

Panic to Peace

**The Power Of Meditation To Clear Your Mind
for Good Decision Making**

*from A Woman's Book of Yoga: A Guide to Relax
and Nourish Your Body and Soul*

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How often have you longed for peace and quiet? Time alone just to sit quietly and gather your thoughts?

Stress-Free Case Study: Carol, one of my yoga students, found it hard to relax, unwind and switch off at the end of the day. She would lay awake at night, replaying all the mistakes she felt she made during the day. Carol struggled to manage her time. Her brain felt muddled with all the pressures and demands on her time. At home, Carol found it a great effort to be present and listen to her children. She wanted to help them with their homework and catch-up with their day, yet every night, Carol found herself shouting and moaning at her children. This made Carol feel guilty and she went to bed tired and worn-out. Constant worrying about what happened at work prevented Carol from enjoying her children. She longed to find a way to solve problems easily and smoothly and most important, to spend more fun, relaxed time with her family.

In this chapter, you will find out how meditation helped Carol and other students to focus, slow down their thoughts and think clearly. I will share with you some of the meditation techniques Carol used which helped her to do her job, and at the same time have more energy and time to be with her children in the evening.

Why Meditate? Top Benefits Of Meditation

Once the domain of monks and spiritual seekers; meditation is increasingly being studied by scientists and recommended by doctors as a way to help you to balance and manage the complex lives you live.

Benefits of Meditation for Women

- Meditation helps to strengthen the mind.
- Meditation encourages you to take time to love and care for your inner wellbeing.
- Meditation promotes effective breathing habits.
- Meditation gives you strength to forgive others and yourself.
- Meditation enhances your intuition and sense of curiosity and wonder in the world.
- Meditation promotes positive and healthy thoughts.
- Meditation affirms your connection to humankind and joyfulness of life.

Like most of my new clients, Carol was keen to learn mediation, however I advised her it would take time for her to learn how to let-go and practice meditation.

Did you know that more than 2 out of every 3 Canadians find it difficult to balance family life and work; among European workers, 6 out of 10 suffer from work stress; and among U.S. employees, 1 in 3 feels chronically overworked? To avoid becoming another statistic it is essential you find a way to bring balance and stability into your life, otherwise your health, personal relationships and sense of belonging diminishes and you feel poorly and unhappy.

You spend a large portion of your time at work and if your work/home life is anything like most of the working world, your world will be dominated by your work. Fitting in child care, organising your life around your family is often squeezed in between meetings and other social commitments. With so many tasks to do in a day, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and stuck. In this state, it can be difficult for you to think clearly and make informed decisions. To manage your time effectively you need to have a system, way of working which allows you to look after your family, do your job as well as care for your inner health and well-being.

Stress-free Wisdom: If you are looking for a way to find inner peace, stillness and quiet in your life, then the ancient art of meditation may provide you with the calm you are seeking.

What Happens When You Meditate?

Meditation has been likened to observing the sea on a calm and clear day. You sit and see beyond the horizon and grasp a glimpse of your true potential.

Meditation is the process whereby you are able to still and quieten your mind. During meditation you travel inwards and with practice, you are able to fully experience a deep sense of calm, clarity and conscious connection with all humanity.

During meditation your body undergoes certain physiological effects which counteract the negative effects of stress:

1. Brain activity slows down because there is an increase in alpha brain wave activity.
2. Heartbeat and breathing rate slow down and blood lactate levels drop.
3. You feel brighter, refreshed and inspired, more able to do your daily tasks without feeling harassed and stressed-out. A bonus during intense days at work.

Stress-free Parenting Tip: Encourage your child to meditate with you. If they are not interested, don't force them, they will learn just by observing you and the difference regular practice makes to your life.

So, how can you achieve inner harmony and clarity in the midst of your chaotic and cluttered life?

Seven Simple Steps To A Successful Meditation

Learning to meditate is a skill and a gift you give to yourself. If you are new to meditation, the following seven steps will give you a head start in setting up your own meditation practice.

1. Find a quiet comfortable space in which you can sit undisturbed for a period of 5 – 20 minutes.
2. Find a sitting position where you can sit comfortably, maybe on the floor, on a cushion in a comfortable cross-legged position. If your knees do not reach the floor or your hips feel stiff, let your knees rest on a cushion. If you sit on a chair, make sure your feet are flat on the ground. Make sure your head, neck and back are in a straight line. Rest your hands on your lap with the palms facing up.
3. Close your eyes, take three deep breaths to clear your mind and to help you come back to you (let go of your stuff) and prepare your mind for your practice.
4. Close your eyes and take a deep steady breath in through your nose and as you breathe out as you release the tension in your shoulders, jaw and neck, allow your jaw, shoulders and neck to relax.
5. Take a slow steady breath in and on the next out breath, allow your buttocks, thighs, calves and feet to relax.
6. Stay focused on your breath. Breathe naturally, slowly and gently in and out through your nose. If your mind wanders and you lose your concentration, just return your awareness to your breath. Stay in this position for at least 5 – 10 rounds of steady breathing.

7. Gradually open your eyes. Stay seated for a few more moments to acknowledge how you feel and to honor your intention of being calm and in control of your energy.

Stress-free yoga Tip: Start your day off with a few minutes meditation – you will feel calm, centred and cared for as you prepare for your day ahead.

Stress-free Case Study: A former yoga student of mine, Ally, a 36 year old accountant with a young baby, suffers from Lupus. Her medical care often left her feeling drained, exhausted and unable to care for her baby or manage work. Ally found meditation an ideal tool to help calm her nerves and help her feel in control of her body during the intensive invasive medical care.

What Ally Did When I Taught Her This Meditation

She would imagine herself in a pink bubble, bath with golden light. Once in her bubble and focusing on her breath, her spirit felt calm, no longer under attack and she found peace with the demanding medical treatment.

Six Creative Meditation Ideas To Help You Let Go Of Worries

1. Candle Meditation

Sit on the floor or on a chair with a lighted candle in front of you. Gaze at the flame through half-closed eyes, then close your eyes and visualise the warm glow from the candle behind your eyelids. Stay focused on this image. If you lose the image, gently open your eyes and gaze at the flame, then close your eyes and repeat. Continue with this practice for 5-10 minutes.

2. Breath Meditation

Sitting comfortably, prepare to meditate. Become aware of your breath. Breathe in slowly and count “one”. Slowly breathe out and count “two”. Breathe in and count “three”, breathe out and count “four”.... Continue counting your breaths up to number 10. When you reach number 10, go back to number one and repeat the practice for 5-20 minutes. If your mind wanders during the practice and you lose concentration, just return your attention to the breath and begin counting from number one.

3. Just Be

Sit quietly for 3-5 minutes and observe your thoughts and feelings. Just sit and observe these thoughts and feelings, without becoming attached to them. Allow them to flow naturally and see them for what they are-just energy...just thoughts. Breathe deeply and consciously stay connected with your breath as the thoughts flit through your mind.

4. Focus On Inner Stillness

In the midst of chaos and disorganisation there is stillness and calm. To find this place within yourself, sit in a comfortable position, with a straight back, close your eyes and imagine a candle glowing bright within your heart. Hold onto this image and feel the warmth from this candle flowing now through your body, through your veins and nestling deep inside your soul. Remain focused on this image for 5- 20 minutes. Slowly open your eyes and re-engage with your day.

5. Wrap Up Warm And Go Outside

If it is too cold you can practice this meditation by staying indoors and look through a window. Gaze up at the sky, observe the colours, textures of the clouds, or if it is night time, look for the stars and moon. Take a few deep steady breaths as you release and let go of the stresses and tensions of your day. Stay focused and gaze up and observe around you. Lose yourself in the spaciousness and awe of this creation we call the Universe, take heart and remind yourself you too are a part of this greatness. Stay outside for at least 5-20 minutes and as you return home know that this expansive feeling is part of you.

6. Loving Kindness

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths to calm your body. Turn your attention to your body and become aware of any parts that feel stiff, sore or achy. Send your out breath to these parts of the body, allow tension and unease to gently flow from the body. Stay with this process for 3-7 minutes. Slowly open your eyes.

Now that you feel all calm, relaxed and chilled-out let's turn to another area of your life where stress can play havoc with your immune system- your digestive system and foods you eat.

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