

# *The Magic Medicine of Meditation*

By Bernadette Sutherland

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## **About this Book:**

This book was written to help people acquire more knowledge on meditation and to help them understand how meditation can benefit their life. The book includes loads of practical tips and exercises to get you started with meditation. And it contains lots of personal knowledge and experience of meditation. This book does not give medical advice and if you are concerned about your wellbeing, please consult your doctor.

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# The Earliest Recording of Meditation

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The earliest recorded mention of meditation occurred in Hindu scripture approximately 5,000 years ago in India. How incredible is it that meditation has been in existence for so many years! Meditation is truly food for the soul. Meditation has been introduced to Western Culture and many people want to learn more about it. So many of us are looking for inner peace and solitude and meditation seems to be the answer for many people.

## In Buddhism

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In Buddhism the purpose of meditation is to reach “nirvana” (Nirvana is the original term for God Consciousness). God Consciousness is mostly achieved by those who teach meditation and who practice it on a daily basis. God Consciousness can be described as a state of never-ending bliss. Imagine experiencing never ending bliss! Close your eyes and meditate - and be open to the experience!

## The Search for our Deeper Self

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Through the practice of meditation, we can achieve a state of balance, deep relaxation and peace of mind. We learn to see more clearly, to hear with clarity and to be in the here and now, this is referred to as “mindfulness”.

For those on a spiritual journey, the purpose of meditation can be described as an inner journey of personal growth. When we meditate we discover our inner world. We sometimes make the mistake of judging ourselves based on our life experiences. When we get hurt, traumatised,

or punished by our parents or loved ones, we define ourselves based on this experience and lose sight of who we really are and the purpose of why we are here. There is a deeper level to us - a level where love and compassion and kindness resides, where we get to see our true inner being. Through the practice of regular meditation, you can witness your true nature. Meditation activates an awareness deeper than thought consciousness is able to. It is in this new awareness where our life leads us on a path of growth, spiritual awakening and a pure understanding of self and others.

## So why do we practice Meditation?

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There are many reasons why people practice meditation. I think everyone has a different purpose for meditation. Some people meditate to relieve stress, some meditate to relax, whereas others meditate to meet and communicate with spirit energy and guides. And for some this is where they create wealth and abundance in their life using creative visualisation techniques.

I meditate for the sole purpose of relaxing my thoughts enough to allow a space in between them for silence. It is in this space that awareness can be observed. This is where we are given an opportunity to witness our inner self and see things, we are not able to see in our usual chaotic mind.

It doesn't matter what your purpose for meditation is. What matters is that you have time to STOP, RELAX, and be PRESENT. Be the observer, witness internal truth and gain awareness and then CHANGE. What I mean by change is: whatever comes up for you in meditation that is going to improve your wellbeing and your life, then adopt and model it. Whatever it is that we model in our life, it is also modelled to others. We

are not only setting a good example; we are making a difference in the world.

## A Balanced Life

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Meditation is the key that facilitates a balanced life. So many of us live a chaotic lifestyle where we are “time poor”. Our life feels like it never stops even when we sleep at night. Unfortunately, I know many people who don't sleep at night because their brain is switched on "full" mode and they are unable to find balance in their life. I once had an interesting conversation with a group of meditators and recall one of them saying that when we meditate for 30 minutes a day (a restful state) it is equivalent to four hours of sleep. So, get meditating!

Meditation gives us an opportunity to STOP and to BE PRESENT. To balance out our chaos. Imagine a seesaw with an elephant at one end and a mouse at the other. Do you ever feel like you are the elephant - heavy and weighed down by life? If you feel like this, then make some time for change. At least give meditation a go and see where it takes you.

## Benefits of Meditation

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- Reduces stress
- Decreases muscle tension and pain
- Reduces levels of anxiety
- Creates inner peace and happiness
- Increases motivation and confidence
- Increases creativity
- Increases self-awareness
- Helps us feel grounded

- Promotes mindfulness
- Develops intuition
- Improves relationships at home and at work
- Improves the relationship you have with yourself
- Opens your eyes to truth
- Increases your ability to solve complex problems
- Develops emotional maturity

People who meditate achieve a deeper level of relaxation. As we can be inspired by ideas while meditating, I also believe meditation is a source of inspiration for many.



## Bernadette's Definition of Meditation

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Meditation is an ongoing practice of moment-to-moment experiences that cultivate an inner peace - aiming to go beyond thought and into awareness (restful alertness)

## Many people GIVE UP on Meditation

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I hear this all the time: *I just don't know how to meditate! I just can't do it!* As an optimist, I believe anyone can do anything they want to if the urge is strong enough. Unfortunately, people place conditions and expectations on meditation and once they don't achieve this, they

automatically think they have failed and quit. It saddens me that such expectations are placed on meditation. The only two things I usually request from meditation are that you "*sit up*" and maintain an "*erect spine*". The reason I request this is because meditation is about the mind (this is why we sit in preference to lying down - once we lay down it becomes about the body). Ultimately, we maintain an erect spine so the energy in the body can flow freely.

Do whatever works for you. It takes time to find your preference for meditation. Over your lifetime you will be introduced to many styles of meditation. As you discover them do what best suits you - as long as it promotes *stillness in the body and silence in the mind*. Don't give up! The benefits of meditation are too crucial to quit.

## How to Prepare for Meditation (for beginners)

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Below is a very basic understanding of preparing for meditation. It is guided towards beginners only. For those readers who have been meditating for a long time, this information will not be relevant.

### Preparing for Meditation

Some people believe meditation can be practiced at any place and any time. This may be true however to get the full benefit of meditation, we should prepare a place and ourselves for meditation. Setting the scene for meditation at home is important. We want to create an environment that feels comfortable and one that is free of interruption. Creating a place for meditation also increases the energy vibration of the area you are meditating in. Eventually you will be meditating in a vibrational energy that supports your purpose of meditating. Below are some

simple yet effective ideas for preparing the home and the self for meditation.

### **Wear comfortable clothing**

Wearing something that is loose and comfortable for meditation is important. It is very difficult to relax and feel comfortable when you are wearing tight clothing. Your body deserves this time for letting go and releasing—and tight clothes will restrict this intention. I recommend you wear comfortable loose fitting pants and a loose top, no shoes and nothing firm on your head like a headband or your hair pulled back in a tight ponytail.

### **Find a quiet place to meditate**

Finding a quiet place to meditate always makes the experience of meditation more peaceful. Even though we can meditate with noise in the background, it is recommended to meditate in a quiet area. A Buddhist monk once told me that meditation is best done in a quiet, noise free area. When I say noise free, I am referring to an area that doesn't have the television blasting or the kids screaming around you. Noise will always be somewhere in the background of meditation -the birds might be singing; the dog next door may bark or you may hear the phone ring in the background. Unless you are in a soundproof room, you will always experience noise during meditation. Find a place in your home that you can set up for meditation. It might be a bedroom, a spare room or a corner of the lounge room. Once you have found the space that you want to practice meditation in then you can begin to prepare your area of meditation (see below).



## **Eliminate interruptions**

I encourage you turn off all mobile telephones and devices. If you have a home phone then take it off the hook so you have no interruptions during your meditation practice. Nothing is more annoying than being in a deep state of relaxation and being interrupted.

## **Burn candles**

Burning candles sets the scene for meditation. It provides beauty and ambiance for the environment. Scented candles also provide a gentle smell within the air that can be relaxing. There are certain scents that are more focused on relaxation, like lavender, so if you are using scented candles choose a scent that promotes relaxation. It is important to be safe when burning candles. ALWAYS make sure the candle is somewhere where it won't be accidentally pushed over.

## **Burn incense**

In Eastern culture burning incense is very popular. In Buddhism, it is a sacred offering, a way to honour Buddha and his Dharma. The burning of an incense stick symbolises the necessity to burn away negative qualities within one's self in order to reveal the pure self within.

The aroma of incense is typically derived from herbs, flowers and other natural sources. Incense purifies the atmosphere and inspires us to develop a pure mind.

The smell of burning incense can be very calming and inviting, creating an atmosphere for meditation. Just be aware the smell is not too overpowering because this can interfere in your meditation practice. For some people the scent can be too strong and can make them cough. I often burn incense in my meditation room half an hour before my class arrives so the room smells pleasant, yet the smell is not too

overpowering. On special occasions, such as healing nights or full moon ceremonies, I burn incense outside the room to welcome people and to provide a pleasant atmosphere.

### **Play meditation/relaxation music or meditate in silence**

You will find a lot of people play gentle relaxation music while they meditate. The background music provides a gentle sound that can enhance the level of meditation. Music or silence is your own preference so experiment with both until you find which of them you most prefer. In all my years of meditation, I prefer silence. Silence provides me the freedom to gently invite a deeper level of stillness, a space in between thoughts to obtain awareness.

### **Sit in a comfortable position**

It is recommended you always have an erect spine while meditating. The importance of an erect spine in meditation is fundamental. If the spine is not erect the energy cannot flow freely through the body. An erect spine also supports the body and prevents it from falling forward or bending, which blocks the flow of energy. Using a meditation stool, sitting on the edge of your chair, or having a supportive pillow under your buttocks can help prevent the spine from slouching. I have a meditation stool I use for all my meditations. It offers me a supportive erect spine and allows the energy to flow more easily through my body.

## Setting the scene for meditation

- Find a quiet place for meditation
- Eliminate any interruptions
- Burn candles or incense (optional)
- Play meditation/relaxation music
- Wear comfortable loose clothing
- Sit in a comfortable position (either on the floor or sitting in a chair)
- Hold an erect spine
- Start the meditation



## Breathing techniques

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Learning to breathe is the first stage of learning meditation. Breathing can be a powerful tool for meditation. Many traditional meditational systems use breathing techniques to regulate the breathing pattern which helps to calm the mind.

The first thing to learn about breathing is to breathe through the nose. Many people believe that nasal breathing filters out the dangerous elements or impurities in the air, thereby making use of the full system nature gave us.

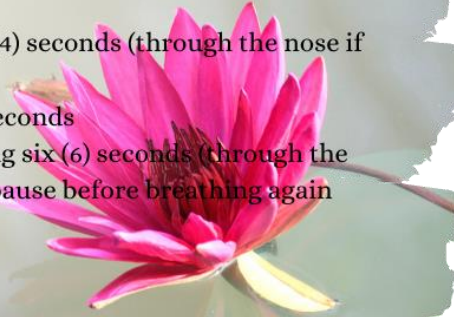
When we breathe through the mouth, we not only shortcut the system; we also allow the impurities to enter our body freely.

While we breathe through our nose we are breathing in warm air that is a suitable temperature for our body. Some believe that when we breathe in cold air through the mouth it can cause respiratory illnesses.

## Gentle Calming Breathing Technique

sitting or

- Ensure you are comfortable either sitting in a chair or lying on the floor
- Now take a breath in for four (4) seconds (through the nose if possible)
- Hold your breath for two (2) seconds
- Now release your breath taking six (6) seconds (through the nose if possible) then slightly pause before breathing again (repeat above)



## The Count of Four Breathing

- Inhale through the nose, hold for a count of four (4), then exhale for a count of four (4).
- Repeat this five (5) times



## Counting Technique

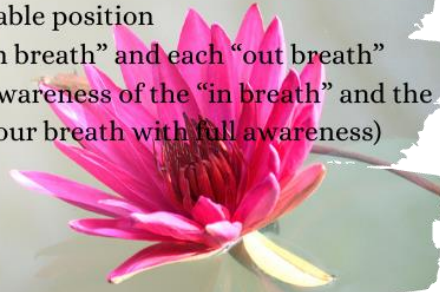
Many people believe this technique is easy. But you will soon discover how difficult it is to concentrate on even a basic body function such as breathing:

- Sit comfortably
- Breathe in and breathe out slowly, counting each breath from one (1) to ten (10)
- When you reach ten (10), go back to one (1) and start again.



## Breath Awareness

- Sit or stand in a comfortable position
- Be fully aware of each “in breath” and each “out breath”
- Continue to have a full awareness of the “in breath” and the “out breath” (watching your breath with full awareness)



## Relaxation

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Relaxation is paramount to meditation. Below is a "*Relaxation Script*" and a "*Basic Relaxation Exercise*" for you to practice personally or to use in a group environment. I believe that relaxation is an important aspect of meditation. When we are able to relax the body, the mind will follow.

I encourage you to allow the body to relax as much as you can to promote a deeper level of relaxation before meditation. It is difficult for the mind to relax when the body is restless. I believe the mind plays an important role in relaxing the body, however the body needs to let go and relax for the mind to be able to reduce thought/s in preparation for awareness and awakening.

Relaxation is a process that reduces the wear and tear on your mind and body.

# Relaxation transcript By Bernadette Sutherland

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- Very gently close your eyes
- Make yourself comfortable either lying down or in a seated position
- Notice what happens to your body as you close your eyes
- Are you experiencing any tension in the body or does the body feel restful?
- Now bring your awareness to the breath
- Notice the breath – I breathe in – I breathe out
- Allow the breath to naturally relax the body
- Feel the body becoming very heavy – gently relaxing
- Now bring your awareness back to the breath - I breathe in – I breathe out
- Now give your body permission to relax
- Breathe deeply into the entire body - quietly relaxing.
- Short Pause (approximately 5 minutes)
- Now bring your awareness to the head - using the breath, gently relax the head
- Now bring your awareness to the neck and shoulders -using the breath, relax the neck and shoulders
- Now bring your awareness to the chest - using the breath, I now relax the chest
- Now bring your awareness to the right arm - using the breath, I now relax the right arm
- Now bring your awareness to the left arm - using the breath, I now relax the left arm
- Now gently bring your awareness into the entire back - using the breath, I now relax the back
- Now bring your awareness to the stomach - using the breath, I gently relax the stomach

- Now bring your awareness to the buttocks - using the breath, I now relax the buttocks
- Now bring your awareness to the thighs and knees - using the breath, I quietly relax the thighs and knees
- Now bring your awareness to the calves - using the breath, I now relax the calves
- Finally bring your awareness to the ankles, feet and toes - using the breath I now relax the ankles, feet and toes
- I now relish the body in this relaxed state.
- I breathe in – I breathe out
- The body is open to being relaxed – feeling the tension gently moving away from the body
- I notice a sense of calmness surrounding the body
- As I gently breathe in – and gently breathe out
- Moment by moment the body is gently and peacefully relaxing.
- I return to the breath - I breathe in – I breathe out
- I fall deeply into a calm state of mind and as I do this my body becomes deeply relaxed
- The body is now completely relaxing
- I feel a warm calmness move over my body
- I am surrounded by a sense of stillness
- I am restful in this calm state of relaxation
- From the top of the head to the tip of the toes I invite a sense of tranquillity into the body
- I find myself deeply relaxed
- Moment by moment the body is gently and peacefully relaxing
- I am surrounded by a sense of stillness
- I am peaceful
- Quiet
- Relaxed
- Long Pause (Approximately 7-10 minutes)

- Soon it will be time to bring your awareness back from this relaxed state
- And as you do this notice that the body was able to relax.
- Short Pause (Approximately 4 minutes)
- Now slowing become aware of your surroundings
- As you gently bring your awareness to the feet
- Notice the temperature and position of the feet
- Now bring your awareness into the hands
- Again, notice the temperature and position of the hands
- I now bring my awareness to the breath
- I watch my breath
- I breathe in, I breathe out
- I now open my eyes
- As I open my eyes, I notice I bring back a relaxed body and a relaxed state of mind
- With my eyes open - I am now fully present in the here and now, feeling relaxed, calm and completely at peace.

*In nature I am grounded.  
In meditation I am connected to my true self*



## Relaxation Exercise by Bernadette Sutherland

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1. Find a quiet and comfortable position either sitting up or lying down. Try to wear comfortable clothing, nothing too tight. Once you have found that relaxing position then close your eyes.
2. Concentrate on taking three (3) deep breaths, then return to normal breathing, feeling calm and relaxed.
3. On the out breath; say the word “relax” in a gentle voice. Do this several times as you feel yourself becoming more relaxed.
4. Try and imagine a beautiful scene, somewhere where you will feel relaxed. e.g. laying on the beach listening to the waves crashing in or sitting on top of a hill admiring the beautiful views, the green grass, the birds singing, and the sun shining brightly. Continue to breathe and imagine the scene of your choice several times.
5. When you have reached the point of relaxation, take a slow deep breath, open your eyes, stretch your body and when you are ready get up slowly.

## Meditation Techniques

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Below are some basic meditation techniques you might find very useful as a starting point for learning about meditation. Remember: learning to meditate can only come with practice. Even though meditation theory is helpful, the true benefits of meditation are experienced through the practice of meditation.

### 21 Breaths Meditation

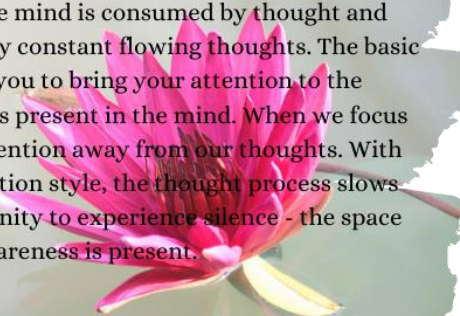
Gently observe the breath – on each out breath, count the breath 21 times

Once you have completed the above, do it two (2) more times



## The Basic Breath Meditation

The basic breath meditation is when you sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes and gently bring your attention into the breath. When meditating people experience a busy mind, we call it "The Monkey Mind". This is when the mind is consumed by thought and the meditation is interrupted by constant flowing thoughts. The basic breath meditation encourages you to bring your attention to the breath when a thought becomes present in the mind. When we focus on the breath, we move our attention away from our thoughts. With ongoing practice of this meditation style, the thought process slows down and you have an opportunity to experience silence - the space in between thoughts where awareness is present.



## A Simple Meditation Practice

### Step 1

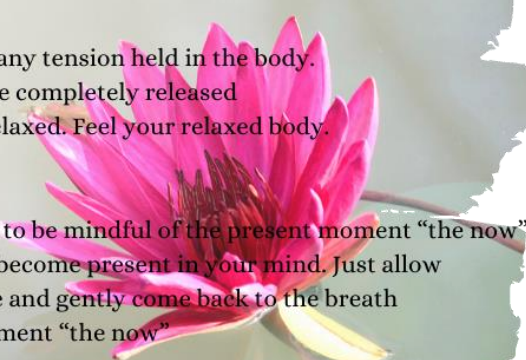
- Sit in a comfortable upright position
- Close your eyes
- Gently bring your awareness to your breath- notice the in breath and the out breath
- Now observe your natural breathing rhythm

### Step 2

- Gently bring your awareness into the body
- Scan your body from head to toe, releasing any tension held in the body.
- Now allow the tension held in the body to be completely released
- Now gently imagine your body becoming relaxed. Feel your relaxed body.

### Step 3

- As your body is relaxed, now allow yourself to be mindful of the present moment "the now"
- Thoughts from the past and the future will become present in your mind. Just allow the thoughts to come and go without resistance and gently come back to the breath
- Now allow yourself to sit in the present moment "the now"
- Have no expectations - just be present
- Remain here for as long as you can and when you are ready gently open your eyes and return your awareness into the present moment.



# Mantras

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Mantras are a combination of powerful words that carry their own unique vibration. A mantra is a word or sound repeated to aid concentration in meditation.

The word Mantra is derived from the combination of two Sanskrit words- “man” meaning “mind” and “tra” meaning “liberation” or “freedom”

Mantras can be spoken, chanted, sung, or even thoughts that can be practiced inwardly and silently. Using your own voice empowers each mantra with your own unique vibration – one that is perfectly attuned to your body’s needs.

## Mantra 1

Om Gam, Om Gam, Om Gam, Ganapataye, Namah

Salutation to Ganesha, remover of obstacles and creator of successful new beginnings.

Om Gam (pronounced Gum)

Om Gam

Om Gam

Ganapataye Namah



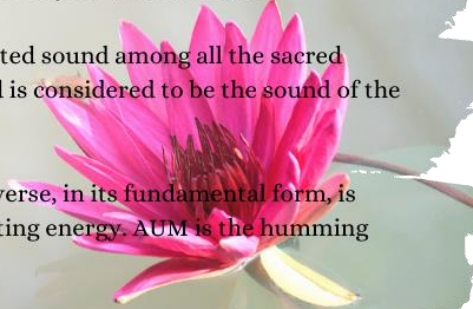
## Mantra 2

### OM or AUM

OM or AUM is the most important and significant word of Mantra tradition. It is considered to be the root mantra of all mantra. In a majority of Mantra, you will find AUM.

AUM is the most often chanted sound among all the sacred sounds on earth. This sound is considered to be the sound of the existence.

It is believed the whole universe, in its fundamental form, is made up of vibrating, pulsating energy. AUM is the humming sound of this cosmic.



## Mantra 3

### Om Namah Shivaya

It means "I bow to Shiva." Shiva is the supreme reality, the inner self.

It is the name given to consciousness that dwells in all.

Shiva is the name of your true identity- yourself.



## Definitions and Intentions

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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century meditation has many definitions and intentions. There are many ways to practice meditation and many intentions or themes. In my experience the purpose of meditation is to move beyond thought consciousness and into pure consciousness (awareness). I truly believe that awareness is the finest gift you can ever receive in this lifetime. Awareness promotes personal and spiritual growth; it enforces

change and evolution. What I mean by evolution is once you have witnessed the internal dialogue - or new awareness (your higher-self talking to you) - and you adopt this in your life, then evolution is inevitable. We can only evolve once our awareness has become our reality and is practiced in our daily life.

There are many viewpoints on how meditation is meant to be experienced. These differences of opinion come from people's actual perceptions and personal experiences of meditation. I encourage you to find the method that best suits you and practice this style of meditation. You might find at some point you are introduced to a new method or style of meditation and find yourself changing your practice.

## Meditation as a Way of Life

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Meditation can also be described as a *Way of Life*. Let me help you understand meditation as a *Way of Life*. When one meditates everyday, they are awakening their inner self. They are gaining knowledge and insight. All this knowledge and profound insight changes people's perceptions, experiences and life path.

Change your *Way of Life* by meditating regularly. Do not underestimate the power of meditation. It truly is a life changing experience. If you want to be the best person you can be, then meditate regularly. I know I make it all sound so simple, but trust me it is. With the ongoing practice of meditation your life will change forever. Your *Way of Life* will be so profound, you will have enormous clarity and your life path will appear before you with ease.

If you can make meditation a daily practice - even if you only start with five minutes a day - your level of awareness will awaken gently and your new journey of life will begin. I challenge you to start today.



# Be Inspired by Spiritual Guidance

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Meditation is a great way to receive inspiration. In the last nine years of my meditation practice I have been fortunate to be given several intimate inspirations. Some of the inspirations are a guide to my day-to-day living, whereas other inspirations have guided decisions about my career, my spiritual journey and personal issues.

I have two theories:

*The first theory* is that the inspirations I receive are my “*higher self*” speaking to me. The meditation practice allows me to go deep within and communicate on a soul level which I refer to as my “*higher self*” or simply “*soul*”. Like Buddha said, the truth lies within each and every one of us. I trust my higher self knows the truth.

*The second theory* is my inspirations come from spirit guidance, either spirit guides, angels or loved ones in spirit. In my spiritual teachings I have learnt that when we meditate, we raise our energy vibration, spirits lower their energy vibration, and we meet somewhere in the middle. Once we have met each other in the middle we are able to receive spirit guidance and messages direct from spirits.

This may not sit well with everyone reading this. However, I share this information from direct experience and I am deeply grateful for every inspiration I have ever been given. These inspirations have been a guiding force in my life and I know for sure they have awakened unconscious knowledge that I needed to be where I am today.

## The Highest form of Yoga!

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My husband studied Yoga in an Ashram in Southern India in the late 1970's and is a non-practicing Yoga Teacher. He taught me about the

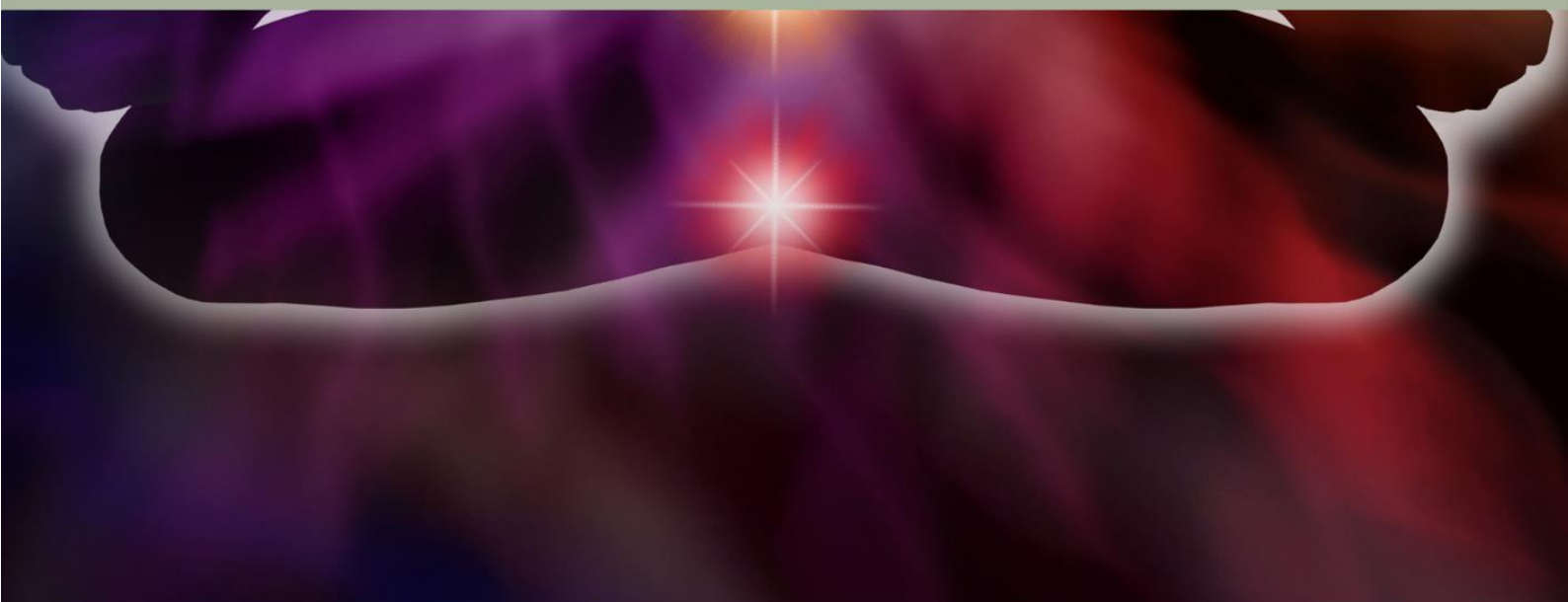
*Highest Forms of Yoga* (stated below) as part of his teachings. Just for a moment imagine that you could adopt these virtues into your everyday life. Now ask yourself "*would my life be different?*" I bet I know the answer to this question for most of you.

There is a lovely quote attributed to Gandhi- "be the change that you wish to see in the world". It's never too late to change. *Never!*

- Serve
- Love
- Give
- Purify
- Meditate
- Realise
- Do good
- Be good
- Be kind
- Be compassionate
- Adapt
- Adjust
- Accommodate
- Bear insult
- Bear injury



# Part 2





# MEDITATION evokes AWARENESS

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My interpretation of awareness is when one brings to the conscious mind what has been dormant in the subconscious mind for a very long time. When one becomes aware, they are in the presence of a unique energy. The energy can be described as a “*clear understanding*” of the self in the events of life. Awareness can also be described as “*light bulb moments*”, where something becomes clear in the mind's eye and a deeper level of understanding is present. When one becomes aware of their *thoughts, feelings and actions* then an opportunity for change is present.

When we meditate on a regular basis our awareness is activated. It is like a light switch being turned on. Symbolically it is like moving out of the darkness and into the light. It is here that our conscious mind becomes aware of internal suffering and aspects of self that require change. It is only when awareness is obtained that we discover an aspect of self that requires a deeper level of understanding. It is in this moment we gain new meaning to either an event, a situation, thoughts, feelings or actions.

For example: if you have an unresolved conflict in the workplace, in deep meditation you become more aware of the issue, gain a clearer perspective, and are better acquainted with all aspects of the conflict. Once you understand the conflict from this clearer perspective you can make the necessary changes to stop the suffering. This does not mean you have to resolve the conflict with the other person or situation - it means you have to resolve the conflict *within*. Humans love the full catastrophe. We love blowing things out of proportion and creating mountains out of molehills. Yet this environment you are creating is still your own creation. If you want to create greatness, then you must become aware of all aspects of self. The practice of meditation helps us cultivate our thoughts, feelings and actions - and we then transform ourselves. *Awareness* is a wonderful gift that stirs up subtle and sometimes profound changes in our life. Make becoming aware a part of

your daily life. Once your awareness is activated on a subtle level it is like there is something inside you that wants more and more and you find yourself on a journey of self-discovery, awakening your awareness. A truly life changing experience.

*In meditation I observe a gently stillness that inspires me  
to follow my internal truth*

## MEDITATION promotes COMPASSION

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I remember attending a Brahma Kumaris Meditation Retreat Centre in 2011 and hearing a facilitator define compassion as *"Understanding with Love"*. This definition really resonated with me. Compassion can be defined as a deep awareness of the suffering of another human being and wishing to relieve their suffering.

Offering compassion to another human being is an act of kindness. Meditation gives us the ability to see a situation, recognise suffering, and show empathy to help someone move beyond their suffering into a place that allows them to feel safe again.

So how does meditation promote compassion? Meditation invites us to go within - into a core part of us that is known as the "soul" or "higher self". I believe the soul and higher self are one, it is just that we use different language and words to describe them.

In meditation you are invited to meet a deeper part of you and be introduced to soul energy. You are probably wondering what I mean by soul energy. We are soul, we are energy, yet some of us get caught up in pain energy. I define pain energy as an energy that involves all of our painful life experiences. This energy is a place where people rest and seek comfort in. Our soul energy is

the energy of who we really are at a profound core level. Imagine yourself as energy, not a physical being, and this will give you some idea of what I mean when I refer to soul energy. Imagine closing your eyes and moving gently into the breath. Now allow the breath to take you on an inner journey, going deep within, going so far that you gently become aware of a pure consciousness. This consciousness is "*truth*". In truth is truth and it is the pure consciousness in action.

Compassion is a virtue that can gently be awakened in meditation. It is witnessed and brought into consciousness. We experience it when we allow ourselves to shift into soul consciousness - to become the observer of our inner world. When we witness compassion, we realise the importance of it in our life. We somehow understand and have a clearer perspective. It's like we recognise this virtue and we realise that if compassion is not present in our life then something important is missing in the relationship with self and the relationship with others. We release judgment and criticism and replace it with compassion and love. Remember: compassion is understanding with love and while meditation allows us to discover our compassion, we are also discovering our pure consciousness.

## MEDITATION increases INSIGHT

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Insight and awareness are similar; however, they have differences. Insight can be defined as having something nearby or within reach. Insight brings forth information that allows us to witness something first hand, as if it is right there in front of you. You see it, it's clear, but what you do with this insight is the important thing. Some will ignore the insight and others will turn insight into awareness. Insight is a wonderful thing, yet it doesn't necessarily bring about change. For example: you might have the insight that your behaviour towards a work colleague is condescending and non productive, yet you choose to avoid your behaviour. So, here we have the insight, but no awareness to take it to the next level. Awareness is the

acknowledgment of behaviour and changing it, whereas insight is knowing it and doing nothing about it.

Be certain of one thing: insight is the beginning of awareness so don't be too hard on yourself if you are unable to take insight to the level of awareness. I assure you, if you keep meditating insight will have no choice but to lead you to awareness.

## MEDITATION creates PEACE OF MIND

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Peace of mind is something we all want or desire for our lives. Some of us think that peace of mind is only for the lucky people or the rich people who have all the money in the world. Some of us think that peace of mind is unattainable and we only experience it occasionally. The good news is that peace of mind is the state our mind is in. If we are constantly in a state of mind that is negative, unproductive, pessimistic, depressed and overwhelmed, then our state of mind will never be at peace. If we learn acceptance, optimism, openness and forgiveness we are creating a state of mind that is on its way to finding peace.

So how does meditation help us find peace of mind? While we meditate, we invite an inner peace in, and around, our body. This inner peace is subtle and most people are unaware it is happening. When we sit for meditation, unconsciously we are preparing the mind and body for peace and quiet time. When we prepare our self for meditation, the mind and body has an awareness of this preparation and moves gently into a state of peacefulness. With regular meditation our thoughts, feelings and actions are in harmony with peace and tranquillity. Peace also changes our vibrational energy and this is reflected in the relationship we have with ourselves and the relationship we have with others. You may hear comments such as “you look different”, “you feel different” or “what is different about you”. A peaceful mind promotes a healthy body, a healthy life and a healthy you and people will be more attracted to the

new peaceful you. We are attracted to energy - and peaceful energy is highly attractive.

## MEDITATION promotes our inner STRENGTHS

Have you ever felt that any inner strength you have is taken up by family, children, work, relationships and home duties and by the end of the day you are completely exhausted. The next day you awaken to do it all over again with complaints such as “I’m tired”, “I’m exhausted” and “I’m sick of the routine, when will this ever stop”? Well let me tell you that you are not alone. What I have described above is very common and, sadly, the reality for many people. We assume that any strength we have has to be used for our daily routines - but this is not necessarily the truth.

So many of us have a tremendous amount of inner strength; however, these strengths stay dormant as a result of the hectic lifestyle we have created for ourselves. We lose sight of what is really important. We neglect the inner aspects of the self and become slaves to our routine. Let me give you a few examples of the inner strengths some of you may possess: creativity, patience, love, caring, open, competence, organised, forgiving, capable, assertive, friendly, thrifty, optimistic and trusting. These strengths are within all of us though it is up to us to bring them out and make them part of our day-to-day living.

When we meditate, we are given the opportunity to witness our inner strengths. In the silence of meditation miracles can happen - the miracle of you is observed. When we observe the self in meditation it can be experienced in a subtle and gentle way - and in some cases without any real knowledge. It isn't until a situation or event arises that we realise our inner strengths. In other circumstances the learning is much more obvious. For example: you may be dealing with a situation with someone close to you and in the silence of meditation you tap into a strength that inspires you to do something about it. You may realise that you are assertive, that it is okay to tell the person how

you feel about the situation and you can do this in a respectful manner with hurting the other person. Whether the strength is witnessed in a direct or subtle way, it is still a blessing that you were able to recognise it and act on it in a way that allows you to live more at peace with yourself and others.

*I am a loving, peaceful soul and I am the only person in my life that knows me completely*

## MEDITATION promotes GOOD HEALTH

Meditation and good health... well, firstly, I must say I am not a medical doctor, naturopath or even a dietician, so I don't proclaim to be an expert in the body. However, I can say from personal experience that when we meditate our mind and body reaps the rewards of the practice. Meditation, as I have mentioned within this book already, is a practice of the mind. When we meditate, we relax the mind and body, and it is in this deep state of relaxation that the mind and body rest, heal and recuperate. It is not just the mind and body that heal -meditation involves our spiritual and emotional body too. When our mind is happy and healing, so is our body. As a therapist I am aware of clients who not only suffer the emotional and psychological consequences of experiences but also the physical consequences. When the mind is unwell, the body is unwell. When we heal the mind, we heal the body.

In meditation we rest the mind and automatically the body gently follows. It also works the opposite to that - when we relax the body, the mind follows. It is different for everyone. As we develop our awareness in meditation our mind is opening up too many new experiences, new learning, new opportunities, new insights and a deeper level of understanding. As we gain this awareness, we are changing, moving and seeking new experiences. Appropriate actions are taken towards unresolved issues on a mental and physical level and it is

here that our body responds to the changes and automatically begins the healing process.

I strongly feel and believe that the body heals itself on a cellular level (remembering I am not a medical expert). In the years I have practiced meditation I know personally that the mind and body heal with regular mediation - and it is on a deep cellular level that healing takes place. Our cells heal themselves without our prior permission and knowledge, yet we only know this by how we think and feel and by the decisions and actions we take in our everyday life. How cool is it that our mind and body heal itself from a simple practice such as meditation?

## MEDITATION makes you HAPPY

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Some of us spend an entire lifetime searching for happiness through approval from others or in material items we accumulate during our lifetime. Some of us fantasise and dream about happiness and wonder will we ever experience it. We observe the happiness in others but struggle to find in ourselves. We read books, watch movies, use affirmation and inspirational quotes but we don't feel that deep sense of happiness.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is they expect others to make them happy. If only my partner did what I asked, or my boss understood me better, or the house was kept clean all the time, then I would be happy. Even though these things make us happy, our true happiness comes from within. It is an internal experience and it is established and understood through self-discovery and personal growth.

So, you must be wondering by now, *how does meditation make us happy?* Meditation promotes peace and invites a gentle sense of calmness and tranquillity. In this calm state of consciousness, we become clearer about things, our body responds, and so does the mind to new ways of living. We

begin to observe our thoughts and feelings in this calm state and it is here that we feel more content and happier. It is the awakening of self-awareness that cultivates happiness.

In meditation knowledge of worries and stressors become present. We may find a constant flow of unwanted thoughts. We don't stop thoughts or push them away. In my experience what we do is allow our thoughts to be there at the same time as concentrating only on the breath. A thought is a guide to come back into the breath. What we are achieving is permission to have thoughts, without judgment, and then gently bringing our awareness back into the breath to obtain a "here and now" experience - to be present without getting caught up in thought.

Instead of in our conscious thinking state, we create a space for our worries to be observed in a state of stillness. In between thoughts are moments of stillness. In this stillness worries and stressors are processed and explored - sometimes without our awareness. It is this subtle self-awareness that observes and releases the old, creates and makes way for the new, and for happiness to evolve.

This gentle evolution promotes awareness and creates opportunity for new choices, new ways of living and cultivating happiness. Thank goodness for evolution. Let me share an example: if you are worried about your job and thinking about changing careers and you are constantly stressed about it; in meditation your thoughts and feelings are observed in a state of stillness which invites a clearer perspective of your issue. You may find that an idea drops into your head. You may now see your worry as a challenge instead of a burden. When our worries, stressors and uncertainties become clearer in meditation, we can then make informed choices that lead us on a path of happiness - instead of staying on the path of distress. Discovering inner happiness can come quicker through the practice of meditation. Just know it doesn't happen overnight. We all deserve happiness! Be the creator of your own happiness.



*Never stop loving yourself because this hinders the way you  
love others*

## MEDITATION improves RELATIONSHIPS

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Relationships need to be maintained, nurtured and cultivated. Relationships are not always easy and unfortunately relationships can hurt us and have negative consequences on our overall wellbeing. Intimate relationships sometimes feel like they are the hardest to manage because some of us, unfortunately, lose our identity in our most intimate relationships. We think that because we have married or committed to someone, we have to give up on ourselves, our dreams and our passions for our partners. This is unreasonable but unfortunately very common in many societies and cultures.

Relationships can be fun, intimate, loving, caring, spontaneous, understanding and nurturing. At other times relationships can be painful, hurtful, nasty and abusive. Relationships with others can be complex and at times rewarding. I believe the best relationship we can ever have is the relationship we have with our self. This is the kindest thing you can do for yourself - be in an intimate, loving relationship with *you*. Some of you may be saying, come on, that's ridiculous. No, it's not! Think about it!

Having a loving and honest relationship with yourself is not always easy. That is because, for some of us, we are taught that others come first and loving yourself is selfish and self-centred. In my opinion this is just a myth. Love yourself and love everything about you. Discover your full potential and let it be your driving force in life. Find your passions and love them too. It's perfectly okay to love yourself.

The ongoing practice of meditation benefits the relationship you have with yourself immensely. It is in this space of meditation that we connect to our

*higher self* and become acquainted to the authentic self. We see our faults and our potential. We see the good and the not so good. We witness our dreams and passions and this alone can change the relationship you have with yourself. We become insightful and we create awareness. We basically see our self in the nude - naked and vulnerable. It is this type of exposure that is liberating. Naked, exposed, ready to try on new things to see if they fit you or not. How exciting we get to be that vulnerable and, even better, we get to love ourselves all over again with new meaning. I'm excited to be naked and vulnerable!

In meditation we evoke an awareness of the self and we gently awaken our true identity or "*higher self*". We begin to move away from old conditioned habits of the false identity and become our true identity. It is here that our relationship with the self changes and the relationships with others change. Awareness of self is awareness of others. Always love who you are and don't ever stop discovering your full potential. Be in the best relationship you can be in - "*with yourself*".

## MEDITATION increases our KNOWLEDGE

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Knowledge is like having our own internal dictionary. This dictionary is based on our life experiences; the places we visit, the people we meet, the relationships we have gained and lost, the pain, the hurt, the happy times, the sad times. Our dictionary will contain countless words and countless definitions. This dictionary is our book of life -our book of knowledge. The biggest mistake some of us make is that we write a dictionary full of our negative experiences and our definitions of life are therefore tainted.

Meditation gives us a chance to rewrite our dictionary. To re-evaluate the content, make changes and redefine the meaning we have given our life. Resting in a meditative state opens the pages of our dictionary and we can read what we have written - we are a witness to the words and meanings we

have interpreted for our life. Once we can observe the meanings we have defined for our life, a wonderful thing happens - we get an opportunity to rewrite our definitions all over again.

Remember: change is a personal choice. However, when one feels disconnected and discontent in life, they should consider removing old content and adding new content to their internal dictionary. Once our dictionary has been rewritten it will contain new, exciting and valuable knowledge. With new knowledge comes new opportunities - and a clearer pathway for one to walk in life.

What type of dictionary do you want to write for your life? What will it contain? How do you define life and your experiences? It is something to think about. I encourage you to meditate and gain new knowledge and rewrite your internal dictionary if required. Enjoy!

## MEDITATION promotes SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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Experts in spirituality would agree that a whole book could easily be written on how meditation awakens our spiritual self. For the purpose of this book, however, I want to share some of my own personal and professional observations of how meditation can awaken the spiritual self. Let me share my definition of a spiritual being: it is “someone who opens up their inner self to the truth, gains insight, knowledge and wisdom and uses it appropriately” A spiritual being does not purposefully hurt others. A spiritual being is very in tune with empathy and compassion. A spiritual being does not gossip and hurt others directly or indirectly with words. A spiritual being stands strong in their truth, knows the truth, and acts out the truth.

My spiritual journey began in 2003 when I started studying for a counselling diploma. It was the content of the course that made me look at myself, my life

and everything around me. Then meditation knocked at my door and changed my life forever. The meditation practice gave me many opportunities to look at myself, my thoughts, my feelings, my actions and my past. I was confronted with demons from my childhood, my adolescent life and then my early adulthood. If it wasn't for meditation, I don't believe I would be the person I am today. I must say, I am pretty happy with who I have become and what I have achieved on a personal level.

Meditation changes people. It awakens people and somehow changes their life path. As someone who teaches meditation classes I have been blessed to witness the unfolding of people's lives and see them change before my eyes. Some of my meditation students have discovered a profound love for themselves - and others - since practicing meditation. It is as if they have looked into a mirror and witnessed their higher self standing there right in front of them. A loving self, a kind self and a true self has been exposed. Yet, what has been most fascinating is watching them discover their passions and dreams. Being able to believe in themselves enough to follow their path, to follow their truth, and to take the required action to meet those desired dreams and passions. Incredible!

Meditation is like the medicine that helps us cultivate and grow into spiritual being. If we take the medicine every day (meditate) we are healing our mental, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual self. We create a beautiful home for the soul to live in. Meditation is truly a gift for the soul to fully develop and become whole. So many people go about life doing what they think is expected. They get caught up on the merry-go-round and stay stuck. At the end of their life they question the poor decisions they've made and regret not living life to the fullest. Don't be one of those people! Grow as tall as you can, cultivate much love in your life, and take the medicine of meditation.

If you want to develop spiritually, meditation is the foundation. It is the one thing I know that will open you up to seeing more clearly. It is the one thing

that raises our vibrational energy. It is the one thing that connects you to the people and places you need to go for cultivating your dreams. Most importantly it connects you to your higher self, exposes your full potential and cultivates your inner spiritual being. Please let me make one thing clear: this does not happen overnight. It takes time and patience and an open mind.

## MEDITATION allows one to breathe

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Our beautiful, amazing, wonderful breath. Without the breath, we die. Our breath is so incredible, it keeps us alive. It gives us life. It grounds us. It connects us. Just for a moment.....STOP.....breathe and observe the breathe.

I think we lovely human beings don't give enough credit to our breath. We just keep breathing and going about our day and never give thanks to the breath. Just for a moment..... Give thanks to your breath.

The most important aspect of the breath in meditation is that it allows us to be present in the body and in the moment. A Buddhist monk once taught me to concentrate on my breath long enough for me to no longer need to concentrate...because then I moved into awareness. I love this. This is how I practice meditation - breath awareness - in silence or with gentle music. The breath not only grounds us in meditation, it also grounds us in conscious awareness.

In conscious awareness the breath can help alleviate anxiety, panic attacks, stress and pain. That is because it brings you into breath awareness (into the body) and away from the anxiety, panic, stress and pain. Next time you are feeling anxious or stressed, STOP, BREATHE and gently allow the awareness of breath to ground you and bring you into the present moment.

The first thing I do when beginning any meditation in classes is bring the class into their breath. This gently allows them to come into their body and into the

now. Awareness of body and the present is an important aspect of meditation. Even though the mind will still wander, concentrating on the breath will gently bring you back into the now.

It takes practice to have awareness of the breath. I challenge you for the next week to be mindful of the breath, fully aware of the breath and at any point you are feeling stressed connect to your breath and see what happens. Don't waste this wonderful thing "*breath*" because it truly is a gift of life and a tool for stress.

Appreciate your breath because it is the one thing that gives you life.

## MEDITATION evokes WISDOM

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Wisdom is defined as "*having experience, knowledge and good judgement, the quality of being wise*". My definition of wisdom is when someone puts their knowledge into practice. Let me explain a little more. When we gain knowledge, insight and awareness, we are then given a choice as to whether we put this new information into practice in our everyday life. I have experienced clients who gain knowledge and insight, yet never introduce this into their life resulting in "no change". So the "*wise one*" is the one who brings awareness to life. Wisdom is about gaining knowledge and using it appropriately. A wise person will see the truth in situations and follow that wisdom.

So how does meditation evoke wisdom? Throughout this book I have referred to the amazing knowledge we gain through silence and meditation practice. In between thoughts are periods of stillness and it is here that knowledge and wisdom is obtained. Every time we meditate, we somehow go on a journey and we gain new insights and information about ourselves in the process. Somehow, over a period of time, we develop a clearer understanding of our life's purpose in meditation and feel inspired to follow the new path that is

put before us. The new path symbolises a rainbow - there are lots of colours, it feels inviting and all you want to do is find your way to the rainbow to seek out new experiences.

Our wisdom continues to develop as long as we meditate. The only difference is the one who meditates learns much quicker than the one who doesn't. The wise self is a true self.

## MEDITATION reduces STRESS

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Stress can be described as a silent killer. This definition is very confronting and the medical industry is now dealing with the overwhelming health factors men, women and children are facing on a daily basis. Clinical and medical diagnosis such as high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, mental health issues such as depression and anxiety are all common health issues caused by STRESS.

Stress impacts the body in such a negative way that the body can only respond by shutting down and getting sick. As a therapist I observe and work closely with the body. I understand those who are under a tremendous amount of stress are those who present with physical and mental illnesses. The body can only take so much stress and we individually - and collectively - need to be aware that stress is hurting us on so many levels.

I see clients who suffer fatigue, headaches, body aches, sleep disorders, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) or the symptoms of IBS, depression, anxiety, chest pain, dizziness, neck, shoulder and back pain. In some of the worst cases people have pace makers, high blood pressure and a history of minor strokes.

So how does meditation help those who suffer from stress? Meditation gives the body and mind time to stop and to be in the present moment. We are so

busy in our professional and personal lives that we rarely get time to stop. Our body was not designed to continually be on the go. Our body was designed to have balance. It was never designed to exhaust itself.

In meditation the body has time to stop and recover from the continual stress and the non-stop activity we do on a daily basis. Some of you may ask how the body heals itself in meditation. I believe that meditation promotes healing when we rest and relax the body. Even if you take 15 -30 minutes of lying down and doing a gentle relaxation exercise, the body will be very grateful. Try it!

In meditation the body gently slows down, the cells, the muscles and the organs in the body have time to slow right down and are completely rested. Even though meditation is a practice of the mind, the body plays a significant role in meditation. Both mind and body relax, promoting healing on a deeper level.

## **Exercise**

Now imagine for a minute that you can stop everything you are doing and just bring yourself into this moment.

Imagine in this moment.....you can STOP..... BREATHE and RELAX.

Just let the body be still..... quiet ..... and rest in the present moment.

Now bring your awareness into the body and take note of how the body responds.

What does your body want to do? Whatever is happening just come back and STOP..... BREATHE and RELAX.

Allow yourself at least 15minutes to really benefit from this exercise.



# MEDITATION is a MINDFULNESS practice

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So, let me get a little bit creative now. Research suggests that mindfulness is a practice of living in the present moment, in the now. In my experience of mindful meditation, it is a state of being present in mind, body, spirit, with sound, smell and vision. We allow our entire being, including our senses, to be set in motion during meditation and we avoid all judgements of any kind.

Mindful meditation is a pleasant and engaging practice. The now is such a precious moment and so many of us just don't know how to be in the now. We are constantly caught up with the past, the future, stressful situations, financial worries, relationship issues...the list goes on and on. Imagine for a moment you were in meditation and all you achieved was stress, worry and upset. What would be the benefit? We cannot avoid life events that cause us stress but from time to time we can stop, breathe and relax enough to give ourselves time to be in the now, no matter how we feel, and consciously avoid judgements.

Try sitting in the sun on a beautiful sunny morning and close your eyes. Listen for the sounds that pierce your ears, breathe in the air deeply and feel the sun on your skin. Be aware of any thoughts, feelings and any sensations. Now return your awareness to the breath. Be present, without judgement. Be in the NOW.

If I could give you one bit of advice in this book, it would be to encourage you to learn more about being mindful and to practice mindfulness in your daily life. Mindfulness develops awareness, gratitude, a deeper level of understanding and emotional maturity. Mindfulness teaches us about life... be the student.

# MEDITATION reduces LIMITING BELIEFS

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As a therapist I am very aware that limiting beliefs are destructive, unhelpful and prevent us from moving forward. They are like having a big STOP sign right there in front of you that tells you that you can't move forward. Our limiting beliefs are quite often established in our early life through childhood conditioning from our parents, teachers, friends and even strangers. These conditioned messages become our truth and dictate our choices. Limiting beliefs are crippling, toxic and self-destructive and make us feel worthless, hopeless and incompetent. Our limiting beliefs can influence our path for life. Now imagine walking a pathway full of cracks and bumps and constantly tripping over and hurting yourself. Now imagine a pathway that is smooth and easy to walk along. Which path would you choose?

We find ourselves striving for happiness, yet it never seems possible because our limiting beliefs are so programmed that we are blinded by the truth. We want to be successful, we want a great job, we want to meet interesting and fun people, yet nothing ever seems to change. Our limiting beliefs prevent us from achieving our passions and dreams, our goals and inspirations. It isn't until we change our limiting beliefs that we can move forward and strive for what is important to us in life.

So, the big question is "how does meditation help our limiting beliefs"? Much of this book has already demonstrated this. We already know that meditation truly is an inner journey. When we come to realise that we are not worthless, hopeless or incompetent and that we are a worthy, capable and knowledgeable spiritual being then energy shifts- and so does our path. Meditation, being an inner experience, shows us our full potential over time. Our full potential becomes our life motivator and we are inspired by new belief systems. We have a shift in consciousness and we create new life experiences that promote continual personal and spiritual growth. When we come to realise that what people say about us is not the truth, we can then let go of

opinions and judgements of others and create belief systems that support our life path. Lastly when we realise and witness our inner truth, we are no longer a victim of our limiting beliefs -we are inspired by our terrific true self.

## MEDITATION resolves FRUSTRATION and ANGER

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Most of us have been conditioned to suppress our anger to avoid any type of conflict or argument. Let's be realistic: anger is a normal emotion. The expression of anger is what is important. Your anger should not harm yourself or others. Suppressing anger can result in destructive, abusive and violent behaviours, whereas expressing anger assertively can be very constructive. A passive person suppresses their anger, an aggressive person expresses their anger in a hostile way, and an assertive person expresses anger with an outcome for resolution.

When we meditate, whether we like it or not, we have thoughts. Some thoughts are helpful while others are unhelpful. In a meditative state we observe our state of mind through a thought process. Meditation is not about thought - but thoughts are present in meditation and are worthy of observing. When we are going through a difficult time, we tend to have more thoughts than normal. This is because we are trying to process and gain a level of understanding of the situation or event or of our feelings. When we still the mind and body in meditation we are able to access a deeper level of awareness. Our thoughts are present and so too is our pain. What we most want to observe is our feelings of anger. How do these feelings impact our thoughts, our body, our life and the situation and others? If anger is making you mentally, emotionally and physically sick then you really need to look at how you can resolve the internal anger and how you can take personal responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings and manifestations of anger. Discover ways of expressing anger healthily.

In my own experience meditation has been a wonderful tool that has helped me understand anger on a deeper level. It has allowed me to gain a deeper awareness of how I have been the creator of my own anger by reacting to others, instead of responding. We cannot blame others for how we feel, because we are the thinkers in our own mind. No one makes us think a certain way...we choose to think that way. Be the observer of anger and learn. Don't let it be your enemy.

Sometimes it is hard to put into words the process that takes place during meditation that awakens us. All I know is that sometimes it is so profound and other times it is much more subtle. What really matters is that you are awakening your higher self, gaining perspective and healing on the inside that changes the outside. Awareness equals change and change equals happiness/contentment. Be content to resolve your anger and let meditation be the tool that supports your personal and spiritual growth.

## MEDITATION and ACCEPTANCE

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Acceptance is a wonderful thing. It is so liberating when one can accept the imperfections of life and self. Yet many of us struggle to accept lots of things. Just for a moment imagine you can accept the differences in people, their experiences, their backgrounds, their attitudes and their belief systems. Imagine the feeling of being an accepting person. Be mindful: just because we accept something, it doesn't mean we like it. You are probably thinking this woman is crazy! Please let me explain. Imagine a friend who constantly complains about everything. These friends can be very draining: they complain about work, relationships, their lack of money... the list goes on and on. While draining, if we can accept the friend for all their imperfections, we then avoid suffering. Let me explain more: when we are non-accepting of this type of person, we get caught up in their cycle of life complaints. Unfortunately, we are drawn into the cycle and we are then impacted. We do not have to like something or someone's behaviours. But when we accept their

imperfections we are then in control of our own wellbeing and we do not get caught up on the turmoil of these types of people. I just want to add one more thing here: we get to choose the people we spend our time with so if this type of person becomes too draining, we can accept their imperfections and gently let go of the relationship. We do not have to remain in relationships with people who do not match our energetic vibration.

There is one more thing I want to mention about acceptance and that is there are so many people who spend their entire lifetime seeking out acceptance from others and fall into the trap of not accepting themselves until others accept them. This is a very gloomy existence. When we don't accept ourselves, we are unable to receive the acceptance from others. This then creates a vicious cycle. This cycle can be described as being on a self-destructive rollercoaster where we are seeking out acceptance all the time yet never being able to see it. We are blinded and caught up in the inability of non-acceptance - constantly creating the vicious cycle, emotional immaturity and emotional pain. I hope you are able to relate to my examples of non-acceptance and why it is important and liberating to find acceptance in situations and people.

Meditation is a great practice to open you up to acceptance. We become accepting of a lot of things - like people, situations and environments. In meditation we open up to our *"higher consciousness"* or *"higher self"*, gaining insight and awareness. I know I harp on about insight and awareness but I know from personal experience - and years of meditating - that many incredible things come from meditation and inner awareness. It is like there is a part of us - let's call it our *"higher self"* or *"soul"* - that knows the truth, that can see beyond our conscious mind. It is this part of us that we access and bring to light in our everyday life experiences. We are activating our inner awareness that is our life teacher. Those that stay the same are ignorant to awareness. Those who keep changing and growing are flourishing with awareness. In my counselling practice I see people who grow because they are enlightened by awareness and I see others who are so ignorant that change is like fighting a war. To be honest I make no judgement on those who

choose ignorance: it is all part of their spiritual journey. One will change when the timing is right - the power of divine timing.

Through the miracle of meditation our new awareness is observed on a heart level. It is felt literally. So together with awareness and heart energy that an awakening of acceptance is present - it is only now that free will steps in and you get to choose what you want to do with this new learning. We gain a deeper level of understanding of the complexities of our non-accepting self and we cultivate the accepting self in our imperfect world. When we realise that acceptance is love, kindness and compassion, we continue to cultivate it on a daily basis. Acceptance is truly a liberating experience.

## MEDITATION and STILLNESS

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Stillness... When was the last time you were “still” other than going to bed? When was the last time you sat on your own in silence? When was the last time you made time for some peace and quiet? I have no doubt that many of you reading this are probably saying to yourself “I don’t remember”. My reply to you is “that this is very sad”. In my role as therapist, as well as in my personal life, I find many people are living life in such a hurry. They spend more time being busy than they do in rest and recreation. We find our relationships, family, work, home life, hobbies and interests are all suffering and so too is our mental, physical and psychological wellbeing. This type of lifestyle only promotes high levels of pressure and stress - creating a platform for burnout. Trust me: you do not want to burnout.

When we meditate, we invite a sense of stillness in and around us. In this stillness, our body is rested and relaxed. Our body is able to recuperate in this subtle but gentle stillness. Everything around us becomes still, it is like an illusion where the room, the air and the surroundings are drifting into a state of complete stillness. In between our thoughts are moments of stillness

and silence and this promotes healing. Stillness promotes mind, body and spirit healing.

Stillness is like a miracle drug that is finally being recognised in the medical world. The next time you feel overwhelmed with life make time to be still - whether that be in a meditative state or not - because your mind, body and spirit need time to recover, rest and recharge. We all need time for stillness. Don't ever underestimate the power of stillness. Don't knock it until you have tried it.

## MEDITATION, IMAGINATION and TRANQUILITY

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When I hear the word tranquillity, I automatically imagine a rainforest and a waterfall. I imagine tall, leafy, healthy trees. I imagine the beautiful bright sun shining through the treetops and glowing on the surface of the forest floor. I imagine the warmth of the air, a gentle breeze and the sound of nature. I imagine the birds singing out loud to each other and hear the rustling of the leaves as the little forest creatures find their way through the forest floor. I imagine the most incredible and magnificent waterfall and hear the splashing as the water crashes from far above into the river below. It all sounds so beautiful and there is good news. Your imagination can take you anywhere you want to go! All you have to do is close your eyes for a minute or two and imagine anything you want. The sky is the limit.

In meditation we have access to our own imagination and can go anywhere in the world or in the universe we want to go. Quite commonly people go to places such as the beach and watch the waves crash in or find their favourite place like a temple or even rest in a beautiful garden or a valley of flowers. It doesn't matter where you go as long as it promotes peace and tranquillity. Tranquillity can be described as calmness, serenity and peace of mind and

when we go into a meditative state with our imagination, we are promoting a deep sense of peace - not only in our mind but also in our body.

Imagination and tranquillity can be evoked at any stage or time in your life. For example: if work is very stressful and you are feeling overwhelmed then take a couple of minutes to go into your imagination. Take yourself to a place that promotes an inner tranquillity and peace - and rest there long enough for your state of mind to shift into a relaxed state. If, later in the day, you have 15-30 minutes to yourself then find a place to lie down or sit up comfortably and let your imagination take you on a journey that promotes inner wellbeing.

Imagination is used to "*create*" - so if you want to be the creator of your life and wellbeing then let that incredible imagination of yours show you the way. When you practice meditation regularly you will notice your life change - your imagination becomes more creative and your life path more obvious.

## MEDITATION and EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

There have been many experts who have written books on emotional intelligence and there are many perspectives. I want to share what I mean by emotional intelligence in relation to meditation. Some of us have experienced life events and situations that have stunted us emotionally. For example: childhood violence and abuse, neglect, bullying, domestic violence, poor parenting, alcoholic and drug addicted parents...the list can go on and on. When our emotions are stunted, we find certain situations and circumstances much more difficult to manage due to the lack of emotionality. Please let me make that clear – this is not a weakness.

Emotional intelligence is developed over our lifetime. We don't just become emotionally intelligent. It is a process of learning and developing our conscious mind; seeking information from our sub-conscious or our higher self; or as simple as reading a book that taps into our inner world forcing us



to change. Our emotional intelligence can be developed from many experiences. You will witness emotional intelligence in people you see moving in a forward direction in their life. This is because they are developing on a spiritual level and are awakening their inner self and gaining phenomenal expertise of self. Healthy emotional intelligence promotes tremendous change in all areas of our life.

The more you meditate and unravel your inner conditioned demons the more likely you are to increase your emotional intelligence. Let me give a brief example: I have spent many years living with self-doubt, believing I am not good enough and fearing any type of success. Since I started meditating my emotional intelligence has developed. Meditation awakened my fear and conditioned demons so I was left with no other choice but to face them head on. It isn't always easy facing fear, but I can assure you it certainly is life changing. Meditation helped raised my vibrational energy and I started attracting new people into my life. These people became my personal and spiritual teachers. I manifested a business coach. I attended meditation retreats centres and Buddhist centres and temples. I attended spiritual and psychological workshops and retreats. I changed counselling supervisors and one particular supervisor changed my life forever. I sat in a psychic/mediumship development class for nearly four years and met some incredible people and had some amazing experiences. All these experiences enhanced my emotional intelligence and for that I am so grateful.

As you can see meditation is truly the medicine of healing the mind and body and awakening the spirit within. It has tremendous benefits on so many levels however you will only reap these benefits from practicing meditation. Even though knowledge of meditation is beneficial, the practice highly outweighs the knowledge.

## I wish you well and thank you

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I wish you well on your journey of learning relaxation and meditation. I hope this book was able to give you some practical tips on meditation and relaxation. I hope part two of the book was able to trigger some keen awareness to continue meditating or at least start meditating. I hope when you begin to see the beauty that lies within you and you are awakened to your full potential; and that life delivers everything you need to live a peaceful and fulfilling life.

From my heart to your heart, may love surround you every day.



Bernadette has a collection of guided meditations available on her website at [www.hih.net.au](http://www.hih.net.au).

