



Gary Simmons is best described as an entertainer who teaches the life skill of non-violent self defence. He mixes a career of entertainment, media and promotions with being a 5th Dan black belt Taekwondo master instructor, coach and national Taekwondo referee.



Featured Article by **Gary Simmons**

I call the following meditation technique 'Finding Your Edge'. The aim is to regain some clarity and focus when you first become aware of being ego driven, tense or emotional in a way so no one else will notice.

For a lot of people, the word meditation conjures up the stereotypical image of either a yoga, Tai Chi or martial arts practitioner assuming a 'mysterious' body position, sitting cross legged with the eyes closed and hands resting on their knees with a couple of fingers on each hand forming a circle (Lotus posture). This type of perception can sometimes lead the uninformed to believe that meditation is only a fringe or 'new age' activity; something only tied to eastern cultures with little or no relevance to the modern west.

As a whole, the practice of formal meditation is a very positive and worthwhile life skill with benefits including being able to relax at any time and being able to confidently make decisions. Meditation has been a valid and worthwhile pursuit for thousands of years. Logic suggests that for something to be so enduring, the claims about its benefits must have some element of truth. There are many books, discs and teachers available who can help you discover the many and varied benefits of meditation.

Formalised meditation may involve sitting in the 'lotus posture' however in essence meditation is only focused concentration, calm and breathing — that's all. Meditation is a way to regulate an ample supply of oxygen into the body, mind and spirit.

The actual practice of meditation involves concentrating on a single focal point such as the flame of a candle or soft soothing music. By maintaining awareness and attention on a single focal point, it becomes possible to quieten the random thoughts that naturally dart around inside the head. To sustain this concentration, meditation involves monitoring the breath or more specifically, the pattern of breathing.

By achieving this 'awareness state' of your breathing, all thoughts of the past or future disappear. The mind is totally 'in the moment' absorbed in the present, because all awareness becomes internalised on 'monitoring' the breath — in and out, in and out...

'Finding Your Edge' begins by ideally being in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, although this is not essential. Close your eyes, which is also optional and get comfortable. If you are in a situation where it is only possible to stand, then standing is okay. The basic idea is to focus your attention on the lower abdomen (danchon). The exact area can be found by placing your hand sideways on your lower stomach with the side of the thumb over the bellybutton. Concentrate your breathing on this region below the little finger, one hand span away from the belly button.

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When you are comfortable, slowly breathe in through the nose so this lower abdomen area rises and then falls on the out breath, through the mouth. This sort of movement can take a little practise because quite often this muscle group can be lazy through lack of use. An effective way to initially develop this particular breathing technique is to lie down flat on your back and place both hands over the 'danchon' area. As you gently breathe in through the nose, feel the lower abdomen expand up in your hands, hold it for a couple of beats and then contract it back down by exhaling out through the mouth.

To quickly 'Find your Edge', slowly breathe in through your nose in the above way to the count of four. Hold your breath to the count of four. Breathe out through the mouth to the count of four, hold for four and keep repeating. The aim is to maintain this constant cycle or rhythm of breathing. This breathing technique is a means to instantly relax or focus yourself at anytime while in the office, the dentist's chair - or anywhere immediately prior to an important meeting.

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