



mindful media publishing

Simple Meditation for Busy People eBook



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'Simple Meditation for Busy People'

An Inspirational Mindful Media Publishing eBook.

A journey of personal transformation guided by Debra Robins

Guidelines

It is recommended that you do not complete more than you are comfortable with, trust your instincts and your inner guidance to direct you as to when you should move on. It may be necessary to repeat or to spend more or less time on certain meditations and concepts as we all develop uniquely and assimilate information differently; and the outcome will be unique to each individual person. Most of us live a very busy and full life. With everyone and everything demanding a piece of our time, it is no wonder we procrastinate when it comes to meditation. When we think of meditation, we think of a person sitting down to practise, with legs crossed, spine erect and hands held in a prayer-like or meditative pose. Yes, this is just one aspect of meditation; meditation comes in many forms and can be done anywhere.

This guide will focus on seven ways you can make meditation a part of your life, no matter how hectic or frenetic it gets.

Keep it short

Most people think they have to meditate for a long time to get the full benefits. Not so. It is better to meditate, go within, for a short amount of time and to be completely focused than to spend 30 minutes attempting a distracted meditation.

Keep it simple

By keeping it simple, using the body, breath and mind awareness coupled with everyday activities, you can get into a state of centred peace on a very busy or potentially stressful day.

Meditate in the morning

Meditating in the morning is most effective as the demands of the day have not yet started. The only investment needed is time; set the alarm for 15 minutes earlier. Make meditation part of your routine, just like brushing your teeth.

Make it a priority

Perhaps the reason why you have been less than consistent with your meditation practice is because you have given it less value than other activities you do during the day. How we spend our time is a reflection of what is important in our life.

Be mindful

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that does not require you to sit down formally and be still. Mindfulness can be done any time and anywhere. It requires you pay attention to the present moment.

Practise breathing

Being conscious of your breath and focusing on your breathing you will notice that you are far calmer and centred if you monitor your breathing noticing every inhale and every exhale.

Use a mantra

Mantras are a powerful word or set of words that you repeat aloud or silently. A good mantra to use is 'Om'. By repeating a mantra during your day, you will feel relaxed and happy.



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Before We Get Started...

Let's just take a moment to relax and to stop and smell the flowers, any flower will do.

- Sit in front of and watch the flower
- What comes to mind?
- Can you see the components of the flower, the sun and water?
- It's all there...
- Don't let the mind wander to anything else, only the beauty and life of the flower.
- Spend a few minutes.
- Breathe in and smile.

Quick Fix De-Stress Visualisation

Practising visualisation is a great way to break away from the day's activities to deal with stress. This quick fix de-stress visualisation will calm and rejuvenate you within 10 minutes.

- Sit comfortably at your workstation or in your car or, yes, even on the loo!
- Let your eyelids drop to a relaxed position or close your eyes.
- Take deep breaths, slow breaths. You need to feel your heartbeat start to slow.
- Focus on your breathing.
- Temporarily erase all of those thoughts that are cluttering your mind. Keep focusing on your breathing until you start to feel calm and relaxed.
- Now, picture the ocean, with its waves rolling in and breaking at the shoreline, then rushing up the beach over the sand, then being swept back into the sea.
- Hold this visualisation in your mind's eye for a few minutes as you watch the waves rush up onto the beach and retreat back to the ocean...
- Now shift your focus to the waves offshore.
- Keep seeing them reduce in size until you visualise a smooth surface of water.
- Picture small ripples appearing and the sun as a soothing reflection off the water.
- Hold this visual. Feel the sense of quiet and calm.
- Once you feel relaxed, bring yourself back to focus on your breathing. Breathe a few slow, deep breaths, exhaling just as slowly.

Introduction

Behind all creation is silence.

Silence is the essential condition, the vital ingredient for all creation and all that is created. It is a power in its own right. The artist starts with a blank canvas - silence. The composer places it between and behind the notes. The very ground of your being, out of which come all your thoughts, is silence. The way to silence is through meditation. When you arrive in your own silence you will know true freedom and real power.

Meditation is the art of silencing the mind. When the mind is silent, concentration is increased and we experience inner peace in the midst of worldly turmoil. This elusive inner peace is what attracts so many people to meditation and is a quality everyone can benefit from.

The wonder of meditation is that our philosophy, spiritual and or religious belief, is not important. Meditation is about consciousness and in that the belief of the mind becomes trivial.

Meditation is enabling and facilitative, penetrating deep into the heart of the matter to gain access to our soul – our inner reality; our inner wisdom. Meditation can and is practised by many people of different belief systems, traditions and cultures.

Benefits

Improved concentration

Clarity of mind enhances thought processes and encourages creativity. It facilitates intuition and general productivity

More presence in the moment

Meditation assists us in 'not sweating the small stuff'; detaching from drama and mitigating the true nature of the mind, which tends to make mountains out of molehills. Meditation helps us detach from drama, enabling us to live in the present moment without calling back the past or fretting about the future.

Improved health

There have been numerous studies pointing to the health benefits of meditation. Meditation reduces stress levels and alleviates anxiety. Mental and emotional stress affects every cell in the body. What we think, what we say and how we manage our stress can either cause disease or cure it

Knowledge of Self

Meditation enables us to have a deeper understanding of our inner self. Through meditation we can better follow our path being open to our life's purpose.

What is the point in having a hectic life and not enjoying it?

Clearing the mind makes the rest of the day more productive and nothing beats that feeling of inner peace. Meditation is not about withdrawing from the world and your reality; it is about inspiration and peace of mind in everything that you do. A calm mind is not just peaceful, it is focused, self-directing and divine.

Relaxation Technique - Breathing

As we begin to explore meditation in this eBook, let us use this relaxation technique to unwind and unclutter our minds; this can be used for relaxation or to prepare for meditation.

To begin the breathing meditation, you will focus on visualising the air you breathe travelling in through your nose, down your throat, filling your lungs, leaving your lungs, passing back through your throat and back out of your nose.

As you take each deep breath, feel the sensation of air entering and leaving your nose.

Notice that the air entering your nose feels slightly cool and the air that's leaving your nose feels slightly warm.

Take note! This is very important!

Get to really feel this sensation. Take a few deep breaths of air to familiarise yourself with this. When you're ready, you will mentally count each repetition you take. You will do this slowly 21 times, each time focusing on the feeling.

Once you make it to 21, start again. Repeat the cycle three times or until your breathing is controlled and your mind is focused.

Where to Start – The Basics

Silence

In silence lies the ability to listen; to listen to ourselves, to others and to God.

Listening is a lost art. Without it we cannot communicate, we cannot relate to each other and so we cannot live life meaningfully. We need to learn to listen.

Sitting in silence allows us to listen to ourselves and to understand. This silence can heal. The worries, the pain can be healed when we listen. Spiritual medicine is ever-present in the soul. Whenever we need it, to whatever extent we need it, we can find it within.

Meditation: A Message from Dianna Cooper

Prayer is talking to the divine, while meditation is listening. When you still the chatter of your mind, you enter the Silence where all things are known.

Connect with the universal consciousness and synchronise with your infinite potential. Here lie enlightened answers, which enable you to act with certainty and a deep knowing. Your decisions become wiser; your joy contagious.

Remember that the quiet mind bestows immense health benefits and sense of wellbeing. It enhances your power to manifest your visions.

Create time to meditate.

Mind, Body, Spirit – A Healthy Balance

Walter B. Cannon, a medical doctor, developed the term homeostasis for the natural wisdom (balance) of the body. This supports that position that, despite any disturbances, the body finds and maintains its own stability and balance. The yin and yang doctrine presumes a balancing process of dynamic equilibrium. This means restoring balance when disharmony is taking place and responding correctly to the interrelationships. The body, mind and spirit are not independent of one another. They are intertwined. What affects one affects the others.

A philosophy that focuses on only one aspect is an incomplete approach. Restoring correct connection between your body-sense and the outer situation is health-giving.

The exercises that follow are designed to help you find your own balance.

Meditative Reflection on Balance in Your Life – Part One

In this exercise you will explore the balance in your own life with regard to sleeping, eating, working and resting. Often, we go through our days out of balance, pushing in one direction or another without balancing the forces.

- Sit however you feel most comfortable.
- Close your eyes.
- Think back over the past day.
- How much sleep did you get the night before?
- What kind of food did you have at your meals?
- How often did you eat and in what quantities?
- Did you enjoy your food?
- How long and hard did you work?
- Did you rest at all? Was there any time for exercise?
- Next think back over the past week, past month, past year.
- Look for patterns over time.
- If you notice a large imbalance, make note of it along with your feelings.
- Clear your mind of these thoughts when you have come to terms with them and wait for any other thoughts or feelings to request attention.

Meditative Reflection on Balance in Your Life – Part Two

If you have begun to recognise imbalances, think about ways to alter them. Often, balance can be achieved by making very slight changes.

Adding a few minutes of meditation each day can begin to correct an imbalance of stressful overwork. Thomas Edison was a firm believer in fifteen-minute power naps to recharge his mental batteries. Then he could return to his continuous inventive endeavours with renewed vigour.

Fifteen minutes of exercise or meditation will help correct a sedentary lifestyle. Find what fits into your life. Small corrections may make a big difference over time.

Chi – Human Life Force Energy

The human life force energy or 'Chi' is an unseen energy stream that pours into the human energy field, nourishing every part of the mind, body and soul. When this energy is abundant and flowing freely, we experience health, vitality and a sense of wellbeing. When the energy stream is blocked or depleted, we are susceptible to stress, depression, illness and disease.

Elevate Your Chi

Martial artists call upon their inner energy, called Chi, to enhance techniques, adding focus, power and spirit to every movement.

Taoist meditators believe that the lower abdomen is the source of Chi energy. The Chinese call this area, located approximately one and a half inches below the navel and one third of the way through the body, the Tan Tien. Originally nourished through the umbilicus, the embryo's energy is circulated from this lower abdominal area. Taoists believe that you can reclaim this source of energy by raising your Chi in your abdomen and then circulating it using your mind.



Chi Meditation

Before starting this meditation, the breathing meditation from our introduction is recommended.

To begin the breathing meditation, you will focus on visualising the air you breathe travelling in through your nose, down your throat, filling your lungs, leaving your lungs passing back through your throat and back out of your nose.

As you take each deep breath, feel the sensation of air entering and leaving your nose.

Now

- Turn your attention to your lower abdomen and breathing comfortably for several minutes.
- Bring the air in through your nose, down into the lungs and then out again.
- Permit your rib cage rise to and fall slightly and your abdomen to expand and contract with each complete breath in and out. Breathe gently, as you focus all your attention on this area. You will eventually begin to feel slight warmth in the lower abdomen.
- This is your Chi. Taoists say that when the spirit moves, the Chi moves.
- Imagine the warmth beginning to spread around to your back, up through your head and back down to your abdomen, in a circle.
- Keep your attention moving in this circle through your body.
- With careful practice, you will feel the warmth, your Chi.

Did you notice the air leaving your nose, in the breathing relaxation, is warm, as is the energy or Chi when it flows through your body? Now you have mastered feeling your 'Chi', your life force surging through you, out into the ether and then back into your physical being, balancing you and connecting you to all that is.



Mindfulness

A Body/Mind Connection

Unifying the body and mind encourages mindfulness in any daily circumstance. Meditation should be as natural as any other daily activity.

The physical daily activities in your life include: Lying down, sitting, standing and walking, known as the 'the four dignities' and, although we undertake these activities with ease, how often do we focus on what we are doing, lying in bed, sitting at the table, standing in a queue, walking down the street... unless, of course, we have a painful leg or foot and we then become aware of each step as we walk. Our instinct for awareness is within and, if we apply mindfulness to our daily lives, through the exercise below, in silence in a quiet space, this will bring us to a heightened state of awareness.

Reposing

Do you consider lying down an activity?

You can raise awareness by paying attention to your body even when it is at rest.

- Lay down on a flat surface on a yoga mat, a blanket, some soft grass or beach sand.
- Draw your knees up and place your feet flat on the floor.
- Place your arms at your side palms up.

Now

- Notice how this position pushes your back flat against the floor.
- Straighten your legs out and notice the difference in your back.
- Return your knees to the bent position, with your feet flat and close your eyes.

Feel how your body connects with the floor.

- Are you pressing down into the floor or are you holding yourself away from it?
- Are your muscles tight? Are your muscles relaxed?
- Is your breathing regular or laboured, shallow or deep?
- Notice any other sensations in your body?

Notice as many details as you can, do not judge them; none is good or bad. Do not try and put the sensations into words or rationalise what you feel. Simply observe, be in the moment, without judgment or interference.

Experience lying down with heightened awareness for a little longer and, when you are ready, gently stretch and sit up.

Sitting

We spend so much time in the day sitting, mostly in a chair; support yourself while you get support from your chair. Using a desk or dining room chair, stand with your back facing the chair. Pay attention as you lower yourself into the chair.

- Do you feel you are falling into the chair or lowering your body gracefully?
- Are you using your arms to support you?

Once on the chair, how do you sit?

- Do you lean back against the chair or sit away from the backrest?
- Is your posture straight or slumped?
- Are your feet resting on the floor or pushing against the floor?
- Is the chair holding you or are you holding yourself in the chair?

Notice your breathing...

- Can you concentrate while breathing or do you hold your breath when you concentrate?
- How do you feel at this very moment – at ease or restricted?

Consider all of these factors and practise standing up and sitting down slowly with awareness.

Mindful Standing

The ability to stand upright and erect separates us from the animal kingdom. 'Standing on your own feet' indicates independence, but have you ever experienced standing as an activity.

Sitting.

- Take off your shoes.
- Wiggle your feet around.
- Scrunch up your toes.
- Tap the soles of your feet on the floor.
- Stand up with your feet a shoulder-width apart, eyes closed and arms relaxed at your sides and breathe comfortably.

Now

- Notice how wide your shoulders feel, how far is it from your left to your right shoulder?
- Feel the surface of your skin, is it warm or cool? Is it tingling?
- Are your muscles relaxed or tensed? Are you able to let go of any tension that is not involved in keeping your body upright? For example, if you feel a bit of unnecessary tension in your shoulders can you relax them a little.

Now

- Gently rock backward and forward to find your centre point.
- Do the same thing from side to side, keeping your feet in place.

You will feel some discomfort in your legs when you are out of alignment with gravity; in time and with practice you will find your own best alignment where standing becomes effortless.

Stand for five minutes, aware of your body as you do so.

Walking

We drive or get driven in cars, buses, taxis and trains; we do also spend time each day walking, perhaps not as much as we should; walking does not have to have a specific purpose; it can be walking for walking's sake – for enjoyment.

Mindfulness as you walk has many benefits.

Mindful walking

- Take off your shoes and stand for a while as you just did, relax and align yourself with gravity.
- Very slowly take a step forward and feel your heel meet the floor and then gently roll forward onto the ball of your foot.
- Notice how your balance shifts as you step.
- Let your arms swing.

Take another step, paying attention to your sensations.

- Are your steps light or heavy?
- Do you feel held back? Do you feel able to run free?

Continue to walk paying close attention to your breathing, your sensations and pace. Try different paces, faster or slower, without losing awareness.

This is meditation as you walk.

Breathing Meditation

In the first two segments of 'Simple Meditation for Busy People' our relaxation exercise has focused on breathing; we have felt the energy circulate, flow, exit and enter our physical beings during our breathing relaxation exercise and our Chi (life force energy) meditation.

Did you notice...? The air leaving your nose, in the breathing relaxation, is warm and as is the energy or Chi when it flows through your body.

Whilst working with our balance and our body mind connection, whilst sitting, standing, lying down and walking, we have taken notice of our breathing.

We have explored our understanding of silence, in our constant state of 'busy-ness' we all know that we need to find time for ourselves just to sit and just be.

A Simple Breathing Meditation

As with all meditation, the first stage is to stop distractions, make our mind clearer and get to that stillness that feeds our soul.

When the inner dialogue stops and we are left with a stillness that has no content, this feeds our soul.

How can we do this? By practising a simple breathing meditation.

We choose a quiet place to meditate and sit in a comfortable position.

We can sit in the traditional cross-legged posture or in any other position that is comfortable. If we wish, we can sit in a chair.

The most important thing is to keep our back straight so as to prevent ourselves from becoming sluggish or sleepy.

Sit with your eyes partially closed and turn your attention to your breathing.

Breathe naturally, preferably through the nostrils, without attempting to control your breath, and try to become aware of the sensation of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils.

This sensation is our object of meditation. Try to concentrate on it to the exclusion of everything else.

At first, our mind will be very busy and we might even feel that the meditation is making our mind busier; but in reality, we are just becoming more aware of how busy our mind actually is.

There will be a great temptation to follow the different thoughts as they arise, but we should resist this and remain focused exclusively on the sensation of the breath.

If we discover that our mind has wandered and is following our thoughts, we should immediately return to the breath.

Repeat this as many times as necessary until your mind settles on the breath.

Meditation. It's good for you.

Physical Benefits

- Lowers the level of stress hormone.
- Reduces heart rate, which in turn lowers blood pressure.
- Increases oxygen flow to the lungs, which increases alertness.

Emotional Benefits

- Reduces feelings of anxiety and anger.
- Enhances creativity.
- Improves memory and problem-solving.

Breathing meditation is the foundation of other meditation techniques.

Practice Exercise

- Find a quiet place without any distractions.
- Sit in a comfortable position. A lotus sitting position is recommended.
- Close your eyes and keep your spine straight.
- Start by paying attention to your breathing.
- Bring your attention to your stomach, as it rises gently with each breath. The rise and fall of your stomach will be the focus throughout the meditation practice.
- Take long, slow, deep breathes. Notice the air filling your lungs.
- Once your lungs are full of oxygen, hold your breath for a second or two, and then slowly exhale.
- Keep focusing on your breath and movements of your abdomen.
- If you notice that your thoughts have wandered, gently bring them back to the rise and fall of your stomach.
- Repeat the process for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Visualisation

What is visualisation?

Visualisation is also known as Mental Imagery, or Visual Mental Rehearsal (VMR), and is a technique that has been proven to be extraordinarily successful in producing a specific outcome.

Why is it important?

Visualisation evidence suggests that our mind plays an important role in the creation of our experience and, therefore, it may be possible to 'program' our mind and body to act in a certain way to gain positive results.

What research has been done into the subject of visualisation?

Mental Imagery research has grown significantly in the last few decades and studies show that the brain does not know the difference between imagining something and actually doing it. Therefore, visualising positive outcomes or successful completion of an outcome enables both the brain and body to become responsive and conditioned to that particular result.

Many sportspeople and athletes have used mental imagery and visualisation to increase their success. In visualisation and mental imagery, the mind believes that the successful result has already been achieved and thus acts accordingly. This has been especially useful when using visualisation for healing. Dr David Hamilton has documented a wealth of evidence that visualisation has been successful in improving health and wellbeing.

How is visualisation demonstrated?

Visualisation or Mental Imagery is usually demonstrated through the focused attention on various imagery, usually involving all aspects of your modalities (i.e. imagining what you would see, hear, feel, smell, etc.).

Can you practise visualisation?

Visualisation is already practised unconsciously by everyone; it is, however, beginning to be harnessed by individuals who would like to direct their consciousness towards a particular outcome.

"Visualisation is more important than knowledge." — Albert Einstein.

We can use visualisation and breathing not only to relax but also to energise, balance and heal the body and mind.

Energising Visualisation

20 Minute Active Visualisation to Start your Day.

Begin this guided visualisation 'The Energy Starter' by taking some deep, energising breaths.

- Inhale deeply and exhale slowly, breathe in and out.
- Breathe in again, breathing in energy and exhale. Keep breathing deeply, slowly and calmly.
- With each breath, you can take in the air your body needs and become filled with energy. You can exhale any tension or fatigue you may be experiencing.
- For the next few moments, focus on your breathing and concentrate on breathing energy and positive feelings in and breathing negative feelings out and away.

Become more energised with each breath you take. As you breathe allow the energy to grow, encourage that energy. Filled with energy, grow the energy, getting more and more energetic and alive.

- Squeeze your hands into fists and clench your fists tightly. Feel the muscles in your hands and arms, strong, tight – squeeze and now release the fists, allowing your hands to be loose and relaxed.
- Allow your hands and arms to become warm and awake. Close your hands into fists and now open them. Close and open your hands a few more times, waking up the muscles of your hands and arms.

As you continue this energiser, allow yourself to experience feelings of excitement and anticipation for the day ahead. Allow the energy to flow through your body, completely waking up, filled with energy.

- Rub your hands together, feel the friction generated by your hands rubbing together, like electricity crackling and increasing your energy. As you rub your hands together, it generates energy for your mind and body, leaving you feeling completely awake and alert.
- Move your feet up and down at the ankles, flexing the muscles on the front of your legs as you move your toes up toward your shins – hold, and then point your toes, flexing the muscles on the back of your legs. Hold - and now move your feet up again and down, up and down.
- Now move your feet quickly up and down, waking up your leg muscles, up – down – up – down – up - down.
- Now hold your feet still and feel a tingly, energised sensation in the muscles of your legs.
- Place your hands on your knees, and rub your hands up your legs, toward your hips then back down toward your knees. Move your hands briskly along the muscles of your thighs, generating warmth and energy.
- Then stop, and let your hands just rest in your lap. Feel the energy in the muscles of your legs.

As you become more awake, alert and energised, get ready to go. Feel your body getting ready to move, wanting to move, eager to get going.

Continuing the guided energy starter, so filled with energy and motivation.

- Now as you continue the guided energy starter, get into a standing position with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands at your sides.
- Breathe in as you reach your right arm up and stretch your right hand as high into the air as you can. Breathe out as you lower your right arm to your side.
- Breathe in as you raise your left arm and reach as high up as you can with your left arm. Exhale as you lower your left arm to your side.
- Now alternate with your arms, breathing in as you raise your right arm and out as you lower your right arm. Breathe in as you raise your left arm and out as you lower your left arm.

In, reach. Out, relax. Repeat 21 times.

- Good. Now relax your arms at your sides and stand with your eyes closed for a moment.
- Become aware of how your body feels. Turn your attention inward, just observing the state of your body. Feel your breathing as each breath moves in and out of your body. Feel the gentle movements your body makes as the air moves with each breath.
- Notice that you can feel calm and relaxed, but energised at the same time.
- You can encourage the energy within you to increase, becoming more and more energetic, more awake, more alert. Ready to go.
- Concentrate on a feeling deep inside the core of your body, a feeling of energy, of power, of motivation - excitement.
- Focus intently on this feeling. You may notice it at the centre of your body, near your stomach. Encourage this feeling to grow, getting bigger and bigger.
- See that the energy within can grow without any effort at all. The energy so easily and naturally grows until you feel filled with buzzing, electric energy.
- So eager to move, movement would feel effortless.
- Your body feels so light, so powerful, so free.
- Completely filled with energy from head to toe. Ready to move, ready to think, ready to act. To do everything you need to do to fly through the day ahead.
- Concentrate on this feeling and allow it to grow until it is so powerful, you feel unstoppable. It is a wonderful feeling to be so energised and comfortable.

Now you can proceed with your day, ready to take on the day ahead. Feeling energised, alert, calm, and powerful.

Healing Visualisation

A 30-minute visualisation to heal body mind and spirit and boost the immune system:

- Begin by finding a comfortable, relaxed position. Allow your body to begin to relax.
- Breathe in and out, repeat. Take a cleansing breath in and breathe out the tension in your body.
- Feel relaxation beginning at the bottom of your feet. It might feel like stepping into a warm bathtub or it may feel like a tingling sensation or simply calm and loose. Allow the relaxation to spread over your feet, and up to your ankles.
- Feel the relaxation rising above your ankles, flowing up your lower legs to your knees continuing up to your upper legs.
- Allow the relaxation to continue to spread throughout your body, rising now to your hips and pelvic area, to your stomach and lower back, to your chest and upper back.
- Let your upper arms relax, your elbows, lower arms and wrists. Feel the relaxation spread to your hands, relaxing the palms of your hands, the back of your hands, each finger and thumb. Your hands feel pleasantly warm, heavy, and relaxed.
- Feel your body relaxing further as the area by your collar bones widens and relaxes, allow your shoulders to ease back slightly.
- Allow your upper back to relax even further, let your shoulders relax and your neck.
- Feel the relaxation continue to spread to your chin, the back of your head, your mouth, your cheeks, nose and eyes. Feel your eyelids, heavy and relaxed.
- Notice your eyebrows relaxing, your ears relaxing and your forehead. Your forehead feels cool and relaxed. Let the relaxation spread further to the top of your head.

Your entire body now is relaxed and calm. Feel the relaxation flowing throughout your body, from your head to your feet.

- You can relax even further as you let your spine relax completely. Starting where the top of your spine meets your head, feel the relaxation, feel the muscles giving up their hold and relaxing.
- Feel the relaxation spread down your spine, down your neck, upper back, middle back and lower back. All the way down to your tailbone at the bottom of your spine.
- Notice all of the muscles of your back relaxing completely. Feel the relaxation flowing throughout your body.
- Breathe in, now hold that breath, and relax your muscles totally, allowing the breath to flow gently out of your nose or mouth.
- Take another deep breath, breathing in relaxation and release the breath. Breathe out any remaining tension.
- Continue to breathe smoothly and slowly as you mentally scan your body, looking for any remaining tension. If you notice any tension, focus on that area. Direct the relaxation to flow into that area, and then carry the tension away.

- Imagine that the air you are breathing can cleanse your body and remove tension. Imagine that each breath carries relaxation. Picture the tension in your body leaving with each breath out. Now simply relax, calmly, enjoying the feeling of relaxation for a few moments.
- Focus your attention now on your body and think about the healing that needs to take place.
- Create an image in your mind of your current state of being. Imagine the physical ailment that troubles you. It might be pain, or illness, or injury. It might be something diagnosed, or it may be a problem that is not yet identified. Whatever it is that you would like to heal, imagine this problem in your mind right now.
- Focus on the specific location in your body where this problem is present.
- You might want to imagine the problem as a dark area, and picture the healing relaxation as light. See the light of relaxation flowing through your body. Direct the light of healing relaxation toward the dark area.
- Your body has many ways of healing itself. See the healing relaxation promoting your immune system, promoting strength, promoting growth of healthy tissue, removing unhealthy matter from your body, removing toxins, bacteria, or waste. Cleaning up your body.
- Imagine the light of healing relaxation flowing, swirling, touching the edges of the dark problem area in your body.
- You might notice small pieces of the dark area being carried away by the healing relaxation, allow these dark pieces to leave your body as you breathe out.
- Breathe in health, healing and calm. Breathe out tension, illness and any problems in your body.
- Allow the light healing relaxation to continue swirling around the dark problem area; see the dark area getting smaller.
- Imagine the dark area completely enveloped by relaxation.
- See the healing relaxation making the dark area lighter and lighter, carrying away anything that is not good for your body.
- Imagine your immune system working to heal you. Picture the cells you need going to the places they need to go, working as needed to heal your body.
- Imagine the healing relaxation flowing, coursing through your body. Picture your body entirely filled with relaxation.
- See the problem area your body healing, see it becoming even lighter. Filled with relaxation, carrying away any discomfort. Healing.
- Allow your body to heal itself. Take a cleansing breath in and breathe out what your body does not need. Breathe in relaxation, breathe out all the old air.
- Relax for a few moments and imagine the healing process going on inside your body, feeling confident in your body's ability to heal. Feeling calm and at peace.

If you choose to awaken, feel your body and mind becoming more aware of your surroundings. If you decide to sleep, let the relaxation deepen.

Authentic Self Visualisation

Become who you are. Take 20 minutes to just be... your authentic self

Begin by getting comfortable. You may want to sit or lie down. Close your eyes, or focus your gaze on one spot in the room.

- Start to relax your body, beginning with your feet. Allow a feeling of relaxation to fill your feet, feeling heavy, loose and relaxed. Relax your ankles, lower legs and knees.
- Allow the relaxation to continue, relaxing your upper legs. Let the muscles of your legs completely let go, feeling very heavy and relaxed.
- Relax your hips, pelvis and all the surrounding muscles. Feel your stomach and lower back relaxing, the muscles giving up their hold.
- Feel the relaxation in your chest, back and sides; feeling very relaxed, very heavy.
- Let your hands relax, all the way from your fingertips to your wrists. Feel your lower arms relaxing, letting go. Relax your elbows and upper arms, loose and heavy.
- Relax your shoulders, feeling them lowering slightly, finding a comfortable, relaxed position, free from tension.
- Allow the muscles of your neck to relax, letting go and relax your face and head.
- Feel your entire body relaxing even more deeply, becoming completely relaxed, limp, heavy, comfortable.

Now turn your attention inward, even more deeply inside, to find your authentic self.

- Begin by reflecting upon your values. What is the most important to you in life? What do you value? Where does your sense of right and wrong come from? Spend the next few moments thinking about your values.
- The values you have been thinking of make up part of the core of who you are. If you are being true to your values, these core beliefs will drive your behaviour.

It feels good to behave in ways that are consistent with your values. For example, if honesty is something you value, this could be reflected in your life by being truthful. If you value your family, perhaps your life reflects this in the time you spend with family members.

- Think about how your values can be a part of your day-to-day life.
- Now consider what else makes you who you are. Finding your authentic self involves learning who you truly are. Your authentic self is the real you, the person you are truly meant to be. Your authentic self is the person you are at the core, the person you can be if nothing holds you back.
- Imagine the person you believe yourself to be right now. It's okay if you aren't quite sure who you are, just picture yourself going about the things you usually do in a typical day. Imagine that you are watching yourself, observing yourself going about your usual activities.
- See yourself getting up in the morning, going about your day. Imagine the things that you do in a typical day. See yourself doing these activities.
- Picture this person – you standing in an empty room. Imagine watching this person; observe. Now imagine you could strip away all the things that hold you back from your

full potential. Imagine self-doubt dissolving, being replaced with confidence and self-assurance.

- Picture this person before you and imagine all the things that get in the way of success. Such as circumstances, lack of resources, lack of forgiveness, illness, baggage from the past. Anything that is holding this person back in any way at all.
- See these problems dissolving, disappearing and going away.
- Now imagine this person, standing in the empty room. What is left? Who is this person when all those barriers are stripped away?

(Pause)

- This person is you. Imagine who you are at the core, the pure character that is left when there is nothing to get in the way of complete self-expression.
- You may only have a vague picture in your mind right now; let's allow that picture to come into focus, becoming clearer.
- Think of your motivations, what motivates you? What drives your behaviour? What catches your interest or has caught your interest in the past? What propels you to action?

(Pause)

Think about your personality and character traits. The characteristics that are left when all barriers are removed and all fears have gone away. At your fullest potential, your simplest form, with no fears, what traits do you have? Think about your energy. Are you laid back and calm, or are you energetic? Think about your other characteristics.

- Are you introverted or extroverted?
- Quiet or talkative?
- Are you creative?
- Are you practical?
- What sorts of things do you appreciate?
- What do you admire?
- What do you like?
- Imagine something that makes you feel happy, what is it?

(Pause)

- Think of some things you enjoy, things that you like to do.

(Pause)

- Think about all the characteristics of the person who is left when all barriers and fears are removed.

(Pause)

- Now let's create a different picture. Imagine yourself as a young child, in a happy moment. See the potential in this child. Who is this young person? What makes this child who he or she is?

(Pause)

- Think about the characteristics that you share with this child. In what ways are you similar? In what ways does the current make you differ from this child? Think about how you have learned and grown since the time you were a small child.

(Pause)

Now picture yourself as the child, see the world through your younger self's eyes. What did you want to be when you grew up? What hopes did you have for your future self? What dreams did you have as a child?

The hopes and dreams you had as a child were probably related in some way to your authentic self. Something about your dreams was connected to a part of your true self. What do these aspirations say about who you are? What personal characteristics of yours are related to your childhood dreams?

For example, if as a child you dreamed about becoming an astronaut, you probably have some personality traits that relate to this dream, such as being adventurous, curious and analytical.

- Think about your own childhood dreams and see what these dreams say about who you are.

(Pause)

- Now create one final picture in your mind. Imagine, in as much detail as you can, the person you want to be. Imagine your ideal self.
- How would this person behave? What does this person, your authentic self, value? What motivates this ideal self? What personal characteristics are present in this ideal version of you? Imagine all the details of the person you most want to be.

(Pause)

- The image in your mind right now, of this ideal person, is you. This is your authentic self. This is who you are. At the core, beneath all of life's getting in the way, this is you.
- Spend a few moments with this image of your authentic self.
- Now allow yourself to step inside this image and fully become this person. Become who you are. For this moment, just be, simply be your authentic self.
- Feel a sense of calm and serenity, secure in who you are, knowing who you are. This is you. Your authentic self.
- You can take this authentic self with you, allowing this true essence of you to shine through in everyday life. Allow your values, personality and motivations to shine though, to guide your behaviour, to make up who you are.
- You have always been this person; you always will be your authentic self. A positive, confident person. A person you like and appreciate. Underneath the challenges, the baggage, the demands of living life, this is the real you that will always be with you.

(Pause)

Keep the image of your authentic self with you as you go about the rest of your day. Express this true self and allow you to be simply you.

Mantras

Mantras have been used for meditation because of the benefits they give. As a result of these benefits, people have reported increased concentration, faster quieting of the mind and unlocking of positive virtues from within.

What is a Mantra?

Mantras are sounds (spoken words or phrases) that are used as objects of concentration while meditating. The way mantras are used and the types of mantras available vary according to how people view them and their religious background. Whatever the case, they are known to have spiritual effects on practitioners in a way that affects the mind. A mantra is referred to as a mind protector because it helps to protect your mind from wandering from place to place while meditating. Mantras can either be chanted out loud or chanted internally during meditation.

Unlike sentences where you can interpret their meaning, most mantras do not have a sensible meaning when translated. However, some do have a meaning. For example, the Rama mantra is one of the most popular mantras used in India.

Rama Mantra

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare.

Rama means to rejoice and was used by Gandhi throughout his life. Other religions also use mantras without actually calling them mantras.

Christians normally chant Jesus when praying and Catholics chant Ave Maria (hail Mary) while Muslims chant Allahu akbar (God is great), Jews chant 'Barukh attah Adonai' which means (Blessed art thou, O Lord).

Mantras are taken to be a powerful form of meditation because they help one to stay focused and concentrated during meditation.

How are mantras a different approach to meditation?

Many people believe that mantras help them to follow through their meditation practice. Some of the reasons why they think mantras are a different approach to meditation include helping the mind to anchor, their suitability for all kinds of people during meditation and the ease of using mantras. When it comes to anchoring the mind, repeating a mantra will help you stop your mind from wandering. For example, when you say mantras that you enjoy and that relate to spiritual figures you wish to emulate, you will find that your concentration will focus on that figure alone. You will forget about every other stress or problem you have. This feeling will eventually help you to feel more peaceful and relaxed than when you started meditating.

Quieting the Mind Mantra

I'm filled with love, light and wisdom; all my thoughts are peaceful, tranquil and serene.

Apart from anchoring your mind, mantras can be used by all kinds of people. School age kids, teenagers, beginners and even the most experienced meditators all benefit from mantras because they are easy to use. Not only this, mantras also help you meditate when you are facing trying times like financial difficulties, grief, hardship or illness. There are specific mantras for such circumstances and, by repeating mantras for illness, as an example, you will find your mind wandering away from your illness and focusing on your wellbeing.

Mantra for Immunity and Vitality (Can be used for illness).

Om Howm Vum Joom Saha

Mantra for Abundance and Success

Om Sreem Om

Mantra for Peace

Om Shanti Shanti Om

Mantra in times of Need

Psalm 117 in the Bible, the shortest Psalm is often used as a Mantra in times of crisis and need. 'Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever'

You may wonder why we should use Sanskrit for our mantras, why not other languages, or why not English, especially since we can understand it so well? Ultimately all languages are mantric, that is, they are rooted in the truth of energy at its most fundamental level. What we are trying to do through mantras is access levels of consciousness and healing that are submerged in the depths of our awareness. We have to penetrate to these levels of depth.

Unfortunately, English has become such a utilitarian language that it becomes almost impossible for us to use it to penetrate to the depths of our being.

Each language has its own vibratory structure that is intended for specific purposes. English, for instance, has been developed into a sophisticated conceptual language.

Predominantly utilitarian in function, it is easy for us to communicate in English with each other using arbitrary labels that we have conventionally agreed upon to represent specific things, most of which pertain to the world of everyday consciousness. Sanskrit is a language that has been constructed at the deep levels of consciousness typically available to advanced practitioners of yoga and meditation. The sounds are specially constructed to penetrate the analytical mind and affect our nervous system very directly. In this sense, they are a short cut and are like spiritual pharmaceuticals that enter into our soul with palpable physiological effects. It is this capability that gives mantras the very specific therapeutic and spiritual properties that are missing in our everyday language. At the very least, they offer us a means to rise above the conditionings of mental patterns in order to view life and consciousness from a different perspective, one that offers healing and enlightenment.

How are Mantras used in Meditation?

Mantras are generally used in meditation to stay focused while meditating. To do this, you must follow the necessary meditation steps, select a mantra and say the mantra for some minutes before concluding your meditation. Here are the exact steps to take when doing mantra meditation.

- Select your meditation time and place. You can allocate about 20 to 30 minutes per day either in the morning or evening.
- Get a quiet place where you can be free from distractions.
- Select a mantra based on what you really want. You may want spiritual uplifting, better health, financial breakthrough or even a better job.
- Sit quietly with your eyes half-closed.
- Let about 70 per cent of your allocated time be used for chanting your mantra either out loud, silently or internally. This would mean 20 minutes of the time if you are meditating for 30 minutes.
- While chanting, focus on the meaning and what you want solved with respect and belief.
- After the allocated time is reached, you can stop chanting and remain absolutely quiet for the remainder of the time.
- While you are quiet, observe the thoughts flowing in and out of your mind. You will realise that you feel better than when you started with a positive attitude that your problem is alleviated. This is also the best time to connect with Source and to pray.

Setting an alarm clock to assist your timing is not a bad idea. You can even use Japa beads to chant your mantra instead of an alarm clock. The Japa Beads consist of 108 beads and each bead can represent a mantra. Once you exhaust chanting with the beads, you can stop chanting. If you don't want to use an alarm clock or Japa Beads, you can decide to focus on your breathing. Each outward breath can represent a mantra repetition.

Mantras are very useful during meditation. You have seen what a mantra is, how it is a different approach to meditation and how a mantra is used for meditation. Use what you have read to practise mantras for meditation and have a great experience.

Short Mantras OM, AH and HU.

While there are many mantras that are quite long and complex, many people are often looking for short mantras that may be easily sounded when people meet together in a group. Within the context of mantra, the most famous of these mantras, the mantra that is considered the 'first of all mantras' is the OM. For this reason, the OM is an excellent mantra to work with often and easily.

OM

Of all the sacred sounds on this planet, the one that is most often chanted is the 'OM'.

Undoubtedly, at any given moment, there is someone, somewhere chanting this sacred mantra. The 'OM' is considered one of the oldest vocal sounds in existence; many speculate that it has been chanted for untold thousands of years. It is considered to be the original, primordial sound, the mantra of creation.

'OM' is a Sanskrit word, which is said to be the original primordial creative sound from which the universe and all of creation first manifested. While pronounced 'OM', certain Sanskrit scholars state that it is written as 'AU'. Many consider the two words to be interchangeable because of this. 'OM' is said to be the sound that contains all sounds, it is the totality of all other sounds. E.g. It is the name of God.

'OM' is a multi-dimensional sound, and as such, may be understood a number of different ways. One understanding is that 'OM' (or its written form 'AUM') represents attributes of the major trinity of Hindu gods; Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva. The sounding of the "A" represents the energy of Brahman, the creator and the creational process. The middle portion of the sound, the "U" represents the energy of Vishnu, the preserver and relates to the maintenance and preservation of what has been created. The final "M" represents the energy of Shiva, the transformer and relates to the vital transformational energy to shift and change that which has been created and preserved.

Another understanding of the 'OM' (or 'AUM') is that the "A" represents the physical plane, the "U" the "mental and astral planes" and the "M, all that is beyond the reach of the intellect. 'AUM' or 'OM' is the initial syllable, which begins almost all mantras. Thus, 'OM' represents the Infinite, the One Mind, the all-embracing consciousness - that which is the very essence of existence.

Using 'Om' with pulsing repetition

- OMmmOMmmOMmm...
- OMmmmmOMmmmmOMmmmm...
- OMmmmmmmOMmmmmmmOMmmmmmm...

Using 'Om' with the flow of breath

- Exhale: "OMmmmmmm..." Inhale: "OMmmmmmm..."
- Exhale: "OMmmmmmm..." Inhale: "OMmmmmmm..."
- Exhale: "OMmmmmmm..." Inhale: "OMmmmmmm..."

AH

One of the most powerful mantras on this planet is the sound 'AH'. This is an extremely powerful sound, particularly useful for generating compassion. I know you will agree that compassion is truly a key to transformation of consciousness on this planet.

The 'AH' sound is a sacred seed syllable, a sacred mantra in many Eastern traditions including Tibetan Buddhism. It is also a vowel sound, a divinely inspired sound that is considered sacred in many different traditions including Hebrew Kabbalah.

Most mystical traditions linking the vowels sounds, in relationship to the chakras, find that the "AH" sound is the sound of the heart chakra. This chakra, which is located in the centre of the chest is the energy centre associated with love and compassion. Indeed, when many people think about the energy of love, they express it as an 'AH' sound. Many spiritual masters believe that the activation of this chakra is most helpful for achieving higher consciousness and enlightenment. Most agree that the energy of love and the heart is the primary, essential energy of the universe.

Many people believe that the 'AH' sound is the primary sound that is created when we are born the sound being birthed on the inhalation of the first breath. The 'AH' sound is also the last sound we make, riding on the energy of our final exhalation. In Tibetan Buddhism, there is a co-meditation technique which uses the 'AH' sound. Chanting 'AH' together (or even simply by just breathing together) allows people to attune and resonate with each other.

HU

Just as many traditions believe that the 'OM' is the original creative sound, there are traditions that believe that this energy may be attributed to another sound, the 'HU'. In the Shabd Yoga traditions, including Master Path and Eckankar and in the mystical Islamic path of Sufi, the 'HU' is considered to be the highest vibratory mantra that can be sounded. Chanting the 'HU' is said to lead one to transcendence to God realisation and enlightenment.

'HU' is believed to be the universal name of God, which is present in every existing language. The 'HU' sound has been described as many things from the buzzing of bees to the rushing of wind to the flute of God. It is said to be present in the words we speak, in the sounds of animals; that it is the wind in the trees, the rushing of waters, the roaring of water falls, the beat of the sea against a beach that it is everywhere, in every plane.

'OM', 'AH' and 'HU' are just a few of the one syllable mantras from different traditions; there are many others. These have been used as they are recognisable.

Interestingly, these one-syllable mantras combine quite easily. In 'AH OH MM' you have one combination which contains at least two of these sounds. When pronounced, the 'OM' or 'AUM' should be sounded on one breath. Project the three syllables as three separate sounds, so that the 'AH' resonates the heart centre, the 'OH' resonates the throat centre and the 'MM' resonates the third eye and crown. This way of sounding the 'OM' is extremely effective in a group for bringing the energy of the people together.

Mantra of Blessing - OM AH HUM

Om Ah Hum, gratitude for taking this journey with me.

Afterword

Meditation benefits every aspect of our being: Body, mind and soul. We spend most of our lives looking for happiness, peace and fulfilment outside of ourselves. During meditation we begin to explore and expand our awareness to discover the essence of who we really are, thus restoring the memory of wholeness in our lives.

Meditation is not about forcing your mind to be still or to silence the incessant chatter of our minds; it is, however, a process to rediscover the quietness that is already there, that has always been there – this silence is the thought between thoughts; behind the 'crazy monkey of the mind' is the silence of pure awareness; this silence is in the now; it is not concerned with thoughts of the past nor of the future.

Meditation twice per day is recommended for 20-30 minutes, if you do not have 20 - 30 minutes, use whatever time you do have. The best times to meditate are in the morning before breakfast and early in the evening before dinner. Meditation makes the mind alert and it is not recommended before bedtime. The regularity or the 'habit' of meditation is very important.

The soul loves to meditate, for in contact with the Spirit lies its greatest joy.
~ Paramhansa Yogananda ~

About the Author

Savvy and insightful, Debra is a naturopathic practitioner by trade, a holistic healer by design; a wordsmith and the editor of Odyssey Magazine by choice. Debra brings together extensive expertise in corporate and personal wellness initiatives and, as a personal transformation coach, she facilitates deeper consciousness, inner wisdom and empowerment. Debra Robins (Stevens) lives with her husband and domestic zoo in a seaside village on the East Coast of South Africa.

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