

Kirtan Kriya (which is pronounced *KEER-tun KREE-a*) is a type of meditation from the Kundalini yoga tradition, which has been practiced for thousands of years. This meditation is sometimes called a singing exercise, as it involves singing the sounds, Saa Taa Naa Maa along with repetitive finger movements, or mudras. This non-religious practice can be adapted to several lengths, but practicing it for just 12 minutes a day has been shown to reduce stress levels and increase activity in areas of the brain that are central to memory.

What do the words Kirtan Kriya mean?

In Sanskrit, a kirtan is a song, and kriya refers to a specific set of movements. In the Eastern tradition, kriyas are used to help bring the body, mind and emotions into balance to enable healing.

What do the sounds Saa, Taa, Naa, Maa mean?

The mantra that is repeated while practicing Kirtan Kriya is designed to be uplifting. The sounds come from the mantra 'Sat Nam', which means "my true essence".

Is it essential to use these sounds during the meditation or can other sounds be used as a substitute?

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From an Eastern perspective, it is believed that the placement of the tongue on the roof of the mouth while making these sounds stimulates 84 acupuncture points on the upper palate. This causes a beneficial bio-chemical transformation in the brain. In addition, Western research has revealed that utilizing the fingertip position in conjunction with the sounds enhances blood flow to particular areas in the motor-sensory part of the brain.

Clinical research has shown that practicing Kirtan Kriya for just 12 minutes a day can improve cognition and activate parts of the brain that are central to memory. Replacing the Kirtan Kriya sounds with other sounds, or replacing the meditation as a whole with other relaxing tasks, has not been shown to be effective.

The Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation believes that the various parts of Kirtan Kriya are each vital to the whole, and recommends practicing it in the traditional way to fully reap the benefits of the exercise. That said, other methods of reducing stress, like deep breathing, listening to music and other types of meditation may be beneficial to your health.

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“I am enjoying the Kirtan Kriya meditation a lot. I will tell others in my book club about it and hopefully you will get more takers – with a donation of course. Thanks for offering the CD. I read about it in the book *How God Changes Your Brain*. I am 72 years old and doing all I can to keep my brain healthy: 3 miles of brisk walking a day, reading many books, lots of fruit and veggies, and meditation. In the past I have done ‘Centering Prayer.’ The finger exercise in the Kirtan Kriya Meditation helps me stay focused. Thanks again.”

Jean Foreman

Grand Junction, CO

How do you practice Kirtan Kriya?



1. Repeat the Saa Taa Naa Maa sounds (or mantra) while sitting with your spine straight. Your focus of concentration is the L form (see illustration), while your eyes are closed. With each syllable, imagine the sound flowing in through the top of your head and out the middle of your forehead (your third eye point).
2. For two minutes, sing in your normal voice.
3. For the next two minutes, sing in a whisper.
4. For the next four minutes, say the sound silently to yourself.

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5. Then reverse the order, whispering for two minutes, and then out loud for two minutes, for a total of twelve minutes.
6. To come out of the exercise, inhale very deeply, stretch your hands above your head, and then bring them down slowly in a sweeping motion as you exhale.

The mudras, or finger positions, are very important in this kriya (see illustration below).



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- On Saa, touch the index fingers of each hand to your thumbs.
- On Taa, touch your middle fingers to your thumbs.
- On Naa, touch your ring fingers to your thumbs.
- On Maa, touch your little fingers to your thumbs.

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