

# Meditation for Hackers

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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

$\infty$ -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**

# $\infty$ -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 mindset 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](http://carolbuchman.net)

title glasses: [snotpocket.com/brain goggles.htm](http://snotpocket.com/brain goggles.htm)

first run feedback: Noisebridge

I <3 feedback

[ccc@saizai.com](mailto: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)