

No one ever taught us in medical school how to do what I am about to share with you now, but they did teach us about the harmful effects of stress upon our physical bodies and our emotions. We live in a tense society and are expected to shoulder a lot of things and keep a stiff upper lip. Hence, it is no wonder that we carry so much tension in our shoulders, upper back, neck and jaw.

Meditation and achieving the relaxation response have been documented countless time to benefit everything from pain to asthma to cardiovascular disease.

The Hamsa or "I am that" meditation is designed to promote relaxation of the mind and body through focused thought. By repeating the words "So" & "Hum" with respiration it reaffirms our contentment with mere existence and de-emphasizes our thoughts on pain, depression and anxiety.



**Position:** Either sitting comfortably in a high back chair (figure A), sitting in the lotus position (figure B) or laying flat on the floor (figure C)...really any position that is comfortable for you to be in.

**The breath:** Breath deeply in and out through your nose with your tongue resting comfortably on the roof of your mouth. If you place a hand below your belly button and one on your chest they should be rising and falling together.

**The preparation:** Start at your fingertips and try to relax any tension that you feel in your muscles of your hand. Progress your focus up your arms...then into your neck...then into your head...then down your neck to your shoulders, chest and back...then to your stomach and low back...then to your buttocks and eventually to your thighs, legs and feet.

**Focus:** As you breath listen to the sound of your breath. The sound "so" accompanies inhalation and "hum" accompanies exhalation. Let the two sounds quietly reverberate in your time with each breath. After a time of repeating the "sohum" in your mind count an inhalation and exhalation "1" and then repeat "sohum" with one breath. Then take two counting breaths in your mind and repeat "sohum" once. Then take three counting breaths and again repeat "sohum." This can be continued indefinitely, but once you lose your place go backwards from the level you last remember..."3...2...1..." I usually only count up to 4 and back again, but you will probably surpass me.