

Meditation for Hackers

Sai Emrys (saizai)
ccc@saizai.com



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<http://s3.amazonaws.com/saizai-public/26c3meditation.pdf>

Overview

What is meditation?

Why learn it?

Practical basics intro

Practice – Feedback – Meta

Short Q&A

5 min break (in ~1hr)

Variants

Dangers

Scientology techniques w/ demo

General principles

Discussion

Who am I?

IANAG (& IANYG)

Ruby on Rails hacker / consultant / entrepreneur

Language creator (see <http://conlang.org>) & polyglot

Professional, trained massage therapist

UCB BA CogSci; applying to PhD CogNeuro

mirror neurons, empathy, brain/computer interfaces

Interested in secure p2p botnet & db design

Email, LJ, AIM, IRC, Skype, etc: saizai (.com)

<http://s3.amazonaws.com/saizai-public/sai%20-%20resume.pdf> if you really care

Working definition

A primarily *mental* technique to *intentionally* change one's own mind-state, both temporarily and long term, especially to “*flow*” states.

Benefits

Evoke desirable and/or unusual mindstates

Calmness, peace, energy, buzz, fun hallucinations,
pain control, non-attachment, compassion, etc etc

Control mindstate day-to-day (vs 'rollercoaster')

Partial immunization to manipulation

More on this in pt 2, w/ focus on Scientology

Self-awareness

Lots more depending on your worldview / religion

What I will NOT talk about

Doctrine / Dogma / Religious beliefs

Mechanism

Symbol-set appropriate for *you*

Two-person techniques (except Scn)

Everything

Let's talk later if you want

Two perspectives

“Traditional”

taught by authority (only)
dogmatic doctrinal baggage
technique secrecy
indoctrinating / devotional
anti- or psuedo-scientific
one category of scripted,
specified techniques
special setting state change

Hackish

self-taught
dogma-averse
obscurity bad crypto good ☺
sheeplehood bad
it works, bitches thx xkcd
broad categories of
customized techniques
pervasive state changing

General advice

Ergonomics are important – to a point

do sit up straight; don't worry about lotus

be comfy

Look for patterns & adapt them

Do it 24/7, not just at special times

More on this later...

let's get practical

Basic categories of fundamental techniques*

In rough order of ease to learn:

1-point: concentrate on one thing

0-point: empty your mind of everything

∞ -point: be aware of everything

* These are my own terms, because I don't know others doing this meta-comparison.
Email me if you do (or have sexier terms I can use).

Your attention please

Cellphones etc off

If you're literally “on call” put it on vibrate

Breath focus

5s Breathe in fully, start from belly

1s Hold it

5s Breathe out fully

1s Hold it

Try it now

count subvocally
too easy? add 1s in & out

Later on: 20/3/20/3

Claim: in > out = invigorating; out > in = relaxing

1-point Techniques

What makes it work:

non-interruption (easy to lose flow)

exclusive concentration (stop thinking about work / sex / etc pls)

levels of detail (have you ever *really* looked at your hand, man?)

Result:

improved focus

more efficient work

high-energy calmness

unawareness of outside things *

Everyone awake?

Next exercise is hard to do if you're sleepy

So...

Stand up

Stretch

15 jumping jacks

Stretch again

“How hard can it be”, eh?

Sit up straight, feet flat, be comfortable

Close your eyes

If you start thinking about something:

1. Acknowledge it
2. Turn it away for now
3. Pay attention
4. If meta, recurse (thx Crutcher)

Don't worry about time – that's what timer's for

Try it now

0-point Techniques

What makes it work:

silencing inner monologue (caveat: not everyone has one)

non-attachment (if you're thinking about it, you're not doing it right)

awareness of subtle sensations * (usually masked by noise)

Result:

contemplation without self-handicapping

percolation

stillness

dissociation *

* Warning on dissociation

Non-attachment ≠ dissociation

dissociation: stop feeling

non-attachment: stop influence of feelings

Be careful what you wish for – OK **in moderation**

dissociating painful things works – in short term

Very dangerous in excess

addicting & self-perpetuating

problems worsen if not dealt with

mental “brittleness” – strong shell but weak coping ability

Listen carefully

Be vewy vewy quiet

Notice every sound source

Call 'em out

(otherwise: pls shut up)

Listen to just one

do *not* allow it to filter into background

Repeat

sure you didn't background something?

Try to track 'em all

∞ -point Techniques *

What makes it work:

high volume of stimuli (nature, people)

low depth of processing (vs 1pt's high def / low volume)

foregrounding otherwise filtered stuff

Result:

easier start for ADD types (most of this audience?)

social phobia attenuation (“systematic desensitization”)

increased bandwidth (caveat: only perceived? research unclear)

* More like $\lim(x), x \rightarrow \infty$ ☺

Applied technique: hypnosis

I promise not to do anything bad

In a few minutes, you'll do it yourself

Here's the script...

Part 1: “Inner sanctum” Hypnosis

1. Relax

1. Breathe in and tense all your muscles
2. Breathe out and release them
3. Repeat 10x

2. Experience yourself walking down 10 steps

3. Experience a safe, cozy place

4. Make it vivid in all senses

5. Give it a strong, integrated symbol

6. Experience yourself walking back out

Part 2: Invocational self-hypnosis

Remember the steps?

1. Do it again, yourself

don't worry, I'll time you

2. Think of your symbol while going in

(Self-)hypnosis

What makes it work:

downward, counting, pleasant symbolism

relaxation

idiosyncratic symbols

Result:

strongly dependent on symbolism used

Invocation

What makes it work:

- classical conditioning

- associate desired mindstate with symbol

- stimulus is very idiosyncratic, associational

Result:

- much faster to get in / out of state

- more consistent effect

Caveat:

- advanced use doesn't have “symbols” per se

(Brief)
Questions?

5 minute break

Variety is good

These are *not* comprehensive...

1-point Techniques

Breath focus (style, sound, speed, direction, intensity; hyperventilation)

Mantra recitation (om, religious symbol, personal motto, ...)

Prayer / contemplation

Light suffusion

Object focus (easier when high?; advanced: purely abstract)

Really enjoying touch / food / etc

note: w/ practice you may become a walking party trick like me

Concentrated simple work (e.g. sword technique)

0-point Techniques

Observer vs experienter (*neti neti*, *Dune*: litany against fear)

Flame feeding (*Wheel of Time*: “flame and void”)

Some forms of Scientology “auditing” (<http://xenu.net>)

more in a couple min

Military drill training

Achieves *automation* (cf. Grossman's *On Killing*)

Just sitting quietly (*shikantaza* style *zazen*)

harder than you might think 😊

∞-point Techniques

Crowd behavioral observation (hello, FBI/TSA! ☺)

Soft eyes (martial artists should know this already)

Really enjoying nature (streams are awesome)

Noticing *all* the sounds in a room

Hardcore RTS gameplay (anyone w/ 120+ APM in Starcraft?)

cf. Meditation for Hackers: All-Point Techniques - 2600 Magazine, Sum '08
(pdf is on my LJ profile)

Lots more...

Grounding connectedness, good posture

Shielding 'bubble' & other defensive visualizations

Triggering experience foo together with bar, foo causes bar

also used for trigger removal – foo + !bar attenuates foo → bar

note: tamper-resistance possible but a Bad Idea™

Energy play eg hold hands close together, note sensation

note: no good evidence it “exists” externally; nevertheless, the qualia's neat

.... etc etc etc

Suggestions / feedback?

Warnings

Techniques can cause ***strong, vivid*** experiences

strongly influenced by “set & setting”

experience != evidence

e.g. out of body experiences – test 'em

religions *will* insert dogma here

e.g. attribute your experiences to their teachings

you can have false memories

e.g. “past life” regression, Scientology auditing

Warnings

Some techniques especially dangerous

hypnotic states = suggestible

cults use them for brainwashing

Content is relatively unimportant

techniques work by the *process*

corollary: customization works fine

... except by creating *set*

Scientology

Just an easy target – think of parallels elsewhere

Scientology lawyers: suck my academic fair use

Quick poll:

Xenu?

E-Meter?

Clearing Body Thetans (Bts)?

TR-0 Bullbait?

TR-8 Tone 40 on Object?

Volunteer?

(You'll get a safeword and antidote afterwards)

Scientology basic techniques

TR-0 confront / bullbait: nonreaction

TR-1 Dear Alice: confidently saying nonsense

TR-2 ack: using acks to *end* communication

TR-3 dup. q.: “Do fish swim?” - don't be distracted

TR-4 pc orig.: ack and validate anything

Auditing: find past lives' problems w/ “lie detector”

Word clearing: define *everything*

Clay modeling: gain “mass” to prevent M/Us

Scientology advanced techniques

Touch Assist – “do you feel my finger?”

TR-6: 8-C body control – make person touch wall

TR-7: HS Indoc. – ditto, w/ physical control

TR-8: Tone 40 on object – tell ashtray what to do

TR-9: Tone 40 8-C – tell person what to do

Rundowns: many lists of questions to audit

Body Thetan (BT) clearing: audit BT's issues too

Sec check: confess your sins, current or past life

Not unique

Distinguish Church organization from techniques

Nearly all have analogues in other practices

They *do* work – people have *real* experiences

you would too; they're not “weirdos”

... and also lots of BS ones from pressure

cf: Solomon Asch conformity experiments

Be careful whom you try to copy

look at their long-term students

Remember this

Learn *why it works* not *what script to follow*

Different techniques for different situations

Do it 24/7, not just in quiet rooms w/ incense

Do *not* underestimate or discount experiences

Do be skeptical of what they “mean”

Do try it yourself before you get indoctrinated

Get a kitchen timer and don't worry 😊

Thanks

title painting: carolbuchman.net

title glasses: snotpocket.com/braingoggles.htm

first run feedback: Noisebridge

I <3 feedback

ccc@saizai.com

AIM, IRC, LJ, Skype, etc: [saizai](#)

Working on [book](#) – email if interested

One for the road

For the rest of the day:

notice the emotion of every person you see

yes even in big crowds: individuals not mass

empaths: practice recognition w/ non-attachment

where is their cash?

might be easier for aspies (empathy's implicit for NTs)