



Silent Drum: Tips for Rhythmic Meditation

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According to board certified music therapist, Christine Stevens, "Drumming may be the oldest form of active meditation known to humanity." In this article, Christine explores the parallels between meditation and drumming, and shares her perspective on the added value of drumming. She also offers tips on how to use it for meditation.

What could meditation and drumming possibly have in common? I've been asking myself this question ever since I heard world-famous sound healing expert Jill Purce say "The purpose of sound is silence."

First, both meditation and drumming help us get out of our heads and into our hearts. They just go about it in different ways. In meditation, placing our attention on the breath occupies the mind. In drumming, the rhythm becomes a mantra that captures our attention. You can't drum while thinking. Both act as mind sweepers; to clear the mental space of worries and negative thought patterns.

Second, both meditation and drumming are practices that focus on remembering rather than learning. Meditative states are quite natural and simple, but not easy. Drumming is similar. Within the rhythm, we encounter remembering of heartbeats in the womb and rhythms our bodies long to express.

Third, both meditation and drumming are tools to connect with spiritual realms and the non-physical. We travel along both the silence and rhythm paths as portals into the spiritual space where we breathe deeply, relax and re-connect with the heart and soul.

But there is one difference.

Drumming just may get you there quicker. Drumming just may be better suited for hyper, over-active, ADHD types of people, like me! After a drum circle at the Teton Wellness Festival, a participant came up to me and shared that drumming helped her "drop in" to her meditation practice immediately.

Here are some tips on how to drum your way into silence;

- Create a sacred space where you can settle in.
- Prepare to drum by placing your hand over your heart. Take a deep breath. Breath into an intention for your meditation. Place your open hand on the drum and rub the drum in a circular fashion, infusing your intention into the drum.
- Now you are ready to drum. Play a simple pulse, rhythm or whatever feels good to you. Don't think. Don't think. Don't think. You may use a play-along CD as well, like The Healing Drum Kit which includes twenty-seven play-along rhythms for specific intentions. The specific rhythm is not as important as releasing all self-criticism and allowing yourself to liberate your creative spirit.

- Give yourself at least a minimum of four minutes to fall into the beat. Significant biological signs of relaxation typically occur after four minutes of drumming.
- When you are ready, come to a stop by fading your drumming into silence.
- Put down your drum and focus on your breath. Feel the rhythm of your breath gently drumming your body. Stay in this meditative state for as long as you desire in a sitting meditation.
- Complete your practice by gently returning and honoring your drum.

Christine Stevens, MSW, MT-BC, MA holds masters degrees in both social work and music therapy. She is author of *Music Medicine*, *The Healing Drum Kit* and *The Art and Heart of Drum Circles*. The founder of UpBeat Drum Circles, she has appeared on NBC, PBS, KTLA, and is a featured speaker in the DVD *Discover the Gift*. She has trained facilitators from more than twenty-five countries in the evidence-based REMO group drumming HealthRHYTHMS program. Christine has worked with many Fortune 500 companies, survivors of Katrina, students at Ground Zero and most recently, led the first drum circle training in a war-zone in northern Iraq. To learn more, visit www.ubdrumcircles.com

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