

# Sutra Stitching

Clara Vuletich

**Short Description:** This workshop is to explore the relationship between textile craft/handwork and mindfulness. Both hand-stitching and meditation are proven to reduce stress and increase levels of well-being and this workshop uses both the hands and the breath, to re-connect participants to a state of inner calm.

**Audience and Space:** Ideally in a space that is quiet and well lit that can accommodate a group of people sitting in a circle on the floor, or on chairs. A group no larger than 12 is ideal.

**Duration:** 2 Hours

**What happens?:** Participants are asked to bring any woven cotton textiles they own or cherish. Sitting in a circle on cushions/blankets (or on chairs for anyone who can't sit on floor for an extended time), the participants answer the Pre Workshop Questions privately, and then discuss their past experiences of meditation or breath work as a group. Using the Meditation Guide Sheet, the participants then go through the meditation together using a timer. On completion, participants discuss their experiences. Participants then begin hand-stitching, using images of 'boro boro' (traditional Japanese textile technique) as inspiration, where a simple running stitch is used to layer or 'collage' pieces of fabric together. The hand-stitching session could also be used as a group discussion on any chosen topic, as there will most likely be a general feeling of individual and group well-being and connection. The workshop ends with a final meditation from

the Meditation Guide Sheet, and then participants are asked to answer the Post Workshop Questions privately.

**Equipment Needed:** needles, thread, scissors, fabric, blankets/cushions to sit on, timer

**Suggested Timings:**

10 mins: Pre Workshop Questions

10 mins: Share past experiences of meditation

11 mins: Meditate

15 mins: Share experiences of meditation

45 mins: Hand stitch

11 mins: Meditate

10 mins: Post Workshop Questions

**Pre Workshop Questions:**

What is your past experience of meditation/breathwork? What is your past experiences of repetitive textile craft techniques such as hand stitching, knitting, crochet? How does the activity make you feel? How do you feel today?

**Post Workshop Questions:**

How do you feel after this session?

Was there any significant changes to your feelings of well-being from doing the workshop?

If a group discussion took place during the stitching, did you notice any difference in individual or group communication?

**Feedback:** Please feedback to the TED team, ted@chelsea.arts.ac.uk

# Meditation Guide Sheet

## Meditation 1

### *Meditation for a Calm Heart*

Sit cross-legged, in easy pose. You can place a cushion or folded blanket under the buttocks if the knees are sensitive.

**Eyes:** Close the eyes.

**Mudra/Hand position:** Place the left hand at the center of the chest. Palm is flat against the chest, fingers parallel to the ground, pointing to the right. With the right hand, touch the tip of the index finger to the tip of the thumb, and raise the right hand up to the right as if giving a pledge. Palm faces forward. Elbow is relaxed near the side.

**Breath:** Inhale slowly and deeply through both nostrils, then suspend the breath in and raise the chest slightly. Retain the breath in for as long as possible. Then exhale smoothly, gradually and completely, and when the breath is totally out, lock the breath out for as long as possible.

**Time:** For beginners start at 3 minutes, and work up to 11 minutes.

**To end:** Inhale and exhale strongly 3 times. Relax.

This meditation creates a feeling of complete calmness and it technically creates a still point for the *prana* at the Heart Centre. Emotionally, the meditation adds clear perception to your relationships with yourself and others. Physically, this meditation strengthens the lungs and heart.

## Meditation 2

### *Left Nostril Breathing*

Sit cross-legged, in easy pose. You can place a cushion or folded blanket under the buttocks if the knees are sensitive.

**Eyes:** Close the eyelids, and press the eyes gently up and focus at the Brow Point (top of the nose where the eyebrows meet)

**Mudra/Hand position:** Rest the left hand on the left knee, with the left index finger touching the tip of the left thumb. Raise the right hand in front of the face, and press the side of the thumb over the right nostril to gently close it.

**Breath:** Begin long slow breathing through the left nostril

**Time:** 3–11 minutes

**To end:** Inhale and hold the breath comfortably in for 10–30 seconds

This breath practice works on the breath through the left nostril, that has a particularly calming and soothing effect. The left nostril directly affects the right brain and is associated with the feminine qualities of nurturing and emotion.