

Isabelle Cunningham

Learn to Meditate

Change your life in 20 minutes a day.



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By Isabelle Cunningham

This book is not intended to replace medical advice, nor is the author a medical doctor. While all care has been taken in researching the information contained in this book, the author and the publisher take no responsibility for any harm caused as a result of using any of the techniques or information provided herein.

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First Printing: 2017

ISBN: 978-1-387-34162-7

Published by
Mind Body Education Pty Ltd
Post Office Box 230 Cooroy,
Queensland, Australia 4563.

www.mindbodyeducation.com.au

Dedication.

I dedicate this little book
to Nathan Burns and Travis Burns.
My teachers; my inspiration; my sons.

I would also like to say thank you to my husband Kerry Doolan,
for his unconditional love, support and encouragement

Acknowledgements.

The information in this book is a mixture of common sense, scientific research and spiritual wisdom. All of it has, in some way, been handed on to us from those people who spent (and many who continue to spend) their time on Earth, working toward the wellbeing of their fellow man.

Though I have never met most of them, they have been my teachers. Without them, the road to health, inner peace and happiness would be a much more elusive.

Thanks to these teachers, healers, doctors, scientists, who have been called both kook and genius, the map to a joyous life is already laid out before us.

Some have spoken straight from the heart or spirit, some have struggled through tremendous challenges to gain personal experience and others have spent years proving, what they innately knew to be truth, in research laboratories.

All of them have spoken up, simply because they possessed in them a deep and all-consuming desire to make our lives better. And, every single one of them brings us the message that it is we, ourselves alone, who have the power to heal ourselves and our lives.

Siddhārtha Gautama (Buddha)
Mahatma Gandhi
Jiddu Krishnamurti
Alan Watts
Herbert Benson
Bruce Lipton
Lissa Rankin
Abraham Maslow
Louise Hay
Eckhart Tolle

Preface.

Over the past ten years, research has proven excess stress is a major cause of illness and depression. This little book will assist you to become happier and healthier by teaching you how to better manage the stress in your life. It will also introduce you to the life enhancing practice of Meditation. It will show you everything you need to know to find the Meditation style that is right for you and help get you started with your own Meditation routine.

Meditation has absolutely transformed my own life! It has not only made and kept me healthy and happy, it has also provided me with a fantastic career where I get to help literally thousands of people live happier, healthier lives, every day, through the Inner-Voyage College. I have now been studying and teaching Meditation for over 30 years and training Meditation teachers for ten years.

Meditation is *the* most important and effective healing modality available. Furthermore, it is completely natural, totally safe and ultimately self-empowering.

Meditation offers so many important health benefits. It can really transform your life and it is also lots of fun!

I hope you enjoy reading this little book and practicing the Meditations it contains.

Bright Blessings
Isabelle xo



Introduction.

This little book is not just about how to Meditate, though it will certainly teach you that. It will also explain what Meditation is and why practicing it regularly can (and will) have a massive positive impact on every area of your life.

It will improve your physical health; your emotional wellbeing; your mental health and your spiritual connection to yourself, the world and the universe (or God, if that is your belief).

It can help you lose weight, overcome addiction, improve your eyesight, fix skin problems, move past trauma, improve your sex life, improve your relationships and even make you more creative and more intelligent!

Most people have preconceived ideas around Meditation and think it is all about sitting in the lotus position trying to think of nothing, or just focusing on your breathing. It can be both those things but it really is so much more.

This book will give you a clear and simple picture of how your mind works and why what you think affects your health and all your experiences, in plain language. It will teach you how to Meditate in ways that are beneficial to your health and wellbeing, as well as being a lot of fun.

You will learn how to control the chatter in your mind (sometimes called 'monkey mind'), deal with stress easily and effectively, get over fear and anxiety, develop a positive mindset, feel more self-empowered, be more confident, gain a sense of lasting inner-peace and dramatically improve your self-esteem.

It might sound too good to be true but Meditation has been the best kept secret to a happy, healthy life for too long. Now science has proven what the mystics have always known, and you are being invited to claim your birthright.



Discover Meditation
and truly discover yourself.

Stress.

There has been a great deal of clinical research done on the effects of Meditation over the past few years and we hear a lot more about it in the mainstream media, these days. Thankfully Meditation is no longer viewed as an obscure, eastern, religious practice but is, at last, being recognised for the natural, simple and extremely powerful healing practice it really is.

As you're reading this book, I assume you are probably interested in learning to meditate and wondering how you can integrate it into your current life.

Whether Meditation is completely new to you or you have tried it before, this little book will help you to develop a deep understanding of what Meditation is all about, how it can improve your life and how you can easily slide it into your every day, fairly quickly.

If you are really going to learn to meditate properly and receive the best possible benefits from your Meditation practice, you first need to have a good understanding of how Meditation helps to improve your health and your whole life in general.

Most people learn to meditate because they want to reduce the effects of stress in their lives and/or because they wish to change something within themselves (personal development).

Did you know that regularly practicing Meditation can dramatically improve your health by removing the amount of stress you carry in your body?

Our modern western lives are generally stressful. Most of us have jobs, families to take care of, homes to maintain, appointments to keep and finances to juggle and if we don't, the stress of unemployment, loneliness, boredom or homelessness is even worse!

If these simple functions of living a contemporary life are not enough to create stress, many people have what we might call ‘personal problems’ or carry trauma from the past, as well.

These might include relationship difficulties, health issues, financial struggles, family problems and the list could go on and on. For many people, stress has come to be accepted as just a normal and inescapable part of everyday life.

Clinical research has proven that stress is a major contributor to poor health. When we are stressed our bodies are in the Fight-or-Flight Response (also known as the stress response). Lots of research has gone into studying the Fight-or-Flight Response, why we have it and how it affects us.

The Fight-or-Flight Response is the natural response our body has to danger (or perceived danger) and when it occurs many of our normal bodily functions are altered in anticipation of massive action (fighting or fleeing for our lives).

In more primitive times the Fight-or-Flight Response would have provided us with the instantaneous power required to fight off or flee from predators. You can see an example of the Fight-or-Flight Response in nature documentary’s, where a herd of wildebeests are peacefully grazing, then suddenly one spots a lion stalking them from the bushes and **“BAM!”** Almost simultaneously, they are running for their lives! They have gone from what is known as the Relaxed Response into the Fight-or-Flight Response, within a matter of milliseconds and this is exactly what happens with humans, when we perceive danger.

Once action has been taken (by fighting or fleeing) and the danger has passed, the animals’ bodily functions return to normal; back to the relaxed response and all is well.

While we humans living in the relative safety of our houses no longer need to fight or run from predators very often, we still have the Fight-or-Flight Response as a dominant bodily function, and it is still triggered when we *perceive* danger.

Perceive is a key word here. Because the threats we react to do not even have to be real. The Fight-or-Flight Response is triggered by both real and imagined dangers.

The problem we have today, is that most of the situations we encounter, which cause us to experience the Fight-or-Flight Response, do not require a physical response from us. So, we stay trapped in the Fight-or-Flight Response for prolonged periods. This is what we perceive as being 'stressed out'.

The Fight-or-Flight Response is intended to give us a sudden burst of additional strength when we are faced with a dangerous or life-threatening situation. As soon as a threat is perceived, the part of our brain known as the Hypothalamus releases a powerful chemical cocktail that rushes through our bodies, preparing us to either fight for our lives or run like the wind, to escape the danger.

Here are some of the things that happen to our bodies when we go into the Fight-or-Flight Response (instantaneously).

- Adrenal secretions flush into the blood stream.
- Heartbeat speeds up.
- Blood pressure increases and our pulse rate accelerates.
- We take in less oxygen and breathe faster (shallow breathing).
- Blood vessels dilate for increased blood flow to muscles.
- Blood and glucose rush to the muscles to provide additional strength.
- Our digestion slows down or stops functioning completely.
- The pores of our skin open and we begin to sweat (air-conditioning).
- Sexual function ceases.
- There is an acceleration of instantaneous reflexes.
- Pupils dilate and the tear ducts stop producing tears.
- Our vision becomes narrowed.
- Our brain function becomes limited.

These are just a few things that happen in our bodies when we go into the Fight-or-Flight Response.

If we are ever faced with a wild animal to outrun, they will be most helpful in our survival! The problem is, the Fight-or-Flight Response is activated by *perceived* danger. That could mean a bill turning up in the mail, a traffic jam, a difficult client on the end of the phone, a memory of something upsetting from the past, worrying over something bad that might happen or any number of other daily occurrences that do not require, or even allow for, an active physical response from us.

So, while the Fight-or-Flight Response is a healthy natural, short term state and a wonderful survival tool, it is not a healthy state to be in long term.

Because our modern lifestyles provide us with many challenges, which we perceive as dangerous, but require no physical response, we go into the Fight-or-Flight Response often and stay there much (much, much), longer than nature intended. This is where stress becomes a problem.

When you are stressed, you may be aware of how your body feels. You may experience butterflies in your stomach, a prickly sensation on your skin, muscle tension or tightness in your throat. You may get itchy eyes, perhaps you perspire, and your heart may race. You may find your breathing is shallow and jagged and you may even have slightly blurred vision. This is because you are experiencing the Fight-or Flight Response.

When we remain in the Fight-or-Flight Response for prolonged periods our bodies are unable to function in the way nature intended (the Relaxed Response).

We are placed under stress...think on that word. It is an engineering term that means tension, pressure, and strain.

The Fight-or-Flight Response is a healthy and natural occurrence when it is triggered occasionally and for short periods of time.

But, when we spend too much time in the Fight or Flight Response, we start to experience health problems because the body is not being permitted to function correctly.

Some of these health issues include:

- Vision and eye problems.
- Weight problems.
- Heart disease.
- Alcohol and drug dependencies.
- Anorexia.
- Anxiety and panic disorders.
- Asthma.
- Allergies and skin diseases.
- Cancer
- Chronic fatigue syndrome.
- Chronic muscle pain.
- Constipation, colitis and irritable bowel syndrome.
- Depressed immune system.
- Increased likelihood of colds and infection.
- Depression and suicide.
- Diabetes.
- Difficulty maintaining sexual arousal.
- Loss of libido.
- Difficulty urinating.
- Bladder infection and bladder disease.

Wait, there's more!

- Erectile dysfunction.
- Fibromyalgia.
- Headaches (and migraines).
- Heart disease /heart attack.
- High blood pressure.
- High cholesterol.
- Hypertension.
- Joint Pain.
- Multiple Sclerosis.
- Muscle stiffness.
- Backaches and neck pain.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Stroke.
- Ulcers and digestive disorders.

These are just some of the dis-eases conventional medicine is now accepting to be caused through stress. It is by no means a comprehensive list.

It is difficult to run your life effectively when you're trapped in the Fight-or-Flight Response.

Other than generally not being or feeling healthy, it also causes a lack of motivation and enthusiasm. It makes thinking clearly or laterally difficult and has you on the edge of your seat!

Not great for relationships or creativity. Not good for anything really except running for your life or fighting for it.

When we eliminate the amount of stress we have in our lives we begin to experience better health and happier lives. It is that simple.

A bit further along I am going to give you a list of very easy things you can do every day that will significantly reduce the amount of stress you hold in your body and help you to be and feel a lot healthier and much happier very quickly.

Most people will discuss stress and depression as being a natural and normal part of human existence in our modern society. Few are even vaguely aware that while we have little control over the hectic pace of our world, we do have ultimate control over how stress affects us, on an individual level.

When the prolonged effects of stress finally take their toll on mental and physical health, most people will seek help from their doctor and while many doctors are opening their minds to a wider variety of natural treatments like Meditation, yoga, aromatherapy, etcetera, most visits to a G.P., where stress, anxiety or depression are involved will result in antidepressants being prescribed.

In many cases antidepressants are the only treatment used, providing a band-aid solution, while the root of the problem is seldom, if ever, addressed.

From the perspective of long term, holistic health, the use of antidepressants alone to treat stress related disorders inevitably leads to a wide range of ongoing and often catastrophic problems.

Because the issues, causing the stress, do not magically go away and the patient does not learn the skills required to better manage stress in the long term.

There are many very effective, holistic ways to reduce the effects of stress in our lives. Two of the most obvious and easily accessible are Meditation and exercise.

Both disengage the Fight-or-Flight Response and when used together will make a substantial difference to our health and happiness.

This does not necessarily mean you must sit in the lotus position and think nothing for twenty minutes every day, nor do you need to rush out and get a gym membership.

Meditation and exercise can both be much more fun than that!

It should be mentioned here that exercise alone is not enough to combat stress. If you are running along a beautiful beach and burning up all the chemicals running around your body associated with the Fight-or-Flight Response, but you are still thinking about that bill you don't know how you will pay; or that deadline at work; or what you should have said to that guy who cut in on you in the parking lot; or how badly you were treated by someone in your past, you are keeping the Fight-or-Flight Response turned on...the lion is still chasing you!

Meditation.

Meditation is often imagined as some highly disciplined and rigorous contortion act, where one sits in a lotus position with one leg impossibly twisted over the other and the mind in unaccustomed silence.

This is, in fact, a realistic description of some more traditional styles of Meditation but it is a long way from being the only way to practice Meditation.

Many people miss out on receiving the massive benefits, incorporating Meditation into daily life has to offer, because they have the incorrect view, that it is difficult, overly time consuming and even boring. In fact, Meditation is easy, a natural process, exciting and enjoyable and it can be slotted into the busiest of lifestyles and will always provide infinitely more positives than negatives.

The trick is finding the Meditation style, which best suits you as an individual. For that is the style that will provide you with the greatest number of benefits. It is the style you will personally enjoy most and that will fit into your current lifestyle with the greatest of ease.



Why Meditation doesn't work for everyone.

“I have tried Meditation and it doesn't work for me.”

Have you heard anyone say this? Or perhaps it is something you have said yourself!

I have heard this statement spoken with sincerity many times throughout my three decades of teaching Meditation. Yet some people absolutely love Meditation and can't imagine getting through a day without it.

Research has proven those people are receiving massive benefits through their Meditation practice: People who meditate regularly are much better at managing the day to day stress of modern life.

They feel healthier, more motivated, more energised and more at peace. They even have more effective immune systems, better relationships and less weight issues than people who do not meditate.

We know that Meditation makes an enormous positive impact on life so why do some people love it and reap the benefits while some others do not enjoy it at all and find it useless for them?

The answer is so very simple!

We all have a particular learning style. Often, we have more than one but usually one learning style is predominant in each person.

There are lots of different models of learning styles that have been developed over the years, but we don't need to get too complicated here. We are going to look at what is widely considered to be the simplest and most commonly used model.

This model, of the various learning styles, is called the VAK or VARK model and it was popularised by Neil Fleming.

Visual learners:

These people need to see. They often have very visual minds and can picture things very clearly.

They mainly think in pictures or a combination of pictures and words. We might say they have vivid imaginations.

Auditory learners:

These people need to hear. They often think in words and can have trouble seeing or making pictures in their minds. They are particularly good at giving and following verbal instructions and using language.

Kinaesthetic learners or tactile learners:

These people need to do, touch or feel. They need to experience.

They may think in a combination of words and pictures but are more inclined to think in emotions or feelings. They are often quite artistic and/or physical.

We all fit into one of these groups. Some of us, as I said earlier, may belong to more than one category but one will be our predominant learning style.

When it comes to practicing (or learning) Meditation, these learning styles play a significant role in determining which of the many styles of Meditation will best suit the individual.

If you are a *visual learner*, you will enjoy and benefit most from Meditations that are visual, like creative visualization or guided imagery.

If you are an auditory learner you will probably not enjoy, nor benefit much, from practicing creative visualization.

You may not 'see' what you feel you are supposed to see and creative visualization will feel like a chore to you.

Visual learners may enjoy meditating on mandalas or staring into paintings where their imaginations will take them on a beautiful meditative adventure.

Auditory learners like to hear. These people will get the most out of Meditations that incorporate sounds or instructions (words).

They are more likely to enjoy mantra Meditations (repeating words or a phrase) or meditating to music where they can become lost in the sound, 'riding' the waves of the music.

Auditory learners can also benefit from Zen style 'listening' Meditations where the goal is to concentrate solely on what sounds can be heard or even meditating on the sound and vibration of gongs, chimes or Meditation bowls.

A Kinaesthetic or tactile learner may really enjoy concentrative Meditation where they might sit and stare at a candle's flame or the oceans waves, allowing their mind to become completely absorbed in the experience of doing.

These individuals often also enjoy active Meditations like walking Meditations or dance Meditations.

A Visual learner however, is likely to find concentrative Meditation boring as their minds want to be 'seeing' something.

If you, or someone you know, has tried Meditation and found the experience to be less than enjoyable, you (or they) have probably tried or been shown the wrong type of Meditation for your individual learning style.

The benefits of Meditation are amazing and huge!

When you find the right Meditation style, that best suits you individually, you will find yourself enthusiastically making time to meditate. You will also start to see for yourself the many wonderful side effects of Meditation which the ancients knew and clinical research has now proven beyond any doubt.

There is really only one method of Meditation that suits everyone regardless of their learning style and that is Zen.

This is because Zen Meditation is about being in the moment; the NOW. While we may all belong to different groups when it comes to learning styles, we still have one thing in common...we are all here in the NOW.



The benefits of Meditation.

Whenever you practice Meditation you will recognize benefits on some level. The size of the benefits will always be in direct proportion to the amount of time and regularity of your Meditation practice.

If you practice Meditation for at least 20 minutes every day, you will discover life changing benefits on many levels, fairly quickly.

Some of the benefits of Meditation will include the following;

- A significant reduction of stress in your life.
- A greater sense of calm and peacefulness.
- More clarity of thought.
- Greater self-confidence and improved self-esteem.
- A stronger sense of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Better sleep.
- More physical energy.
- Increased motivation.
- Noticeable improvements in your general health.
- Improvements in the treatment of illness and disease.

Meditation can even help you lose weight, cure skin conditions, improve your eye sight and increase your sex drive!

Clinical research over the past two decades has now proven that Meditation is not only an ancient spiritual ritual but a powerful healing tool that with regular practice can significantly improve every aspect of your life.

Once you find the Meditation style that is perfect for you, you will not only marvel at the difference it makes in your life on so many levels, you will fall in love with the experience!

Meditation is great for stress management and we know, that with regular practice, you will experience deeper relaxation, increased awareness, mental focus, clarity and a sense of wellbeing and inner peace.

Meditation not only improves your emotional wellbeing and mental health it also assists in your spiritual growth and enhances your physical health.

The following physiological effects of Meditation have been proven through clinical research.

- Reduces blood pressure...It's a fact!
- Lowering the pulse rate...It's a fact!
- Decreases metabolic rate...It's a fact!

There are also many more physiological 'side effects' from practicing Meditation that have been proven through clinical trials that make the benefits of Meditation so important to our healing and maintaining good health of mind, body and soul.

When you make Meditation a habit in your daily life, you do not only benefit from Meditation during and immediately after meditating. The wonderful mental, emotional and physical benefits spill over into every other moment in your life.

In general, people who meditate regularly are;

- Happier.
- Healthier.
- Less stressed.
- Smarter (it's true).
- Have better skin.
- Have more energy.
- Sleep better.
- Are more creative.
- Get much more done!

This means, people who meditate regularly are healthier, look and feel better, are more successful and are having a lot more fun than people who don't!

Meditation & Religion.

Many people ask me if Meditation is affiliated with religion and I do love this question. I always feel it deserves a preamble on another question: What is religion?

For some people, Meditation is primarily a spiritual practice and it may be closely connected to the religious or spiritual belief system they have adopted, such as Hinduism or Buddhism.

Meditation is a fundamental practice in most eastern religions, used for contacting or connecting with “God”, whatever God is perceived to be for the individual; or your Higher Self.

In some Christian based religions, the teachings touch on Meditation with Biblical statements such as:

“The kingdom of heaven is within you.”

“If prayer is talking to God, Meditation is listening to God.”

On the other hand, Meditation is also used in the business, medical and sporting worlds, for stress management, to develop positive mind-sets and as a relaxation technique.

Meditation involves connecting with that place, within you, that is calm, quiet, whole at peace and rejuvenating.

Depending on your own individual beliefs and the type of Meditation practice you choose, Meditation can bring you closer to, or allow you to feel greater connection with, the following;

- Your inner child.
- Your higher self.
- Your soul.
- God.
- Goddess.
- The spirit world.
- Differing brain wave activity.

- The silence within you.
- Your subconscious mind.

Everyone has already meditated in one form or another, often without even realising it.

Every time you have ever ‘zoned out’ or been totally focused and absorbed in the moment, you were in a type of meditative state.



Meditation is different from the thought process.

The thinking process requires energy. It is often random and out of control. It is mostly a reaction to stimuli in your environment.

Meditation endeavours to transcend the activity of thinking. When you practice regular Meditation, you will become aware that you are separate from your thoughts and that there is an awareness that exists independent of your thinking.

You will find you can choose your thoughts rather than be ambushed by them.

Meditation helps us gain control over our minds and our thinking process. We become the operator rather than the victim.

It is here that many people find spiritual growth or even enlightenment because while having this experience, most ask the question: “If I am now in control of my thinking and recognise myself as separate from my mind, which I am now observing, then who is the observer? Who is the I?”

Meditation & Concentration.

Concentration can be, and often is, a part of Meditation. You concentrate when you begin your Meditation to gain focus and make quiet the random chatter of the mind.

Then, as your thoughts subside, you may concentrate on something specific to maintain focus, like a sound or a candle flame.

In some Meditation styles the goal is to reach complete stillness of the mind and so even the need to concentrate disappears into complete silent bliss.

How long to meditate.

When you first begin to meditate, you may find it challenging to do it for more than ten minutes.

After some practice, you will be able to meditate for longer periods. It is common for experienced Meditators to practice for 20 to 60 minutes a day. The right duration and frequency must be an individual choice and the correct time is what feels right for you.

The main point is to ease yourself into your practice. Do what feels good, even if it is only a few minutes several times a day.

As you become more experienced you will find yourself able to meditate for longer periods at a time.



Be gentle with yourself.

Music for Meditation.

Music can help in establishing the right atmosphere for Meditation. Especially if you find it difficult to settle down and start your Meditation.

Music can be used to mask the noise of the outside world (traffic, kids or neighbours).

The music you use in Meditation doesn't necessarily have to be all bells chiming and ocean waves or dolphin calls either, though that kind of relaxation music is wonderful, of course.

Music which is powerful or active, like African drumming, can take you on a deep and interesting Meditation experience.

It's fun to try using all sorts of different music to meditate with.

The only guideline is, if the music has lyrics, make sure they are positive words! It should be music that makes you feel good, peaceful, relaxed or uplifted.

It is best to avoid music that has some significant trigger for you or reminds you of something sad or traumatic.

Heavy metal and Jazz are not good for meditating to, as they often have hectic and complicated rhythms.



Best times to meditate.

You will benefit from Meditation at any time of the day or night. Some people believe first thing in the morning is the best time to meditate. They believe the hectic pace of the world has not yet begun, so it is easier to establish the right ambiance: to be in a calm space.

Meditating in the morning also provides you with some energy and peace to carry forward into your day. It lets you start your day with a positive mind and a relaxed body.

Meditation practiced at other times allows you to create a hiatus in your day and dispose of some of the accumulated stress of the day. You can use your Meditation to rejuvenate yourself for the next part of your day.

It is best to choose times that suit you personally and work with your existing schedule. Having a routine time of the day, set aside for Meditation, can help with self-discipline and ensure time doesn't keep slipping away.

It is best to meditate before meals rather than shortly after and meditating when you are already tired will usually cause you to fall asleep.



Rules of Meditation.

Most Meditation styles, with deep traditional and religious roots, have strict guidelines.

More contemporary styles are focused on our individuality and so rather than rules, there are some basic recommendations for getting the best results from Meditation.

1: Meditation should be practiced every day, either for short periods, several times throughout the day or one or two longer sessions, preferably at the same time each day. Like for 30 minutes each morning and 30 minutes each afternoon. The most important thing here, is to make it fit comfortably into your own routine so as not to make it a hassle to try and fit it in.

2: Meditation is best done before a meal rather than after a meal so your body can relax properly without being busy digesting food.

3: A specific, quiet and private place should be set aside as your Meditation space, if possible. This helps us get in the 'mood' faster as we come to relate that space to meditating.

4: We should sit (or lay) with the spine straight. You must be comfortable with good posture.

5: Meditation is an exploration of your inner-self. It is your time and only about you. So above all else, you should choose the style, place, time and posture that works best for you individually.

Creating a Meditation space for yourself.

If you do not already have one, I suggest you take some time to create a Meditation space for yourself.

In designing your space, consider your senses.

Sight – Light is important. It should not be too bright. Natural light during the day and dim lamp or candlelight is great at night.

Sound – Playing relaxing music is a fantastic addition to any Meditation space.

Smell – Relaxing oils and a burner, subtle incense or even lightly perfumed fresh flowers.

Taste – In this case, we will refer to your personal tastes rather than your tongue! Make it attractive and pleasing to yourself.

Touch – For comfort, a chair or cushions with soft fabrics to sit on.

Your Meditation area should feel welcoming and attractive to you, so placing decorative items that appeal to you and make you feel good is very helpful.

It doesn't matter where your Meditation space is, as long as it affords you some privacy and peace from others. It could be a corner in your bedroom, it might take over an entire spare room or it could be a converted old cubby house in your garden.

So...how do I meditate?

There are many ways to meditate.

Some people like to lie down, and you can even meditate while you are walking or dancing.

The most common position for Meditation is to sit comfortably, keeping your spine straight. Either sitting upright on a chair or cross legged on the floor.

The general and most basic idea is to focus on something until your attention transcends the random thoughts and mental chatter that may be occurring in your brain.

There are many different styles of Meditation and as you have already seen, choosing the right one for you will depend on what kind of learner you are.

I will provide you with a selection of different Meditations shortly and the best idea is for you to try them all out and see which ones you most enjoy.

It is going to be a lot easier to integrate Meditation into your daily life (and receive the many physiological and psychological benefits) if you enjoy the experience. If you are a visual person, guided visualization is very useful for bringing you into a meditative state quickly.

Alternatively, visualization may be used once a meditative state has been reached to produce specific results. For example, you may like to start your Meditation by focusing on your breath and once you feel calm and your mind is quiet you may begin to picture yourself walking along a beautiful beach or a gorgeous forest path; engaging your senses by trying to imagine the sights, smells, sounds, etc.

We are very often unaware of all the mental activity we engage in. Meditation requires us to focus and allow our mental activity to quieten down. When you find yourself caught up in a thought pattern while you are trying to meditate, just gently bring yourself back to the object of your focus.

It is, of course, normal to experience itches and other body sensations during Meditation. Some teachers say that if this occurs try to ignore it, relax and simply observe.

I say, scratch!

Wipe that tickly hair away and move back into your focus.

Meditation techniques.

Most people choose to meditate to bring peace and serenity into their lives, to be one with their inner-selves, to heal and to improve their mental and physical health.

Meditation techniques can differ greatly from one culture to another and different Meditation techniques are suited to different personality types and different learning styles.

Some techniques are *expansive* and allow for the free flow of thoughts and the observation of the brain function and some types are *concentrative* and involve bringing focus into the thoughts.

Still others require the total absence of thought all together.

Here are some Meditation styles for you to try!

Movement Meditation.

Movement Meditation is a fantastic way to combine Meditation with exercise. It provides you with great mental, physical and spiritual benefits, as well as being fun and saving your precious time by multi-tasking.

Remember, one of the wonderful side effects of practicing Meditation to manage stress, is that you not only reduce the amount of stress in your body (and your mind) at the time you are meditating but you are also training your brain to be more at peace in general. Therefore, you will have a greater capacity for handling potentially stressful situations throughout your day, before you actually become stressed out.

Two great movement Meditations are walking Meditation and dance Meditation. They are both pretty much exactly as they sound.

To practice walking Meditation, simply go for a brisk walk. While you are walking try to focus your mind on the moment (Zen...the NOW).

Notice your surroundings; the trees, the birds, the flowers. Tune in to your senses and notice the smells, sounds, colour, the light and shadows.

Each time your mind wanders into thoughts outside of the moment (the past or the future) just gently bring it back to the experience you are having right in that moment.

You can also use your walking Meditation to focus your mind only on the things you are grateful for or practice a mantra or repeat positive affirmations repeatedly as you walk.

As long as your mind is focused, and you are in the NOW, you are meditating!

When you practice positive affirmations or gratitude as you walk, you are also getting another bonus! You are actively reprogramming your mind to focus on positives and as the brain loves habit, you will find this positive way of thinking will start to infiltrate your mind at other times when you are not consciously trying to focus. There is more information about how to use gratitude and affirmations a little further on.

It is, of course, essential to ensure your walking Meditations are done in a safe place. You don't need to be competing with traffic or other dangers, so a park, beach or walking track are perfect natural Meditation places.

Other walking Meditations include focusing on your breath as you walk; observing the air as it enters, fills and leaves your lungs. Or focusing your attention on your feet as they step, touching the earth and lifting back up into the air again.

Dr. Herbert Benson has used walking Meditation to assist people to return their high blood pressure to normal with no other treatment or medication.

Dance Meditation is similar, except you do it at home in the privacy of your lounge room or bedroom, crank up your favourite music and dance!

The same rule applies as for using music in any Meditation; make sure it feels good, positive and uplifting. No sad love songs or death metal!

It is naturally difficult to think outside of the moment while you are dancing. Allow yourself to become completely lost in the music. Let your body move any way the music takes it.

Dance Meditation is especially great for parents of young children, who seldom get a quiet minute alone. Little kids love to dance and can join in.

You can also use mantras, affirmations, chants or gratitude to help focus and develop a more positive mind set.

Music and movement has also been used to treat Alzheimer's Disease because becoming totally absorbed in music shuts off the Stress Response and allows the mind to relax.

So, go ahead, dance like no one is watching!



Zen Meditation.

Zen, in its simplest and purist form, is about being in the Now. Right here, right now in this very moment.

Considering this moment is the only one we actually have and given that we can't go backwards or forwards in time, it is amazing how little time most people actually spend in attendance!

Our minds often flit from thinking about the past; what happened, why it happened, why she said that, what you should have said or done, and the unknown future; what will happen; what if he says this; what if they do that; what should I make for dinner?

For many people, being present in the moment takes a great deal of effort when it should, in fact, be our natural state with memories and plans for the future being a conscious and productive choice we make to engage in, at appropriate times.

When we are living in the moment, we are switched on and alert. We feel awake and motivated. We see things for what they *really* are, rather than distorting them through fear of what happened once in a similar situation or what might happen next. We are calmer, more peaceful and more in touch with our own truth. We make better choices, wiser decisions and act rather than react.

Learning to live in the NOW, or reprogramming your brain to do what it is meant to do (serve you rather than continually abduct you like some eccentric time lord) is much easier than it can seem.

Our brains love habit and create all sorts of scenarios to keep us supporting those habits.

We hear people say things like; "I can't help it! I am naturally anxious! I was born this way!" But we can all help it. The brain is not the operator, it is the tool.

Zen Meditation is about being present in the moment. It is easy for most people to practice because it is our natural state. You are not trying

to learn a new skill you are simply allowing what is meant to be. That is, for you to be here, in this moment, alive...right now.

One of the many wonderful things about Zen Meditation is that you can practice it almost anywhere at any time. You can multi-task it which is wonderful for people with busy lives and you receive all the benefits associated with any other style of Meditation.

The best part about Zen Meditation is, it has a very valuable by-product.

When you practice Zen regularly, you start to teach your brain a new habit and remember, the brain loves habits! You start to develop the habit of being in the NOW. So, even in the moments when you are not intentionally practicing Zen, you start to be naturally awake and present in the moment.

Our senses provide a great anchor for practicing Zen Meditation; observing sound, smell and feel all help us to be in the moment.

Zen Meditation is very like Mindfulness Meditation and Concentrative Meditation. Except we do not try to think about what is happening (as in Mindfulness Meditation) or try to remain focused on a particular object or thought (as in Concentrative Meditation), we simply stay focused on what is happening and observe it.

With the use of Zen Meditation, you can create a synergy that connects all aspects of your being – the body, the mind and the spirit.

In your practice of Zen Meditation, your mind will be only in the moment; the **NOW**. You will not be thinking about the past or the future. You will not be thinking about how to get your work done or what you should have said to that guy who pushed in at the grocery checkout.

You could be thinking thoughts like; my nose is itching; my leg hurts in this position; the sun on my back feels beautiful; I can hear a bird singing.

You are in the moment, only reacting to what is happening right now. If you think about this, you are not thinking at all. You do not have thoughts. You do not contemplate things you should have done.

You are not having reflections about your life. You are not worrying or planning. You are simply being in, and observing the moment.

You are not the thinker –You are the observer.

Zen Meditation is a very important style of Meditation for us to adopt. It is the only Meditation style that is suitable for all people regardless of their individual learning styles.

So, I suspect you are now very excited about incorporating Zen into your daily life. Even if you already practice Zen or any other style of Meditation regularly, the following simple exercises are going to fast track you to a more peaceful and more present mind.

Zen Shower:

Every time you take a shower you have a beautiful opportunity to practice Zen.

While you are in the shower focus on the experience you are having in that moment.

Listen to the sound of the water; smell the fragrance of the soap as it mingles with the steam.

Feel the warm sensation of the water on your skin. Focus on what is happening right there in that moment. If you catch your mind wondering on to other things outside of the moment, gently refocus on the sounds, smells and sensations in the present moment.

Sitting in Zen:

To practice sitting in Zen Meditation, get yourself into a comfortable position. It doesn't have to be completely quiet, just somewhere you won't be interrupted.

Sit with your spine straight and close your eyes. Focus on your breathing. Just notice the air as it enters and leaves your body, filling your lungs with life-giving oxygen.

Begin to scan through your body and release any muscles you might be holding tense. Feel yourself relaxing more and more with each outward breath.

Then start to focus your attention on any sounds you can hear (engaging your senses will help you to focus on the present moment).

Just sit and listen. If you find your mind wondering or thinking about anything outside of the moment, just gently refocus on the sounds you can hear.

It is that simple.



Mantra Meditation.

The Mantra Meditation technique involves the conscious repetition of certain sounds or words which appeal to the mind to achieve a meditative state.

Mantra literally means ‘revealed sound’ or a combination of sounds that develop spontaneously. It is important not to confuse a mantra with religious chants.

A mantra may be given by a guru, or a teacher or may be a personally chosen sound or word. The important thing is that the words used feel right for the individual user.

To do this, you could choose a word or phrase that means something to you that is positive or relaxing. This might be “Peace” or “Love” or even a phrase, like “I am calm and relaxed, all is well in my life right now”.

Sit in a quiet space and just repeat the word or phrase over and over again. If your mind slips into thinking about the past or the future, just slide it back onto focusing on the words or phrase.

Sometimes people report having some disturbing experiences during Meditation. These can include physical sensations like shaking or feeling panicked. Some people feel pain in specific areas like their stomach or throat. Some people experience a deep feeling of sadness and may even start to cry, and others may experience a slight feeling of nausea.

The reason for these unpleasant sensations is usually because the persona has been in Fight-or-Flight for such a long time and the Meditation practice has ‘turned off’ the stress response. This may make the person more aware of emotions they have been bottling up and as the bodies chemical balance starts to return to ‘normal’, the effects of all those stress related neurochemicals become apparent.

A digestive system that has been in minimal function, for a long period of time, due to being stressed out for example, may cause mild pain or nausea once it is starting to return to normal function.

Beginning to practice Meditation can also bring to light some deep-seated trauma, regret, fear or sadness that has been overlooked while the mind has been filled with chatter.

These things are unpleasant but will usually pass fairly quickly. If you do experience any of these unpleasant sensations, you could try using a different Meditation style; try not Meditating on a full stomach; change the position you are using (lay down instead of sitting).

If any unpleasant sensations persist, consider what thoughts are coming up for you, during the Meditation. Are you remembering something you have not fully dealt with? Is there a fear that is rising up out of your mind, once the distraction of the ‘monkey chatter’ has been silenced?

Return to focusing on your breathing and on words that make you feel safe and at ease. Remember that only the present moment exists – the NOW.

You are safe in the present moment and any fear or stress you are feeling is related to events outside of the NOW. They are an illusion.



Creative Visualization.

Creative Visualisation is usually a guided Meditation and is possibly the most common form of Meditation used in western society.

A guided Meditation is when your imagination is lead on a journey with the purpose of achieving healing and realizations through focused thought and reflection.

In this practice, you could have a guide or teacher speak or read a guided Meditation to you, listen to a professional guide on a CD or read your own guided Meditation onto a recorder and play it back to yourself.

The idea is to let go of any thought you may have and allow your subconscious mind to follow the words that are spoken. Many people prefer guided mediation because even if you fall asleep you will still benefit from it subconsciously.

It is also very well suited to people who are very visual and have very active minds as it gives the mind something to do, rather than struggling to quiet the mind.

It allows the mind to leave the daily mundane or troublesome thought patterns behind and focus on the experience of the visualisation.

This style of Meditation is often the easiest to learn for beginners (as long as you are a visual person/visual learner) as it takes less conscious effort to focus the mind than many other styles. It also fits well with our modern minds programming, which has us accustomed to being entertained almost all of the time.

A simple guided Meditation will help you achieve deep relaxation and release negative emotions or beliefs that are preventing you from being further enlightened, clam or relaxed.

When you enter into deep relaxation with such great deliberation you can touch on experiences and feelings that are usually hidden in otherwise unreachable parts of your mind.

By allowing your conscious mind to rest, experiences come forward to be acknowledged and released from your subconscious. This enables you to become more positive in your contemplation and reflection, relating to the past experiences and you can also replace any negative programming with more positive mind sets, confidence and higher self-esteem.

Creative Visualisation is an excellent first step into the practice of Meditation and offers all the benefits of many other Meditation styles.

The use of visualisation allows the noisy, conscious mind to be switched off and the full attention focused in a predetermined direction, making this style of Meditation very effective in all types of healing.

Creative Visualisations can also be individually designed to address specific issues and can include affirmations, in the form of mantras, to develop very precise and powerful healing Meditations.

However, Guided Meditation or Creative Visualisation is not suitable for everyone. The main reason being, as I have said, people have different learning styles and some people simply are not very visual.

What this means, is that some people can imagine something and “see” pictures, like a movie running in their mind. When we say to them, “imagine you are sitting on a big soft cushion on the grassy bank of a beautiful river,” they can see this scene in their minds eye. They are there!

However, people who are not visual will not see anything and they will usually not enjoy the Meditation, nor will they get any real benefit from it because they are so busy trying to see something that their brain is not naturally capable of seeing (imagining in pictures).

They may also feel they have failed and that Meditation is therefore not for them. This is a tragedy!

Meditation is for everyone. It is just that not all styles of Meditation will suit all people.

Being the widest used, most popular and most frequently taught Meditation style in the western world, Guided Meditation or Creative Visualisation is often responsible for turning as many people away from Meditation as it is in attracting them to it.

This is because most untrained teachers choose to teach what they know and enjoy themselves and this will often be Guided Meditation/Creative Visualisation.

So, western Meditation students receive an unrealistic picture about what Meditation really is and those who are not visual by nature will feel it is not for them.

Non-visual learners can still participate in Creative Visualisation by engaging their other senses and not relying so heavily on the visual aspect of the Meditation.

One effective way of doing this (and a great side effect is that we are also developing the visual aspect of the mind at the same time) is to simply remember a place you have been to before and really loved. It may be in a forest, a mountain top, a beach, a river bank, or even a room!

When we remember, or recall a place we have been before, it is much easier to picture it than it is to create a new picture of an imaginary place.

We can also engage our other senses and recall how it smelt, what sounds we heard, how the temperature or air felt on our skin. We can effectively revisit that beautiful place that our brain already has a memory and a picture of.

Another method for practicing Creative Visualisation is to combine it with a sort of Concentrative Meditation.

A concentrative Meditation is when you stare at an object (maybe a candle or a mandala). You only think about the object so that all other random thought is quite and only consideration of the chosen object exists in your mind.

You can do this by providing visual stimulus for yourself through a poster or a picture. For example, you might use a poster of a beautiful destination (perhaps from a travel agency) to look at and then start imagining you are there, sitting peacefully in the picture; calm and relaxed.

You would consider things such as:

- What does the breeze feel like on your skin?
- Is it warm and relaxing or cool and refreshing?
- What sounds can you hear?
- What can you smell?
- Or, what scents are floating on the breeze?

It is a lot like daydreaming!



Deep muscle relaxation.

While not traditionally considered to be a form of Meditation, this deep muscle relaxation exercise is an excellent instant relaxation routine, but it is also much more than that!

It is a very important tool for training the brain to adopt new habits where stress and the body's capacity for holding on to the effects of stress is concerned, for the following reasons.

- It helps to quiet and focus the mind in preparation for Meditation.
- It releases tension from the muscles.
- It regulates breathing.
- It releases the body from the effect of stress (fight-or-flight response).
- It becomes a tool that can be used any place, any time to bring instant calm to the mind and the body.
- It teaches our brains how to recognise and instantly address the symptoms of stress in the body...**And that is the most important factor!**

Most people spend most of their time engaged in the fight-or-flight response. They are unaware of this because they have simply become used to the way it feels. Their brain has adapted to having tight muscles, **all of the time** and it registers the sensation of muscle tension as normal.

For many people, tensing a muscle proves difficult because the muscles are already tense!

Practicing the muscle relaxation exercise regularly (once every day at the very least) trains the brain to **(A)** recognise the difference between a tense and relaxed muscle and **(B)** Automatically relax muscles when they begin to tense.

This exercise simply involves sitting in a comfortable position, with your spine straight and moving your attention through your entire

body from the tip of your toes to the top of your head, first tensing and then relaxing each muscle.

Take your time to really explore every big and little muscle; tensing, holding and then releasing.



Word of warning:

Do not tense injured muscles, particularly in your back.

Gratitude.

For many people, a ‘victim mentality’ and many years of focusing on the negative, make positive thinking a skill that requires learning.

A Gratitude Journal assists the mind to recognise and centre on the positive aspects of our lives that are real and in the here and now.

Some popular methods of developing positive thinking skills require a ‘fake it till you make it’ approach where the person visualises themselves already having the ideal situation, when their reality is far from ideal.

For example, a person who is having financial difficulty might picture themselves as already wealthy even though, in reality, they are struggling to find the rent money.

This method does have its advantages because it serves to train the mind to accept that this pretended reality is a possibility. It helps to introduce emotions and thoughts that open the person up to the possibility of experiencing this situation in real life, where they previously have been unable to even comprehend what the desired situation would feel like and this does promote feelings of optimism.

However, for many people, especially those who have little knowledge or experience with the power of positive thought, this method can feel silly and unrealistic.

This type of creative visualisation is better used as a back up to Gratitude Journaling to assist in opening the mind to new possibilities rather than for the development of positive mind sets.

Gratitude Journaling focuses on what is already good in a person’s life right now. The system requires a note book and pen and for the person to make entries into the journal at least once a day.

The entry is simply a list of all the things in your life that you are grateful for.

For some people, who are heavily entrenched in negative thought processes, this can be quite difficult at first.

In some cases, it is necessary to start off small and get bigger as the habit of focusing on the positive develops.

On the first attempt, we might try to simply make three or four entries each day.

Each entry should begin with ...*I am grateful for*.... this may be followed with statements like my good health, or that I have a great job, or the love of my dog; anything at all you consider a good thing in your life.

The second part of using gratitude journaling, to develop positive mind sets, is to reflect on the entries made in the journal. Throughout the day, you can check your 'emotional barometer'.

This simply requires you to consider what emotions you are feeling in that moment. If you recognise negative feelings (example: anger, sadness, loneliness, etc.) then your emotional barometer is telling you that you are functioning from a negative mind set.

This method for switching across to a positive mindset simply requires you to take a moment to start reflecting on the things you are grateful for. You could even set an alarm to remind you to check in with your emotions every hour or so.

Your brain is a computer and you took possession of it after it was already programmed by other people (who may or may not have had any idea what they were doing). If you have a negative mindset, it is not your fault and it is not 'just the way you are'. You can reprogram your brain in the same way you can reprogram your computer.

When you notice that you are feeling down; or panicked, stress, anxious, angry, fearful or depressed, it is an opportunity for you to recognize that you are not in the present moment. You are in the illusion and working from an old negative program, that is not serving you well.

If it is convenient you may be able to spend some time flicking through past entries in your gratitude journal, as a reminder of all the good in your life or just take a quiet minute to make a mental list of the things you feel good in about.

This method of developing positive thinking skills can be a struggle for some, while others get the hang of it and see enormous benefits very quickly. So, if you struggle at first, please try to persist. The rewards are astonishing!

Focusing on the positive is not about ignoring problems that are real and need fixing. However, if worry fixed anything no one would ever need to come up with a solution to any problem ever again.

My old Nan used to say, "If worrying would fix it, I would worry all day."

There is a difference between recognising and working toward resolving a problem and worrying about problems.

Worry is negative: unproductive and unhealthy. It is focused on the problem.

Developing a positive mindset requires us to learn to spend *the majority of our time* focusing on the positive. Because the reality of negative situations, problems and issues that need to be overcome is a very real one, our lives would soon fall into chaos if we simply refused to think about our problems at all.

We are not trying to create a sugar-coated world of denial here, we are working on developing optimism and reducing worry and stress.

When we have a positive mindset for *the majority of the time* (when we are optimistic) our minds are clearer, and we are better able to function 'in the now'. Therefore, we are better equipped to deal with problem solving in a proactive rather than a reactive manner.

When you are in the stress response, it is impossible to make good decisions. This is a biological fact. It is because, while you are in Fight-or-Flight, your brain operates in a way that makes quick, short-term

decisions based on what is immediately apparent. For example, the lion is between you and the path to safety, so you jump in the river! This thinking process is designed to save you in the moment and doesn't take the long-term consequences into consideration. You will work out surviving the river rapids once you are safe from the lion!

How many times have you made bad choices because you were stressed out? It is why most important contracts have a 'cooling off period'. So, you have time to change your mind and not make big, important and lasting decisions when you may have been in a stressful situation.

When we worry, we move into the Fight-or-Flight Response (because it triggers with 'perceived' dangers as well as real dangers). Once we are in the Fight-or-Flight Response we are unable to use the part of our brain that is intended for making good long-term plans and coming up with viable solutions. So, the more we worry about the problem, the more stressed we get and the less capable we are of finding a good, viable solution.

Learning to remain calm, reducing stress and developing positive mindsets, helps us to be better problem solvers.



Affirmations.

Affirmations are arguably the most useful tool available to us in developing positive thinking skills.

We can see the foundations of Affirmations in many familiar practices from psychology to religion in various forms. Some of these forms include chanting, prayer and hypnosis.

Affirmations are statements, made by the conscious mind, that are directed at the unconscious mind. In many ways, it is how our intelligent mind can communicate with our primitive mind.

As most of the information we've ever absorbed into our subconscious has come to us in words, we are able to modify that information with new words.

Most people use negative affirmations alarmingly often. Habitually, when people make mistakes, they will reprimand themselves verbally with harsh words, calling themselves 'idiot' for example.

Often the harsh words we say out loud to ourselves are the same harsh words spoken to us in the past (childhood) that have formed our negative or erroneous unconscious beliefs about ourselves.

Affirmations can be used to reprogram useless, erroneous and unproductive unconscious (or even conscious) belief systems to install new, more positive and useful belief systems.

They are self-empowering, self-governed, free and always available to us. Most importantly Affirmations work quickly and effectively.

Affirmations can be (and should be) used at any time you do not need to be thinking of something else. The use of Affirmations while you do 'auto pilot' tasks, like washing dishes, not only serves to improve your positive thinking skills by developing positive belief systems, it also helps you avoid slipping into negative brain chatter at times when your intelligence is not fully required.

Did you know that your subconscious mind does not differentiate between what is actually happening now and the events you are just thinking about or remembering?

So, your body will have the same stress response to thoughts and memories, that are upsetting, fearful or stressful, as if they were actually occurring in the present moment.

While there is some benefit in thinking Affirmations, they are most effective when they are spoken aloud. This is because most of the information programmed into our unconscious minds, was spoken aloud to us at some stage in the past and unless it was a mighty powerful statement or a very disturbing experience, it was probably spoken to us repetitively.

We can overwrite this information by repeating statements aloud that contradict the old belief system.

Creating posters that are attractive to look at and putting them in places where you will see them often (like toilet walls, above your sink, on your bedroom wall, the sun visor in your car, etc.) will also help to install the required belief system into your unconscious mind.

It is essential that Affirmations are positive statements that are rhythmic and easy to say. Our brains remember, and best respond to, melodic sounds and words we like:

‘I am loving and peaceful – I communicate easily with warmth and joy’, for example. This Affirmation makes a statement about how we view ourselves and our unconscious mind will adapt its programming to adjust to this new belief.

You will begin to believe that you really are loving and peaceful and that you communicate easily with warmth and joy.

As a result, you will begin to behave in ways that radiate this belief system out towards the people you are coming into contact with and they will be more likely to respond to you in a more communicative way.

Affirmations are a great addition to your Meditations. You can simply choose some positive statements and repeat them over and over again (like a mantra). These words will often get 'stuck in your head' like a song does and the powerful brain programming influence of words will continue on, long after you have left your Meditation.

You can also choose to make a poster, like the example below, and practice a sort of mindfulness Meditation where you look at the poster and read the words out loud.

I am...

Healthy
Calm
Beautiful
Perfect
Abundant
Patient

Safe
Resilient
Loving
Lovable
Deserving

You can include whatever words make you feel good and you can include qualities you would like to believe are true about yourself.

Psychological research has proven this technique works to reprogram existing, negative beliefs. We then accept these new, positive ideas about who we are and start to behave in ways that reflect these beliefs.



Other ways to reduce stress in your life.

Along with exercise and Meditation, here are a few other things you can do to reduce the effects of stress in your life:

- Get up 15 minutes earlier.
- Prepare for the morning the night before.
- Use a diary to make lists of the things you need to do.
- Learn to say “no” more often.
- Avoid spending time with negative people who drain your energy.
- Ask for help more often.
- Schedule some play time, just to have fun, into every day.
- Only ever wear clothes you love that feel great.
- Smile at strangers.
- Take more notice of nature...even if that means a tiny green blade of grass growing through the pavement!
- Start a gratitude journal.
- Don't take other people's words or behaviours personally.
- Cultivate integrity; speak your truth and keep your word.
- Eat healthier and drink more clean water.
- Stretch...Take up Yoga.
- Dance more often.
- Exercise every day.
- Take responsibility for your own experiences.
- Allow others to take responsibility for their own experiences (we can't fix anyone else).
- Write positive words on your bathroom mirror in lipstick!
- Drink less caffeine and less alcohol.
- Always allow yourself an extra 15 minutes more travelling time than you actually need.
- De-clutter your living environment.
- Make a gift for someone you love.
- Continue to search out more ways to be happier and healthier.
- Recognise how absolutely awesome you are!

Conclusion.

I have struggled a little with just how much information to put into this book. Meditation, it's role in developing and sustaining good health and happiness, and happiness itself are such vast subjects. There is so much more to say. But my intention was for this to be a little, simple book that outlined the basics and made starting to meditate easy for you. So, I will have to save everything else I want to share with you, for my next book.

There are many ways to practice Meditation and what I have included here are just a few. It is not all about sitting in a lotus position and thinking absolutely nothing (though it can be that too).

A silent, empty mind, while attainable, and the goal of many Meditation styles, is not our natural state. Our minds are active and ever alert, as they should be. The goal of Meditation is to give us control over the thoughts we think and help us become the driver rather than the passenger in our lives.

The Meditation style you choose is just the vehicle. Meditation is the process or the movement toward your destination. The destination is a healthier body, a calm and peaceful mind, balanced emotions, greater happiness, a more positive outlook, recovery from past trauma, being able to live fully in the NOW and better health. It doesn't matter how you get there.

Any time you are focused and present in the moment, without thinking about the past or the future at all; when you are free from random thoughts, you are in fact meditating.

You have probably been meditating at various times in your life, without even realizing it, already!

The trick is to do it consciously, intentionally and regularly, so you can receive the many benefits Meditation has to offer.

What next?

Now you simply need to create a daily routine where you practice and play with what you have just learned.

Some of the Meditations, I have shared, won't suit you at all. So, don't persist with them. The simple rule is: If it isn't fun don't do it! There will, however, be some that you will enjoy and those are the ones you will benefit from practicing every day.

I promise you, if you play around and find the style that you like and commit to practicing that style for at least 20 minutes every day, you will feel the benefits fairly soon.

When you are ready to start practicing your Meditation style for 20 minutes twice a day, you will have changed the trajectory of your life and the benefits will be remarkable.



About the Author.

Isabelle Cunningham is the Managing Director at Mind Body Education Pty Ltd. She is also the founder of the International Meditation Teachers and Therapists Association and the Inner-Voyage College (an international, online training organization for Meditation teachers, Meditation therapists and holistic counsellors).

Isabelle has been studying, researching, practicing and teaching Meditation as a self-empowering healing modality for more than 30 years.

She is the author of the internationally recognized Certificate in Meditation Teaching and Holistic Human Development, the Diploma in Holistic Integrated Creative Arts Therapy and many postgraduate courses for holistic therapists.

Isabelle's training programs have been approved by several reputable industry associations, including the International Institute of Complementary Therapists and the Complementary Medical Association.

Isabelle is a member of the following associations:

International Association of Meditation Instructors.

International Institute of Complementary Therapist.

Association for Humanistic Psychology.

Complementary Medical Association.

Member of the Board International Meditation Teachers Association.

Isabelle lives with her family on Queensland's Sunshine Coast in Australia. She is passionate about sharing the life enhancing benefits of Meditation and other empowering holistic therapies with the world and spends her days researching, teaching, writing, mountain climbing and, of course, meditating.

Author bio by Annie Black

Get Involved

I hope you have enjoyed the information offered here. If you incorporate it into your life, I know for sure your life will be richer for it.

If you would like to move forward into a beautiful life where you could help hundreds of people live happier and healthier lives while creating a beautiful and abundant life for yourself, you might consider becoming a holistic therapist .

You can find training providers who are licensed to offer Isabelle's training programs at <https://mindbodyeducation.com.au/find-a-training-provider>

If you would like to help bring about massive positive change into the world and receive my personal full support, along with the support of my amazing team, to become a training provider yourself, please explore our offerings at <https://mindbodyeducation.com.au/become-a-training-provider>

If you would like to learn about what we do here at Mind Body Education and browse our free resources library, please visit us at <https://mindbodyeducation.com.au/>



Mind Body Education Pty Ltd is a global education network that provides industry-approved, evidence-based training in holistic wellbeing therapies and is dedicated to making the world a better place.

