](#), that don't require any real fitness skills. Notice how your arm feels as you move it, or how your weight is distributed as you press your hand into the floor. If you're holding your breath, exhale. There, now, look at you, meditating!