

Om shanti Friend (yes I know that's not Buddhist, but the expression is nice),

Ah the perennial battle with monkey mind. I have been a practicing Buddhist for 31 years and I still can't fully quiet that chattering monkey. The key seems to be the practice of patience and being compassionate with your own self (flawed as we all are). It is unrealistic to think the chattering of thoughts, which has been going on for countless lifetimes, would cease suddenly when we decide to make time for meditation. It's hard but we have to let go of expectations and preconceptions (this "should" be; this "must" be). The chattering is not going to stop. It's in the nature of the deluded mind (that which thinks there is a truly separate self) to fret and overflow with thinking. With practice and patience, and by focusing on watching your breath, you can come to moments of stillness. The patience and gentle compassion comes in as you meditate. When you find yourself losing attention to the moment and drifting away with planning and reviewing and following after the stream of memory connections our thoughts bring forth, don't stress or berate yourself (it's your deluded "separate" self doing this chastising, so it is fundamentally delusional) – just gently bring your attention back to the moment. And repeat and repeat, smiling if possible. In time the moments of stillness get longer and stronger, and the attachment to your thoughts loosens. Your mind will chatter with thoughts. With practice you can consciously choose to not go with them. Acknowledge them and then let them go and they dissipate like the insubstantial mist that they are. Letting go of the attachment is the key. Our core Buddha nature gravitates naturally to stillness, to cognitive lucidity, to the primordial awareness that is that nature. Create space in your meditation to let that natural process flower forth. Nothing really to do, just open to your inherent nature. The ocean of Buddha mind flows in effortlessly. Flow in that and bliss flowers in the moment.

In *Island*, a novel by Aldous Huxley, the citizens have trained parrots to remind them to stay in the moment. The birds call forth "here and now boys, here and now" over and over. Your inner awareness flows to that call all by itself. Breathe in mindfulness and alertness, relax, open, let go of attachment, and jump into the stream.

Peace