



*Journey to a
Better Life!*

Don't Hesitate - Meditate!

*(An introduction to meditation
for beginners and skeptics)*

by

Tim Brownson

Acknowledgments

I know most people ignore acknowledgments in books, but I don't care because I want to say thanks to a few people who have helped me.

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And of course to [Bodhipaksa](#) for his wisdom, guidance, and sense of humor.

Disclaimer & Legal Stuff

This book is not copyrighted and you are free to forward on to as many people as you like; in fact I hope you do forward it on. If you have a newsletter or Facebook group you want to share it with I would be delighted and you don't need to ask my permission.

In fact as far as I'm concerned, as long as you don't claim you wrote it you can do whatever you want with it.

I deliberated about putting this ebook up for sale on my website and also Amazon, but decided against it. The idea is to help as many people as possible explore the benefits of meditation and charging people to do that would no doubt discourage some.

So if you know somebody who is stressed, anxious, worries too much, or could benefit from being a bit more chilled and/or happy send them this book and then insist on pain of death that they read it and apply the information.

Of course you would also be a very welcome [visitor to my blog](#) and if you want more free ebooks and you're not already subscribed to my newsletter, you can do so by visiting my blog and entering your details in the sign-up box.

If you do, you'll receive "*The 50 Greatest Motivational Quotes of All Time - And Why*" and my in-depth goal setting ebook called "*How To Set Goals That Work*" free of charge.

Meditation is uber-cool and can help with many medical issues. However, please don't decide to quit any medications you may be taking before speaking with your PCP.

Also, there are some links to resources to help you get more out of meditation. Although they won't all be affiliate links, the ones to Amazon probably will be. If you would rather I didn't earn 50 cents or thereabouts on anything you buy, simply Google the book/product etc. and go and buy.

Whereas it is nice to get the occasional gift card from Amazon it's not a big deal and I recommend stuff I think will add value for you and not because I may eventually earn enough to buy a Venti Latte.

IMPORTANT: I do have a tendency to swear, so if you're easily offended you may want to stop reading now and go and pray for my soul, and if you're under 18 it's probably best not to read it at all.

Cheers

Tim

Introduction - April 2012

Let me make one thing very clear just in case you don't know me very well—I'm not a woo-woo kind of guy.

I don't wear sandals in the winter, and I don't dream of unicorns or subscribe to the belief that because I'm a Life Coach I should be happy all the time. Life doesn't work like that. Or at least mine doesn't.

The reason I tell you this is because I want you to know that as few as 5 or 6 years ago I would have definitely filed myself in the skeptical category when it came to meditation.

Like many people, I was aware of its existence, but on the whole ambivalent toward it and thought it was just something for hippies, Buddhists, and people with too much time on their hands.

Then in January 2007 I was a participant in a workshop put on by my How To Be Rich and Happy co-author John Strelecky. In addition to John's delivering all his good stuff, he had a handful of guest speakers join him on the platform to talk on different topics.

To be honest I couldn't tell you what any of them were about other than a guy who talked about meditation.

My memory is hazy, but I'm fairly sure meditation wasn't even his main topic. But he touched on it enough to pique my interest.

After the event I sought Patrick (for that was his name) out and asked him how he got into meditation and what benefits he had seen.

I can still clearly remember his face lighting up and his enthusiasm for meditation and desire to talk about how it changed his life.

I'm not going to go into his personal details now, but needless to say he had gone through some very tough times.

He was at rock bottom when somebody suggested he borrow his copy of *Meditations for Manifesting*. According to Patrick, that moment changed his life for the better and after one listen to the CD he felt happier, lighter, and—most importantly of all—hopeful that the future wasn't as dark as he'd previously thought.

There was no doubt in my mind that the guy was being genuine. You could tell just looking at him that he was a man on a mission to spread the word about meditation and mindfulness.

Even though I enjoyed talking with him I was still less than 100% sold on the idea, but nevertheless I decided to buy the CD he had been listening to and give it a go for myself.

I guess I must have not given it any thought whatsoever as the clue is in the title of the CD, but it was more about using the Law of Attraction (although Dyer never refers to it as such on the recording) to gain the life you desire than anything particularly spiritual or even religious for that matter.

And whilst we are on the subject of religion, let me make this abundantly clear.

Meditation is not necessarily about religion. It really doesn't matter whether you are Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, Hindi, or worship goats, you can still employ meditation to help improve the quality of your life.

A lot of the practices and books I refer to are Buddhist in nature, but that's purely because that's what I've been exposed to.

I'm not a Buddhist and I'm not looking for you to convert to Buddhism or any other religion/philosophy for that matter. Do what feels right for you.

Having said that, of course meditation can be a spiritual practice if you wish it to be; it just doesn't have to be. The choice is very much yours.

Anyway, back to the Wayne Dyer CD.

Even though I was skeptical about manifestation (and still am for that matter) it was a great introduction to meditation and I was chanting my Om meditation away merrily every evening much to the amusement of my wife and embarrassment of the dogs.

After a few weeks of this, even though I found it relaxing, it started to get a tad repetitive doing the same thing over and over again. So I started trawling the Internet looking for alternative methods and types of meditation.

Needless to say I found a lot.

For the next year or so I experimented with different methods (more later) until I found a few that worked for me. And that last part is crucial because not every method will resonate with you.

I don't want you thinking that because the first practice you tried was torture to you that they all will be.

I continued to meditate most days for about the next 3 years or so—then something very weird, but also highly predictable happened. I stopped meditating.

Not overnight, but over a period of about 6 months it went from daily to weekly to almost never.

I say it was weird because meditation definitely helped me feel chilled and aided my concentration levels—so why on earth would anybody quit something that was so beneficial and so free?

And that's the predictable part, because I regularly see clients who do similar things. It may not be meditation per se, it may be working out or eating healthily, but it's still quitting something that's obviously beneficial.

I say quitting, but I'm not totally sure how accurate that is because that presupposes there has been a conscious decision made; that's rarely the case. For me it was more of a gradual tapering off.

Take getting fit as an example. I've worked with numerous clients who have implemented a workout regime and started to see the benefits when something unexpected has derailed them.

Often it can be something as simple as getting sick. All of a sudden the routine is interrupted, all momentum is lost, and it's never picked up again because it's just too much trouble to start all over again.

With me, it was something as benign as getting busier with work. I had moved my meditation practice to mid-afternoon to save my wife's sanity and as such was finding it trickier and trickier to fit in.

There was always a client to see, a blog post to write, or an ebook to compile and meditation gradually started to take a back seat.

Then in the summer of 2011 I started to get stressed. I didn't know it at the time, and in fact if my wife and a close friend hadn't mentioned it I'm not even sure if I'd have ever noticed that I'd slipped back into old patterns of behavior.

Sure, I'd had some (expensive) health issues as had my wife, but business was good and I was doing a job I loved, so why on earth should I be stressed or anxious?

In retrospect that's an easy question to answer. I was stressed because I had built up a pattern of stress over a 25-year period prior to becoming a coach.

Patterns of behavior like that are incredibly difficult to remove completely and the brain can't wait to introduce them back into your life, if and when you drop your guard.

I had most definitely dropped my guard.

Around that time I got a newsletter from Bodhipaksa, the Buddhist teacher who runs Wildmind. I noticed he was offering a weekly online meditation course and I decided that it was time once again to pick up the meditation gauntlet properly and stop dicking about at it.

Prior to then, my knowledge about meditation had come exclusively from audio programs and books. That's all well and good, but it's not the same as actually being guided by an expert and getting immediate feedback.

It's similar to the difference between buying a self-development book and hiring a Life Coach.

The former is cool (and I read dozens of books every year) but the latter is far more likely to help you make lasting change. Although I guess I may be a tad biased with that last analogy.

As I write this, that was over 6 months ago and I am still part of the same group that sits for 90 minutes together via the aid of Skype every week even though the original course was only supposed to run for 6 weeks.

Even so, let me be completely honest and say I am not even close to being an expert on meditation. That confession may lead you to wonder, "Why the hell are you writing an ebook on it then?" And that would be a legitimate question.

The answer is because I believe I know enough to help beginners or skeptics get up and running.

I also believe I can help you appreciate the benefits of developing a regular meditation practice.

This book is a long way from being an authoritative guide; that's beyond my level of expertise. And anyway, the virtual bookshelves of Amazon and the like are filled with such books.

However, it will be an easy-to-read taster on the subject, and free from lingo and dogma.

It will also hopefully make you smile from time to time, and most importantly of all, stir your curiosity enough to dig a little deeper.

I promise you as much as I ever can with such things—you will not regret it.

Cheers

Tim

[A Daring Adventure](#)

What Is Meditation And Why Should I Do It?

This is such a difficult question because I have read enough to realize that authorities on the subject don't always totally agree. Therefore, trying to offer a definitive answer is leaving myself wide open to a host of e-mails from irate people who can't wait to tell me I'm an idiot.

Having said that, there's no real need to know what meditation is or definitively pin it down to enjoy the massive benefits it can offer, any more than you need to know how an internal combustion engine works to be able to drive your car.

However, it would be somewhat remiss of me to skate past this question just because it's tricky. So I enlisted the help of Bodhipaksa, my meditation teacher and somebody who has been teaching, studying, and writing on the topic for a quarter of a century.

The one sentence summary I'd used previously was one I'd heard and liked from my hypnotherapy teacher several years ago:

“Meditation is a concentrated form of focus”

That short summary does indeed go some way to explain what meditation is, but it's misleading in one crucial area because meditation doesn't have to be a laser-like focus as that would suggest.

It's very possible (as will become clear later) to be meditating without focusing intently on any one thing as long as you are being mindful and in the moment, and in that respect that definition misses the mark and can confuse people.

So let's take a look at what Bodhipaksa had to say:

“Meditation is the acceptance of experience and the gentle effort to be continuously present with experience.”

Notice there the latter part about being continuously present with experience. That can be summed up by the word 'mindful.'

Mindfulness is an expression that crops up again and again when reading about meditation and many experts go as far as to say that mindfulness is meditation, that the two are one and the same.

I have to be honest and say I struggle to accept that concept, because by definition you are then saying that any activity that involves mindfulness is in effect a meditation. Or that highly mindful people are almost always in a permanent meditative state, and I struggle to get my head round that.

But who I am to argue? And as I say, for our purposes it really doesn't matter as long as you're on board with the belief that for the most part, being mindful is good.

Being mindful requires awareness, and for you to be present in the moment—which sounds easy, but it isn't because your mind loves to take the easiest route possible and all that “staying in the moment” malarkey can be hard work.

Have you ever found yourself reading a book and suddenly realized you're halfway down a page and have no idea what the hell you just read? Well that's the opposite of mindfulness. You could call it mindlessness if you like, although that may be a tad harsh bearing in mind all the negative connotations a word like that conjures up.

Putting the milk back in the coffee cupboard, driving for 5 minutes without remembering passing through the previous town, and cutting your thumb on a can of dog food because you're thinking of what your next blog post is going to be on (like I did last week) are all because of a lack of mindfulness.

In such situations your mind has defaulted to automatic pilot and your unconscious mind is running the show. In and of itself that's not a bad thing, because it conserves a lot of energy, but it also has a way of removing you from your own experience and you're far more apt to make mistakes like I did with the dog food.

I sometimes get asked whether goal setting (because it's future-oriented) can be done mindfully. And the answer is, of course it can. As long as your mind is staying on task and working on setting the goals at hand and not wondering what the hell happened to that dude from high school who always smelled of wet socks, you're being mindful.

Equally, you can be thinking of the past mindfully as long as you're aware you're thinking about the past and your mind hasn't headed that way of its own volition whilst you're really supposed to be playing with the kids.

Think of mindfulness as you being in charge of your mind (rather than the usual vice versa) and aware of what it's up to, and that will give you a clearer understanding.

I'm sure you'd like to know what the upsides of meditation are other than an increased ability to enjoy the present moment, right? Of course you do, because without knowing why you should do it, you're probably not going to bother.

I considered going into some detail in this section, but after just spending several hours researching the information I'm about to share with you to make sure it's right and not apocryphal I realized that I'd end up with dozens of links and bury you with superfluous information that could easily be summarized in a few bullet points.

I decided to give you the facts and what current science is indicating. What I mean by that is that some of this research is really new and most of it is ongoing.

So when I say meditation is linked to a reduction in coronary heart disease for example, that just means that early studies have strongly indicated that to be the case. However, more work needs to be done to ensure that we know unequivocally that it's the meditation that's helping make the positive changes and, just as importantly, why?

If you doubt any of what I am about to tell you, Google it because there's enough research to keep you busy for the next 3 or 4 decades.

Less than 50 years ago, there was little known in Western culture about the benefits of meditation, and what was known was mostly anecdotal rather than based in any scientific research.

Things have changed massively in recent years as more and more scientific research has been undertaken to understand the effects mindfulness has on the human brain. The advent of fMRIs and Pet Scans along with research on neuroplasticity has given us a window into how the brain works that was previously unavailable.

We now know the body can and does generate new brain cells and that is to all intents and purposes plastic and can rewire itself. That's why when you hear somebody say something like "people can't change" or "a leopard never changes its spots" you can be confident in the knowledge that they are talking out of their ass.

In fact, feel free to tell them so. Unless that is they're in charge of the leopard enclosure at London Zoo and were being literal. In which case they may very well be right, so don't argue with them or you'll just end up looking foolish.

So without further ado here is a list of things that meditation can help you achieve with a little bit of patience and commitment:

- Improves mental health and has been linked to a reduction in depression
- Improves physical health and recent research has suggested it may help reduce blood pressure in people with coronary heart disease
- Increases gray matter in the hippocampus, an area of the brain that is important for learning and memory.
- Lowers stress and anxiety levels
- Improves ability to deal with stress and anxiety when they arise
- Improves cognitive function and concentration levels and, potentially, problem solving skills
- Improves overall satisfaction with life
- Improves happiness levels

- Strong link to lengthening life.

Not bad, eh? Can you see the point of adopting a regular meditation practice now, or do none of those things look attractive to you?

Of course it takes a little bit of work to see those kinds of benefits. Plonking your ass down once every couple of months on your bedroom floor and chanting Om for 10 minutes probably won't achieve a fat lot other than scaring your family.

After all, you wouldn't join a gym, go once, and expect to wake up the following day with a six-pack. Meditation is no different; you don't get astounding results overnight, you have to persevere. But if you can't persevere for the all of above benefits, then quite frankly you may as well stop reading now.

Think of meditation as a workout for the brain and you are on the right track.

If everybody on the planet was taught to meditate, and did so from an early age, I'm pretty sure I'd be out of work because few people would have that sense of stuckness and disillusionment that I specialize in helping remove.

So it could be said that by encouraging you to meditate I may be losing a potential client. But I can live with that, because the sad reality is I know most people won't bother, or will try it for a bit and then give up for any number of dubious reasons.

I know I definitely used to think that, but by pushing through the initial "this is ridiculous" phase I now look forward to my sessions. I see meditation as a reset button and a chance to get away from everything and take valuable time out for myself.

And by the way, we all need to take time out for ourselves from time to time, especially you.

Common Misunderstandings About Meditation

When I take on a new client the first thing I do is to send them my intake forms to fill in so I can gather some background information.

On one of the forms I ask them to rate their satisfaction levels from 1 to 10 in 16 different areas of their life.

There's good reason for doing this and it's largely because, even though a client may come to me with one issue, there may be other issues underpinning it that they're unaware of.

One of the areas I ask about is meditation, and it often provides a fascinating conversation when we start working together.

And the reason it's fascinating is because the conversation, unlike any other topic I ever discuss, follows much the same pattern with the majority of clients:

Me: You have 5 down for meditation; what prompted you to score it like that?

Client: (quizzical look) I'm not really sure what meditation is so I scored it in the middle.

Me: Would you be interested to know more if it could help you lower your stress, make you happier, and improve your health?

Client: Probably, but the problem is I'm pretty sure I couldn't do it.

Me: What makes you believe that?

Client: Well, I have a brain that is going 1,000 miles per hour all the time and never shuts up.

Me: I know exactly why that is.

Client: Really, why?

Me: It's because you're a Human Being, you muppet.

You may think I'm being flippant, but really I'm not (well ok the muppet remark was a tad flippant, but not the rest of it). If you could climb inside my head (and please don't do it, it's full to capacity), you would notice that my mind is going all the time too.

The human brain is wired and trained to chatter away to itself. Although your brain is only 3% of your body weight, it uses, in the form of oxygen and glucose, about 25% of your energy supplies.

Even when you're asleep, that amount doesn't drop measurably because your brain is still hard at work making sure your heart is pumping, blood pressure is being maintained, food is being digested, new cells are generated and much more. All so that you don't wake up dead.

So if you are the kind of person who thinks you have a monkey brain that's out of control, cool, because you've come to the right place and a regular meditation practice will help you calm it down.

There are a number of common misconceptions and myths about meditation and these are the ones I most frequently encounter with clients:

- If your mind isn't completely still, you're not meditating
- It's only really for sandal-wearing, tofu-eating, dolphin-hugging hippies like Life Coaches
- You need to sit upright with your legs wrapped round each other like a contortionist
- A nap or hypnosis is just as good as meditating
- You need to do it for years before you see any benefit
- Meditation is a spiritual and/or religious practice and I'm neither
- You need to do it for at least 30 minutes a day to see any benefit
- I fidget too much so it would never work for me
- I'd feel silly
- It's boring

I think it's enough to say they're all wrong on some level, but I do want to address the points one by one. Therefore, by dumping some of the myths about meditation you will have no excuses for not starting a regular practice

1. If you're mind isn't still, you're not meditating

I have been meditating for 5 years and I'm guessing in that time I have never managed to shut my thoughts off for more than 15 or 20 seconds in any one sitting. Pretty crap, eh?

Apart from the fact that there are many different types of meditation, many of which require visualization and thus involve the active engagement of the mind, meditation is a practice.

What is meant by that is that you pretty much never master it, you just do your best each time you sit. I'm sure there are a handful of people who get close to mastery, but my guess is that even expert meditators think they can improve on their practice.

Your mind is active for many reasons (a lot of which are due to basic and primordial survival instincts) and it's had millions of years of initially reptilian and then mammalian evolution to be all over the place and on high alert for any potential danger.

Unfortunately, the threats that your brain spent hundreds of thousands of years evolving to be on the lookout for are by and large no longer a problem.

Therefore, your brain starts looking for danger where none exists. It simply doesn't want to let go of the fact that for the most part you're perfectly safe and you won't die giving that presentation, asking for that date, or opening that e-mail from HR.

On top of that, millions of people add fuel to the monkey brain fire by trying to multitask. Multitasking has been scientifically proven to be a total myth for all but about 2% of the population, an elite group called 'supertaskers.' Yet still people try to do it and all they achieve is to train their mind to be even more scattered than was previously the case.

What you are effectively doing with meditation is bucking the evolutionary trend and, ironically, bearing in mind what I just said, re-training your mind to be more effective for modern living.

So cut yourself some slack and when you notice your mind has wandered off like an errant puppy, because that's what puppies and brains do. Simply recognize what's happened, don't scold or berate yourself, and then start all over again.

2. It's only really for sandal-wearing, tofu eating dolphin-hugging hippies like Life Coaches

I think this is the thing that puts so many people off and to coin a quaint old English phrase, "It's total and utter bollocks."

If you knew how many successful CEOs, sports people, celebrities and 'ordinary' people meditated you would probably be very shocked.

A better and more accurate way of putting it would be:

It's only for people who want to be happier, healthier and more content with their lives and who also wish to live longer.

Would you like some of that, or would you rather spend another hour playing Angry Birds or dicking about on Facebook?

Drop the idea that meditation is anything other than mainstream and people who meditate are weird. The reality of the situation is it's not weird to engage in a process that is free and offers as many upsides as meditation does.

It is however very weird to think people who meditate are weird when you know all the potential benefits, and you do!

3. You need to sit upright with your legs wrapped round each other like a contortionist.

I can't get into the lotus position, or even close.

I also rarely meditate on the floor with my legs crossed. That's because I have knee and back issues that can sometimes trigger significant pain that continues long after I have finished sitting.

I adapt to my circumstances and meditate either lying down or more usually, in a chair with my lower back supported and my upper back free to do its own thing.

It's best to keep your spine straight, and it's best to make sure you don't nod off, but everything else is up for grabs—which is why you can meditate walking and even in the shower if you like.

4. A nap or hypnosis is just as good as meditating

Sorry, but no. Lovely and crucial though naps are they will not rewire your brain, whereas meditation can.

I am a trained hypnotherapist and hypnosis has a lot of very beneficial uses, but it has limitations and cannot offer the long-term benefits that meditation can.

Hypnosis probably won't make you happier or live longer (although I guess indirectly it can by helping you remove fears and change negative behaviors) and it won't increase concentration levels or make you a kinder, more content person.

The main difference between sleeping and hypnosis and meditation is the latter is an active process and the former two, passive.

Meditation is something you do, not something you let happen to you.

Note: if you are interested in knowing more about the power of hypnosis, I wrote a post called [What Is Hypnosis?](#)

5. You need to do it for years before you see any benefit

I'd say of all the clients who have adopted meditation whilst I have been working with them, I'd guess about 75% have seen immediate or close to immediate benefits. Research led by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, who founded the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, supports the belief that results can happen very quickly for many people.

It's possible to see benefits in lowering stress levels, increasing mood, and improving concentration levels very quickly with meditation, which is why sensible and forward-thinking doctors will advise people suffering from depression to engage in a practice (as well as exercising regularly).

However, the benefits are cumulative too, so like exercise, the longer you do it the greater the return.

6. Meditation is a spiritual practice

Of course it can be a spiritual practice, and for millions people it is, but it doesn't have to be and you can just do it for the huge health and all-around benefits if you like.

If you are devoutly religious and think that by meditating you are being drawn to the dark side, simply adopt a mantra meditation practice using a short prayer to the God or Goddess of your choice. That way everybody's happy

7. You need to do it for at least 30 minutes a day and go on retreats to see any real benefit.

10 minutes a day is much better than nothing, so don't stress that you don't have time. As I said above, meditation is cumulative and builds up over time. A bit like stress does, only meditation won't kill you.

Think of a 10-minute midday meditation as being a better alternative than having to go and see your doctor because your blood pressure is through the roof and you can't sleep.

My meditation teacher, Bodhipaksa from Wildmind, has even produced a CD of guided meditations called "Meditations for Busy People" that are all around 10 minutes or less.

See the resources section at the end for more information.

I fidget too much so it would never work for me.

My guess is you're not a worse (or better depending on your point of view) fidgeter than I am. I have a report card from school that highlights my world class fidgeting abilities. When I first started meditating I could barely go 2 minutes without having to scratch some itch, adjust my posture, turn the heating on, turn the heating off, tell the dogs to shut up, etc.

That was then and this is now and even though I still like a good fidget in my spare time I regularly complete a 30 minute sitting without doing any of the above. Of course there are exceptions and sometimes a really intense itch or bad back pain can force me to scratch or adjust, but on the whole I am much better at dealing with distractions.

And the reason I'm better is that I have trained my mind to ignore them, or if they can't be ignored, focus in on them.

The strange thing is, when you really narrow your focus on some area of discomfort you notice all the weird and wonderful things going on.

Firstly, you notice that nothing stays still. An itch isn't a steady sensation and neither is pain. Nerves become desensitized if activated for any length of time and they go numb. Therefore, you start to notice the subtle movements of the sucker that's irritating you. That in and of itself can reduce the annoyance because you have shifted yourself into a state of curiosity and fascination rather than annoyance and irritation.

More than that, though, you start to realize that the sensations don't last anywhere as long as you think they do and that all feelings are arising and diminishing. You start focusing on a particularly nasty itch on your ear and just as you are doing so it fades and then disappears completely.

I was also advised by my teacher that focusing in on discomfort is just as much a part of my meditation practice as the rest of it. Whereas previously I thought an itch needed to be scratched so I could get on with meditating properly, now I realize that it was sent to help me and that scratching is actually breaking the meditation, not helping me get on with it.

9. I'd Feel Silly

Lame, lame, and thrice I say lame!

It's not as silly as lying in a hospital bed because you've just had a heart attack brought on by intense and cumulative stress.

Nobody is asking you to shave your head, don a saffron robe, and sit in your front yard cross-legged chanting an Om meditation as people drive home from work.

If you feel self-conscious, do it at home or go somewhere where nobody will see you. If you have family members that will laugh at or ridicule you, refer them back to the massive benefits of meditation. If they continue to mock you, put an ad on Craigslist for a new family. Or better still just smile serenely and knowingly at them; that will piss them off no end.

10. It's Boring

Ironically I would say the more boring you find meditation the more you will benefit from it in the long run.

You're bored because your mind is on a mission to make you bored and wants instant stimulation/gratification because that's what you have trained it to want. So put down the crack pipe and light the incense instead.

Setting Up Your Meditation

To Listen or Not To Listen—That Is the Question

If you see pictures of Tibetan Monks meditating you don't usually see them wearing headphones attached to an iPhone. But you're probably not a Tibetan Monk, so to begin with I'd suggest you enlist the help of meditation CDs or downloads to make life easier.

Some people like to meditate to super chilled-out music specifically written for the purpose, whereas others prefer spoken guided meditations with voice only. And yet others like a combination of the two with a soothing voice backed by music or calming sound effects from nature.

My preference is dictated by my mood. Although voice only is probably the option I use most frequently, I like all of them, as well as complete silence on the occasions I'm feeling brave.

When And Where Should You Meditate?

Many people like to meditate first thing in the morning when they are most alert.

Quite honestly I'm not at my most alert first thing in the morning so I nearly always meditate in the afternoon or before going to bed. Do what works for you because there is no hard and fast rule and there are no Meditation Police to come and give you a damn good thrashing for doing it all wrong.

Having said that, we're looking to build up a routine here, so if you can, try and stick with the same time each day at least to begin with. Then over time you can create a habit.

In terms of the best places to meditate, again this is very much personal preference, although it's probably best not to use your bedroom. The reason for this is that your bedroom should only really be for sleep and rumpy pumpy.

And no, I didn't forget about watching TV because, that's about the worst thing you can do in bed unless you want raging insomnia and/or nightmares. TV stimulates your brain and the last thing you want before going to sleep is that type of stimulation.

As meditation can make you much more alert, it's probably not wise to train your brain into thinking sitting on the bed means being wide awake because that could have long-term negative effects on your sleeping patterns.

In all honesty it probably won't for most people, but there's not much point in taking the chance unless you literally have no other option, but definitely do not use your bed if you already struggle with getting enough sleep.

If you have a spare room that isn't used for anything except storing clutter then this is ideal because you can set everything up just as you like it. Eventually you will build an anchor (conditioned response) and merely walking into the room will make you all peaceful, serene, and majestic...probably.

Some people like to really go to town with their meditation space and set up pillows, light candles and incense and have assorted statues and pictures of Buddha, Shiva, Vishnu, etc.

This really is down to you and your preference. My only advice would be to do what works best for you. If you think this sounds a bit woo-woo, then ignore it because by and large I do, although I have got a small Buddha statue overlooking me as I type. He seems to be saying "Kick some ass, Tim" but that may just be my over-imagination.

One change I've made since starting to write this book is to buy a proper meditation cushion called a zafu. I'm still getting used to this so don't want to go overboard, but the early signs are promising.

You can also buy meditation mats called zabutons, or if you're wanting to look all regal and professional you could even buy a meditation bench. I'm told, though, with the latter it's important you try them out first as you need to get one that fits your height and is comfortable for you, because they're not cheap.

And the comfort bit is the key. Meditation isn't an endurance test and you should be looking to be as comfortable as possible.

However, remember this. If you normally slouch like I do it may be a tad painful to begin with, as you will be asking muscles to work that normally take the day off. But don't worry as the initial pain will almost certainly wear off after a few days as your back gets stronger.

So, yet another positive reason to meditate—you improve your posture and strengthen your back muscles. This really is the gift that keeps giving, isn't it?

Getting Ready To Meditate

Setting up your session is important, because as I said you want to be as relaxed and comfortable as possible without the risk of nodding off.

Very few people can comfortably adopt the lotus (or even the half lotus) position you traditionally see in pictures of people meditating for any length of time. If you can't (and I sure can't) don't stress yourself because it really isn't that important unless you want it to be. And if you do want it to be, take up Yoga because that will definitely help.

Sitting cross-legged and upright on the floor like you used to do at school is absolutely fine. You may want to wait before you commit to buying a zafu, so just drop a cushion under your bum so it doesn't go to sleep. It's fine to lie down or use a chair if you prefer as long as you're not likely to fall asleep.

Are you one of those people who gets to the gym and immediately hops on the treadmill or other assorted cardiovascular device without properly warming up?

I know I always used to do that even long after I knew the benefits of warming up because I always seemed to be in a hurry to be leaving the gym and my twisted logic went, "the sooner I start, the sooner I finish and can get out of here!" I'm somewhat better now although I still have a tendency to conveniently forget when I'm in a hurry.

I used to be exactly the same with meditation, except with meditation I had no idea there was any benefit to "warming up." I would just plonk myself down and dive into whatever practice I had decided on for that day.

Looking back, there is a certain sense of irony that I was impatient to get going with my meditation, which just reminded me of something that happened to me a couple of years ago (and I swear this is a true story).

I was at the gym on a cross trainer and in front of me was a guy on a stationary bike. He had the TV switched on and he also had his headphones plugged into his phone. If that wasn't enough he was also reading a book. In and of itself it's kind of funny to think somebody believes they can exercise, listen to music (presumably), watch TV, and read a book all at the same time.

But it got way better than that.

Guess what book he was reading?

Go on, guess.

It was *The Power of Now* by Eckhart Tolle!

Just in case you don't know, *The Power of Now* is probably the seminal book on being mindful and in the moment. I'm pretty sure the guy hadn't quite got the message the bearded Mr. Tolle was trying to deliver.

Anyway, as I was saying, setting up your brain for meditating may not be crucial but it can be beneficial for your practice.

One of the ways to do this is by utilizing something that my teacher Bodhipaksa calls a perceptual stretch.

All you do is adopt your meditation posture of choice and close your eyes. Now start to listen to every sound you can hear. Tune into any sounds outside of the building you are in. Maybe you can hear traffic or birds singing—or in my case it's usually Dobermans barking.

Don't judge the sound as good or bad, just focus in on it. Then focus in on the next sound whilst retaining awareness of the first. Keep pushing out and introducing as many sounds as possible.

You can even introduce the sense of space you can feel with your eyes closed if you so wish and also notice the light through your eyelids and feel your clothing or the air on your skin.

Feel yourself expanding to fill every corner of the room with awareness. Don't worry that this sounds weird, we can do weird.

By setting up like this you are starting the process of quieting your mind. Until relatively recently it was believed that the human brain could process between 5 and 9 pieces of information at the conscious level at any one time.

We now know it's not even that many and for most people 4 is a push. Therefore, as you add each component you use up more and more of your mental bandwidth until your mind is forced to stop thinking and start being.

Of course that's easier said than done and thoughts will start creeping back in, but that's ok, just allow them to leave and reconnect.

Basic Meditation Techniques

Now that you know a bit more about meditation, let's take a look at a few basic techniques. I must point out before I do that, however, that I am not going to distinguish between the different types of meditation.

There will be some crossover because I'm presuming you're reading this and interested in meditation more for the mental and physical health benefits than because you want to start a spiritual practice and are unsure of which path to follow.

If you want to get a better understanding of meditation and the differences, then I suggest you check out the resources at the end of the book.

The Breath Meditation

In my experience this is the meditation most people are familiar with and it's also the one that has people quitting most quickly because it's just "too hard."

What happens is they sit down, focus on their breath, and then wonder where the hell all those thoughts just came from. So they refocus on the breath and a load more thoughts appear as if by magic.

At this point they presume they're mental and start to get agitated that they haven't shut their mind off.

Short of a frontal lobotomy (not advisable), nobody shuts off their thoughts that quickly; it's nigh on impossible.

Even now if I go 10 seconds without a thought I'm metaphorically pumping the air with joy and often a conversation like this ensues in my head.

Me: Yesssss I just went at least 10 seconds without a single thought, woo-hoo!

Me: Wait a minute, that was a thought you bloody idiot. Damn.

Me: Ok, let's reconnect

Me: Stop telling yourself to reconnect, that's a thought, just do it.

Me: Ok, I will I'm doing it right this instant.

Me: Is that a birdie I can hear?

Me: Shut up, just shut up!

Me: No, you fucking shut up sunshine or I'll give you a good hiding!

Me: Ok you make a good point

I'm not saying that's normal per se, but it's normal for me. As long as at some point I snap myself out of my ridiculous internal dialogue and reconnect with my breathing, it's ok and all part of the process. Remember it's a PRACTICE, so do NOT give yourself a hard time because that's the antithesis of meditation.

Also, this is where guided meditations can be so useful because they remind you of what you're doing and to keep reconnecting with the breath. On the other hand it can occasionally be irritating if things are going remarkably well when all of a sudden a voice tells you to concentrate on your breathing.

The urge to say "I was doing that until you told me too and now I'm not, so thanks for that" can sometimes be overwhelming.

In essence, with a breath meditation you are literally shifting all your conscious awareness (or as much as you can) onto following your breathing and allowing your mind to calm down.

A very useful technique that Bodhipaksa uses on his brilliant CD (called, amazingly enough, Guided Meditations) to help ease you into the meditation by calming your mind beforehand is this:

Focus (not too intently) on an imaginary spot on a wall with your eyes open. Start to notice the whole expanse of your vision, especially the periphery. The more information you take in the more of that mental bandwidth you use up and the less there is for thinking.

Then using your sense of space and sound, start to imagine that you can see 360 degrees and see how your thinking quiets down. As it does so, slowly close your eyes and allow that concentration to move to your breathing.

I'm going to borrow another technique from Bodhipaksa's meditation because it's very similar to a couple of others I have listened to and it involves counting your breaths to help you retain focus.

You can count at the end of each out breath until you reach the number 10 and then you start all over again from 1. After a while you may want to switch over and count from the beginning of each in breath. I know this is more or less the same thing as the end of an out breath and the beginning of an in breath are only a kipper's dick apart, but that simple change can help maintain focus.

You can intensify the process by shifting your focus to where the breath first enters and leaves the body. You would expect that this is the same for everybody, but that's not the case. Some people notice the breath as it hits their upper lip, for other people it's maybe the rims of the nostrils, and for yet others it's the nasal passages.

Wherever it is for you, that is where you concentrate your focus and keep returning to and that will calm your mind.

The Metta Bhavana or Lovingkindness Meditation

The point of this meditation is to cultivate loving kindness which in turn will make you a happier person guaranteed or your money back from The Buddha himself.

There are usually 5 stages* to the Metta Bhavana or Lovingkindness Meditation and they are as follows:

- Lovingkindness to yourself
- Lovingkindness to a close friend
- Lovingkindness to somebody you know but have no strong opinion on
- Lovingkindness to somebody that you feel ill will toward
- Lovingkindness to all four people together equally and at the same time

* There are some versions that add a 6th stage which is to add love and kindness to a benefactor. If that floats your boat, go for it.

Once you are set up and fully relaxed, but also alert, visualize yourself looking well and happy and say something similar to the following:

- May I be well
- May I be happy
- May I be free from suffering

You repeat that over and over and create a mantra-like effect which quiets your mind and allows you to focus on giving love to your beautiful self because we both know you deserve it, you sexy beast you.

You may find it feels weird or you resist giving love to yourself, but guess what?

Tough. That just means you need to do it even more, so suck it up!

I cannot tell you how many clients I've worked with who were appalled at giving love to themselves. You, my friend, are the most important person in the world to you and it's about time you appreciated that.

Loving yourself is not self-centered, it's not egotistical, and it's not arrogant, it's merely what you deserve. It also sets a great example to your kids if you have any—unless, that is, you want them growing up unable to love themselves?

Then visualize a close friend, who means a lot to you. Make sure, though, that it isn't somebody you're lusting after because we want to keep this all good clean fun, ok?

Then when you have visualized your friend looking well and happy, repeat the following to yourself, either out loud if you like or preferably just inside your own head:

- May you be well
- May you be happy
- May you be free from suffering

Do that for a similar amount of time as you gave yourself love.

Then move onto somebody you know but have no real opinion about. It could be a neighbor who you know little about, a store assistant who regularly serves you, or just a random person you see on a regular basis and know next to nothing about. Then repeat the process all over again.

Then you think of somebody who you actively dislike and who the thought of makes you feel uncomfortable. It's preferable if it's somebody you know personally because that means you are really stretching yourself.

You may find that you struggle or resist giving love to somebody you actively dislike, but guess what?

Tough. That just means you need to do it even more so suck it up!

In the final part you recall to mind all four people and simultaneously offer your deep, unconditional love, because that's just the kind person you are and you say:

- May we be well
- May we be happy
- May we be free from suffering

After doing all five parts for similar lengths of time you can then let go of the images of the people and instead start to imagine giving love to everybody on the planet. Yes I do mean everybody, even the bastard that stole my golf clubs last week.

It can be tough for some people to do this meditation for obvious reasons. Many people feel self-conscious about loving themselves, whereas others resist offering love to people who they perceive have wronged them.

I really, really get that if that's what you think, but push through the discomfort because it really is worth it, and if you doubt it's worth it ask yourself what do the following people all have in common?

- The Dalai Lama
- Nelson Mandela
- Jesus Christ
- Mahatma Ghandi

Correct, they all offer or offered love and forgiveness to their enemies.

Are any of them seen as weird, weak, or wacky? Well maybe by a few cynical people, but on the whole I think they are amongst the most respected people to have ever lived on this planet.

If The Dalai Lama can forgive the people who stole his country, Mandela his jailers, Jesus his executioners, and Ghandi the evil British Empire for acting like complete arses, then I'm sure you can forgive the dick at work who stole your great idea and passed it off to management as his own

This is really, really important. By forgiving somebody or offering them your love, you are not condoning or encouraging their behavior. You are, however, rising above it and that's because you're such a crazily cool person.

In my not-so-humble opinion, we're either all worthy of being loved or none of us are. I may be naive but I prefer to think it's the former.

The Walking Meditation

As far as I'm concerned we could have called this the shower meditation, the emptying the dishwasher meditation, or the hopping round the house naked on one foot covered in syrup meditation, because it's all about being mindful.

- Go for a walk
- Don't think about work
- Don't think about home
- Don't think about hiring a Life Coach (do really)
- Don't think about why your colleague is a crazy bitch
- Think about the walk
- Think about each footstep
- Rinse and repeat

Be mindful with every step you make and every breath you take as Sting once said. Be in the moment, leave the past where it belongs (in the past), and the future is none of your damn business so leave that alone too.

I try this quite often in the shower because like most people I see a shower as a place to think about what I'm about to do next whilst I'm performing a necessary function. Which is a shame because when you take the time to be mindful, having a nice warm soapy shower is actually an enjoyable experience that most people never even notice.

The Chakra Meditation

According to Hindu tradition there are 7 main Chakras, or energy centers, that run up the core of your body. They are, from the bottom up:

1. Base Chakra (Red) - Lam
2. Pelvic or Sacral Chakra (Orange) - Vam
3. Solar Plexus Chakra (Yellow) - Ram
4. Heart Chakra (Green) - Yam
5. Throat Chakra (Pale Blue) - Ham
6. Third Eye Chakra (indigo) - Sham
7. Crown Chakra (Gold) - Om

I have a cool Deepak Chopra CD called Chakra Balancing that I use for this meditation. It's cool because I love the backing music because it's really trippy and Chopra does a brilliant job of explaining each stage.

This is a mantra meditation because you are repeating the Hindu name for each Chakra over and over whilst imagining breathing in the associated color* and focusing your attention on the particular part of the body related to the Chakra.

Which is a cunning way yet again to shut off Mr. or Mrs. Mind.

Got that? No, I thought not, so maybe buy the CD in the resources section and line my pockets with 50 cents worth of commission gold.

* I know you can't really breathe in colors, we're just pretending. And even though the first 6 chants are all spelt with an 'a' they are pronounced and chanted with a 'u'. Therefore, Lam is actually pronounced as Lum, vam as vum, and so on and so forth.

Body Scan Meditation

This has grown into one of my favorite types of meditation. I think that may be because it's very similar to the Jacobson Method of progressive relaxation which I learned when I was studying for my stress management diploma.

I'm pretty sure you can work out what is involved merely from the title, but I'll explain just in case.

Once you have set yourself up and done a few deep diaphragmatic breaths with slow long exhales, shift your attention to the soles of your feet. Notice how they feel and where any tension may be and then allow all the muscles there to relax and soften.

Keep your attention there for a few moments before slowly and carefully shifting it to the top of your feet and repeating the process. Continue to move up your body allowing all your muscles to relax and go limp.

It may seem strange, but even do this with your heart. Your heart is a muscle and although you probably can't feel it relaxing (is this even possible? I have no idea but it really doesn't matter) it's all part of the process of allowing yourself to just let go.

When you've worked your way through your entire body, do an entire body scan just to make sure no parts have tensed up again.

This is a cool meditation if you're mega-stressed. It's also very useful because you can go at whatever speed you prefer. I usually take about 20 minutes, but even 5 or 10 minutes during lunch time on a stressful day can work miracles and have you in a much better frame of mind.

It's not really what it's designed for, but it can also help if you are struggling to sleep because of things on your mind. The process will shift your awareness from thoughts to feelings and you'll be dozing off before you know it.

Thich Nhat Hanh's Meditation

If you're still not convinced about the benefits of meditation, you may want to take a look at Thich Nhat Hanh (pronounced Tick Not Han even though I spent a couple of years referring to him as Tick Tack Toe).

The Vietnamese Buddhist monk who lives in France looks like he's in his mid 60s, yet he's a lot nearer to 90 and still going strong as a teacher, peace activist, and author.

This is a really simple but also powerful meditation taken from his book *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*. It utilizes a mantra approach, but one that is long and different enough to not feel like a more traditional mantra.

Personally I find that short mantras can be difficult to maintain because they start to lose their meaning to me after a while and my mind then starts wandering off. Therefore, I find it easier to maintain and keep my mind quiet with a slightly longer mantra.

Once you set yourself up start to repeat the following phrases in order and in time with your breathing

- In - Out
- Deep - Slow
- Calm - Ease
- Smile - Release
- Present Moment - Wonderful Moment

If you like you can even smile as you do this meditation. In fact you can smile doing a lot of meditations. Regular meditators do a lot of smiling—I wonder why that is?

Sitting Meditation

A sitting meditation is just that: you merely sit, close your eyes, and observe what happens in your environment without judgment for about 50 years or so.

This is in some ways the most difficult for many people and something I really struggled with for quite some time.

Guided meditations and ones where you are using a concentrated form of focus like breathing, walking, mantras, etc., help quiet your mind naturally, whereas with a sitting meditation you let your mind do its own thing.

It can be quite scary for some people when they realize that rather than letting every thought and emotion pass by as they had intended when they sat down, they just spent the last 5 minutes plotting revenge on the bastard who stole their parking space earlier that day.

Remember that your thoughts are not you any more than clouds are not part of the sky. And that's a cool analogy to use—just imagine your thoughts as clouds and let them drift gently on by without any need for intervention. After all, you don't intervene with the clouds in the sky, do you?

There is a cool Buddhist saying that encapsulates this, and it is one I have recently started using regularly when things aren't going according to plan, especially if I'm feeling stressed about something.

I think of the feeling, thought or emotion and I say:

This is not mine

This is not me

I am not this

And it's true, because my stress doesn't belong to me. Stress, like everything in life, is impermanent and all stress eventually subsides. It isn't me because if it were when it goes I would go with it, and obviously I'm not stress even if my wife thinks otherwise.

This approach allows me to see things in a different perspective and realize that stress is just a fleeting emotion, nothing more, nothing less, and it's down to me whether I decide to cling on to it or allow it to subside and move on. Meditation allows me to let it move on more effectively.

And that's about it for now because I think you have enough to go at. As I said, not all of the approaches will gel with you so experiment and don't quit just because you don't love the first approach you take. Merely move on to the next.

I know I take a light-hearted approach to meditation, but I think you can tell how serious I am about its benefits. I'm not suggesting it's the cure for all ills, but I am suggesting it can be the cure for a lot of them and apart from maybe some initial discomfort there are very few downsides to adopting a regular practice.

The world would be a happier, less violent, and more tolerant place if we all just took the time to sit with our own feelings and emotions on a regular basis and realize that's all they are, just feelings and emotions—they're not real.

I wish you the very best of luck with it and I'd welcome any positive feedback when you start your practice and see great results.

Now forward this on to somebody you think could really benefit by being less stressed and more centered and let's start to change the world one ebook at a time.

Sorry I went all woo-woo and cheesy for a moment. What I meant to say was stop dicking about staring into space and forward the damn book to a friend you muppet! ;-)

Great Meditation Resources

There is a LOT of material floating around cyberspace about meditation. Like any other field, some of it is good, some bad, and some ‘meh’. Having said that, when it comes down to guided meditations and meditation music it is very much personal taste so my ‘meh’ may be your “woo-hoo baby I’m in nirvana!”

I waded through a lot of material before I found what really resonated with me, and I’m still adding to my book and guided meditation list, but the list below gives you a sample of material that has made a difference to me.

As I said in the intro, the Amazon links are affiliate links. However, it would be highly remiss of me not to first suggest you check out Wildmind as so much of my inspiration has come from there.

There’s a free newsletter and blog, plus a host of meditation material to wade through. And if you are really up for taking your practice to the next level, keep an eye out for Bodhipaksa’s online meditation classes.

Guided Meditations

Guided Meditations: For Calmness, Awareness, and Love by Bodhipaksa

This is probably my favorite meditation CD and contains both the Lovingkindness and Breathing meditations. No music, no sound effects, just the sublime voice of Bodhipaksa guiding you to enlightenment.....probably. By the way, it may seem strange with a name like Bodhipaksa, but he has a gentle Scottish accent that in my opinion makes the listening process even easier.

[Buy from Amazon](#)

[Buy From Wildmind](#)

Guided Meditations for Busy People by Bodhipaksa

If you really are President of the USA and even finding 10 minutes per day can be problematical, then this is the CD for you as all the meditations are under 10 minutes long.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

[Buy From Wildmind](#)

Chakra Balancing: Body, Mind & Soul by Deepak Chopra

As I said earlier on, I love this CD, or more pertinently I love the second CD. As I write this I realize I can't remember what is even on the first disc. Worth it, though, just for the second one as Chopra is a great meditation leader and the music is awesome like spaced out.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

[Meditations for Manifesting by Wayne Dyer](#)

This is what all kicked it off for me and even though I don't exactly believe in manifesting (Law of Attraction to you and me), I do like the two meditations. Both are chanting meditations, so if that's something you would feel self-conscious about then it may not be for you.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

Books and Audio Programs

Living as a River By Bodhipaksa

I had this as my second favorite book of 2010. A book on meditation and Buddhism, but much more importantly, life.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

[Buddha's Brain by Rick Hanson](#)

I sent out an e-mail to my subscribers claiming that this was one of the most important books I have ever read. I still think that. It joins the dots between meditation and neuroscience and it does it in an easy to read way accessible to anybody who knows nothing about either meditation or neuroscience

[Buy From Amazon](#)

[The Inner Art of Meditation by Jack Kornfield](#)

This is a 6 CD set and I absolutely love it. It was recorded at a live retreat given by the Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield and is an amazing starting point to getting your head round Insight or Vipassana meditation.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

Buddhism Plain and Simple by Steven Hagen

Without doubt the best introductory book on Buddhism I've ever read. Very easy to read and not at all preachy. If you want to get a broader idea of the precepts behind Buddhism and how you can apply some of them to your life without necessarily becoming a Buddhist, this book is a must.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

How to Train a Wild Elephant by Jan Chozen Bays

This is a super cool introduction to mindfulness for people who may get overwhelmed by the multitude of options and for people who don't want to pursue the more traditional methods of meditation we have spoken about.

The book is laid out in 53 chapters each offering a different mindfulness exercise for you to practice for just one week. Each practice will build on the previous one and before you know it you will possess the concentration skills of a Jedi Master.

[Buy From Amazon](#)

And Finally...

Thanks a lot for reading now go and forward the book on and help others!

As I said at the beginning, this ebook is really designed to encourage you to delve deeper into meditation and not as an end in itself.

I hope it's achieved that aim and you're curious to know more because taking up meditation can change your life for the better in so many ways.

Thanks a lot for reading and feel free to e-mail me any feedback to tim@adaringadventure.com.

About The Author

Tim Brownson is a Life Coach, NLP Master Practitioner, International Best Selling Author and owner of [A Daring Adventure](#). He has been helping people get unstuck and tap into their true potential since 2005. If you would like to hire him to be your coach or speak to a group please call 407-334-4692. You can check out his other books (some of which are free) by clicking [here](#).

