



Do You Need a Mantra?

Meditating with prayer beads is simple. Hold a bead between your fingers, say your prayer, then move to the next one. The simple rhythm of touching the beads, or even just wearing them, keeps you grounded in the here and now.

SOME MANTRAS, CHANTS, AND PRAYERS

- *The Serenity Prayer*

For grace and acceptance

- *Om Mani Padme Hum*

“The jewel in the lotus,” considered the most beneficial Buddhist mantra

- *Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi*

For being of service

- “*Om*,” “*One*,” or “*All Love*”

To connect with the infinite universe and divine love

- “*Every day in every way,*

I am getting better and better”

To improve your outlook and circumstances

- *Personal affirmations, such as*

“I am healthy, loving, and wise”

To accomplish specific goals

When a pebble, seed, or shell becomes a bead, it becomes a prayer.

BEAD

HERE NOW

By JENNIFER WILLIS

My meditation practice needed help, and I suddenly thought of the prayer beads I'd strung years ago. The word "bead" is from the Middle English word for prayer (*bede*), and beads can be tools for prayer and meditation. In the West, a fourth-century Egyptian abbot named Paul would gather 300 pebbles in his lap each day, tossing one away for every prayer he recited. In Nineveh on the Tigris River, there is a 2,000-year-old statue of a kneeling woman holding a string of beads, obviously in prayer. At least 1,000 years before that, Hindus were using 108-bead *malas* for meditation. Beads can be made of anything: seeds, wood, shells, or stone. Some materials are believed to respond to specific intentions. Many cultures believe that rose quartz attracts love or peace; jade is often associated with good health. Beads are a tactile reminder to keep your mind on the now. Chanting with the mala to count repetitions can help you contemplate the meaning of the words. Don't worry about how to chant or work with prayer beads; just do it.

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Making Prayer Beads

Choose beads you like: natural stones or ceramic, or cut glass from a necklace inherited from Aunt Dolly.

Catholic rosaries are numbered in 10-bead decades, while a traditional mala has 108 beads and a larger "guru" bead with a tassel. Fifty-four-bead strands are also common, as are the popular "power bead" wrist malas. The Tasbih for counting the names of Allah typically has 33 or 99 beads, but some have as many as 1,000. String with or without a plan.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- *Beads*
- *Beading string or wire*
- *Scissors*
- *Crimping beads (for wire)*
- *Glue (for string)*

If you're making a traditional mala or are using a pattern, first lay out and arrange your beads, then string them one at a time. When you run out of beads, you're done! Tie or crimp the ends together, or thread them through the

guru bead. Attach a charm or tassel as a finishing touch.

If you're taking the unplanned approach, gather beads that appeal to you and cut a length of string or wire that feels right. String the beads, bring the ends together, and tie off or crimp. When tying string, glue the knots to prevent unraveling. Trim loose ends, coat them with glue, and feed them into the hole of an adjoining bead to hide them.

For meditations, see facing page.

Sacred Materials



AMETHYST
is sacred to Tibetan Buddhists. In ancient Egypt, it was associated with intellect and wisdom.



JADE
used in Chinese and Japanese temples, was believed to prolong life. The Maya believed that it brought peace.



LAPIS LAZULI
is associated with the ancient goddesses Isis, Venus, and Nut. It is worn in India for health and protection.



ROSE QUARTZ
was thought by early Chinese to reflect the gentleness and wisdom of the Goddess of Peace.



SANDALWOOD
is common in Buddhist malas. It is believed to transform desires and enhance alertness in meditation.



TIGER'S EYE
was worn by ancient Roman soldiers beaded into battle. Today, the Dalai Lama uses a tiger's eye mala.



TULASI BEADS
are held sacred by Hindus. Christians thought the Tulasi plant grew at the site of the Crucifixion.