



21 Day Meditation and Mindfulness Program for Teens

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Introduction

Life has many magical and wonderful moments, and alongside those there are the stressful and emotional times.

In our fast paced culture we may feel the pressure to just keep on going despite how we feel. There may never seem to be enough time to take care of the most important person in your life - you!

As a consequence, our inner life can become suppressed, and we may start to feel a little empty, resentful and our health can suffer. When we suppress our needs, we may turn to addictions to keep a lid on our inner life. This may mean social media, shopping, alcohol, keeping busy, food, gossip or others.

Learning to support ourselves and especially the needs that we become aware of is a habit worth cultivating. Listening to ourselves in this way and responding to what we discover can help us to feel supported, heard and valued. When we take care of ourselves we feel less lonely. Decisions are made with more clarity and this leads ultimately to less stress.

In ancient times (and in many places still today), people lived in tribes and a community of family, friends and villagers created a strong network of support. Women gathered together, raised children together and worked together. Men hunted, protected, created safe havens and worked together. Today, many of us live far more separately as individuals. To access support we have to reach out, pay, ask and there is no guarantee that the support available will meet our needs.

Supportive practices such as dance, intentional gatherings and activities that allow for emotional release and group support are not naturally built into our lifestyle and western culture. Even when they are eg ANZAC Day, our western culture is not supportive of weeping in public or more overt forms of mourning such as wailing or loud crying. Whilst we can access a vast array of professional services today that we couldn't in the past, the emotional and personal support is very different. To be supported we have to reach out and ask.

The life challenges faced today are far more complex than ever. School is rarely left at school, people are constantly stimulated and "on alert" with technology all around and the expectations of being a great parent are ever-present. Society is highly competitive and oriented towards achievement and material success. It's easy to feel less than and that everyone else must be doing a better job or coping better.

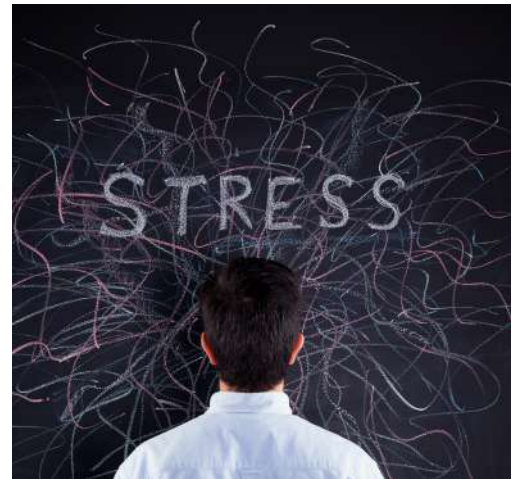
The focus is always on what can be DONE and ACHIEVED. However, in this meditation programme you are going to be asked to pull your thinking away from what you are doing "out there", and begin to bring the focus back to a more personal level; you and your needs.

After all, you are the key person that is making the decisions - for yourself and others. Think about the kind of decisions you make and how you communicate when you are feeling: overwhelmed, anxious, fearful, worried, desperate, alone, sad, annoyed, frustrated, exhausted, depleted and many more.

What are the results?

Generally MORE overwhelm, anxiety, worry, desperation etc.

- When I feel like this I:
- Can't take in information
- Can't think clearly
- Am grumpy and angry
- Frown a lot
- Over - schedule my life and get too busy
- Don't sleep well
- Don't look well
- Feel run down
- Don't speak calmly and respectfully to others
- Don't respond well when people feel challenging
- Have negative thoughts that spiral downwards
- Feel anxious and have difficulty breathing
- Tend to look for sugar fixes or take in unhealthy food and drinks
- Eat more take away and fast food
- Feel like my head is in a fog and that everything feels difficult
- I am grumpy and distant with loved ones
- I tend to buy things I don't need
- Feel unbalanced



Think about the kind of decisions we make and how we communicate when we are feeling: Clear, strong, healthy, focused, happy, connected, peaceful, supported, in control, empowered and energized.

Just reading this second list makes me breathe a sigh of relief!

When I am feeling like this I:

- Smile more
- Am much more creative about how I respond to others and any tricky moments or questions
- I sleep well
- I plan ahead and am more prepared and organized
- I am happy and I laugh more
- I want to be more creative and have fun
- I cook healthier meals
- I feel optimistic about life
- I meditate more and exercise more
- I think more clearly and rationally
- I look happy
- I don't feel like eating or drinking rubbish
- I am productive in my work and all areas of my life
- My life feels relaxed even if it's full
- I communicate lovingly with others in my life and find it easier to stay calm when challenged
- I have more energy for everything
- My relationship with my partner feels closer

Can you relate to any of this? Imagine how others respond to you when you are feeling like this.

In this programme you will be introduced to some self-support tools. All you need to do is use them. In busy lives this may mean carving out space where possible.

Perhaps:

- Early in the morning before school
- In the evening when everything is done for the day
- Free pockets of time during the day (at lunchtime or on the train or bus)

Meditation provides an incredible doorway to experiencing new aspects within. Perhaps it's the stillness, quietness and receptivity that can be created by meditating that can reveal the voice within. All manner of things can be found once the door within is opened. To me, this is one of the most exciting aspects of meditation. The world within can be as vast as the outside world. Some things found will be pleasurable and some things won't, but it's all part of you. Support is always available at ACMM for any thing you need.

Making this connection opens up even bigger journeys and discoveries as we start to perceive the vastness of what is inside us. This can be a great source of comfort and support at times when our external life is challenging. Drawing strength, inspiration and clarity from within can bring healing and resolution without.

As you take time for you, the outer world problems begin to look a little smaller. You might begin to discover what an incredible capacity you do have for creative problem solving. You might touch that still place within yourself that reminds you of what a magnificent person you really are; that you do have the capacity to deal with whatever life brings.

Simply taking time for yourself reminds you of an important message:
"I am worth it!"

This in itself is an empowering statement that you are putting into action by developing a meditation practise. By committing this time to yourself you increase your sense of self value and self-esteem. This is before you even begin the meditation which brings so many rewards of its own.

So little time and effort – for so much reward.



For those of you new to meditation here is a nice meaty definition:

"Meditation is used in a generic sense to cover a wide range of mental activities, much in the way the word 'travel' is used to describe a wide range of physical activities. We can say we will travel from one city to another. But that says nothing about the detail. Will we travel by car or by plane? Will we get there as quickly as possible or will we meander along the way? Just as there are many ways to travel, there are many different ways to meditate. Therefore when people say they are 'meditating' they could be involved in any one of a wide range of activities.

Attention regulation, which is essentially a fancy way of describing concentration, can be directed to various objects such as the breath or body, a mantra, a thought or prayer, a visualization or mental image, a physical object, a sense of being or stillness. These in turn can be used to cultivate various outcomes, including therapeutic outcomes, cognitive changes such as improved concentration, non-attachment to experiences, stillness of mind and an attitude of acceptance. Other outcomes include meditative states or traits such as undistracted awareness, transcendence of thought, oneness, spiritual insight and enlightenment. Meditation can also be identified by the physical effects it produces, such as physiological, biochemical, hormonal, immunological or neurological changes."

(Ian Gawler and Paul Bedson. Meditation – An in depth guide.)

The body of research on meditation whilst young (most has arisen in the last 10 years) is huge with over 6,000 articles and more being published weekly. It attests to meditation's many benefits in the prevention, management and treatment of a wide range of physical and psychological conditions. This evidence is arguably more extensive than that relating to many well-accepted treatments carried out daily in medical practises around the world.

In this programme you will try a few different ways to meditate. Different techniques work for different people, so luckily there are many options available to meditators.

I hope you enjoy this programme and come back to it time and time again for ideas and inspiration.

Warmest wishes
Lisa Forde



Seeking help when you need it

This course is designed for responsible and healthy adults and is for educational purposes only. It does not replace counselling, psychiatric or medical support. Participation is voluntary and proceeding to undertake this programme is an indication that you agree to take responsibility for your wellbeing by seeking professional support should you need it.

Many people turn to meditation in a crisis, I certainly did 20 years ago when I began my meditation journey. Here are some resources available in Australia if you are in crisis. If you are outside Australia, please search for your local crisis centre.

- [beyondblue](#) aims to increase awareness of depression and anxiety and reduce stigma Call 1300 22 4636, 24 hours / 7 days a week.
- [KidsHelp Line](#) is for teens 13-17 years old and can assist with a range of issues regarding mental health, family and friends, physical identity, relationships and se.
- [Headspace](#) is an Australia-wide government organisation provides mental health support that can help you with depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns. They provide free online and phone counselling, and have treatment centres located all around Australia that you can visit.
- [Butterfly Foundation's National Helpline](#), ED HOPE, is a free, confidential service that provides information, counselling and treatment referral for people with eating disorders and body image and related issues. Call 1800 33 4673, 8am-midnight AEST / 7 days a week.
- [Lifeline](#) provides 24-hour crisis counseling, support groups and suicide prevention services. Call 13 11 14.
- [MindSpot](#) is a free telephone and online service for people with stress, worry, anxiety, low mood or depression. It provides online assessment and treatment for anxiety and depression. MindSpot is not an emergency or instant response service. Call 1800 61 44 34 AEST, 8am-8pm (Mon-Fri), 8am-6pm (Sat).
- [QLife](#) provides nationwide telephone and web-based services to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people of all ages. Call 1800 184 527, 3pm-12am (midnight) AEST / 7 days a week.
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) provides 24/7 support if you or someone you know is feeling suicidal. Call 1300 659 467.
- [Family Violence & Abuse](#) – Confidential information, counselling and support service open 24 hours to support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse. Phone: 1800 737732
- For emergencies contact 000

Journal

For each day's meditation in this program, there is space to note your experience, feelings, and anything you may have noticed, i.e., were there any challenges?

The space is brief and you are welcome to keep writing in your journal for your own personal benefit. For those who enjoy writing extensively, it may be a good idea to write in a journal as well.

One of the key skills needed for regular meditation practise is commitment. In this program your commitment will be required. The program will be completed sequentially for 21 days, and if a day is missed you will need to go back to the beginning of the program. It may sound a little strict, but it's the best way for us to ensure that your daily practise develops into a solid routine and that you maximise the opportunity for your own learning and growth.

Meditation has a cumulative effect and not meditating for periods of time interrupts the flow of progress through this program.

As a role model for your family, loved ones and even friends, this commitment will be really important for you to develop. Maintaining a daily commitment places meditation at the centre of your life (high on the priority list). This is where it needs to be in order to be effective and for you to feel the profound benefits ripple through your life in all directions. Even on the most difficult and busy days, staying true to your meditation routine will make the day run more smoothly and provide clear solutions to the conundrums that caused the chaos in the first place. This is the time to test out what meditation can really do for you – you might just be amazed!

On the other hand, especially when you begin something new, it's perfectly human to be a little haphazard at first. It's important not to give yourself a hard time if you miss a day or two.

Self-compassion and kindness are part of the practice, as well as doing your best. People progress best with a mix of boundaries, kindness and love.

So let's begin...

An overview of the journey

In this program you will be introduced to meditation techniques that both stand alone and effectively combine as building blocks for longer meditations. These techniques are gathered from a few different philosophies.

The Program is separated into three sections.

The first introduces a fundamental of Meditation: Grounding.

In the second, you will be introduced to the wonderful relaxing world of Health meditation.

And finally the third section provides an opportunity to explore the supportive practice of self compassion.

The techniques are either a concentrative or attentive technique. A concentrative technique brings your focus to a single point, so it requires you to focus or concentrate on an image, a word, your breath, or whatever point of focus you have chosen. This kind of technique is great for transcending day to day thoughts and improving concentration and attention regulation. An attentive technique on the other hand leaves you open to noticing sounds, sensations, feelings and anything else that arise during the meditation time and embracing these within your meditation. A body scan meditation is an example of an attentive meditation technique.

In your daily practice program we will be teaching you to use both of these styles.



Enjoying the ride

As you open to the world within, some funny things can happen. Here is a list of possibilities so that you feel prepared and not too surprised or worried.

This is a JUST IN CASE list. So please don't be put off. It's mostly a reference to come back to if you need it, rather than a list of things that will happen.

Cramps - You can wait for the cramp to go away, massage or rub the cramped muscle, move your body into a more comfortable position or have a slow and gentle stretch.

Giggling/Crying/Tears - This is a sign of tension release. Know that emotions or tears may come up and just to give yourself time. It is ok and safe to continue with the meditation.

Difficulty letting go - If you find it difficult to let go of tension and relax, repeat the exercise a few times. It takes time and is worth the persistence to achieve results. Be reassured it will probably take a much shorter time to relax than it did to get this tense, which probably took years. You should find they experience progress in a matter of weeks or months and that it will be really worthwhile.

Sleepiness - Drowsiness is normal and sleep is ok unless it happens frequently. Persistent sleepiness issues may point to one of the following:

- Problems in your life that are making you tired
- Difficulty adopting the skill of relaxation
- Difficulty finding the difference between meditation and sleep
- Sometimes the meditation can be too long for your skill level
- Sometimes it may be related to the environment, e.g. meditating in bed or lying down, poor ventilation, distractions in the environment which cause you to tune out.

If sleepiness becomes a persistent problem consider one or some of the following options:

- Do some stretching or breathing before meditating
- Go for a walk before meditating
- Take a 10 minute powernap before meditating
- Don't eat before meditating
- Don't drink alcohol before meditating
- If possible don't take prescription drugs before meditating
- Practise in a well-ventilated room
- Do not practise in a room associated with sleep
- Do not practise at bedtime or naptime
- Do not practise lying down
- Practise in a less comfortable position
- Do activities that increase blood flow and awareness prior to meditation – this may include walking, singing or breathing.
- Use a different meditation technique
- Practise with eyes open
- Change the technique in some way by making it shorter, including some movement or making it more complex so it becomes more active
- Speak louder when guiding the meditation
- Practise with the lights on

Negative beliefs - Negative beliefs around letting go (maybe you were taught that relaxation is unhelpful because you need to be alert to be at your peak performance). Negative reaction to being in a relaxed state (you may not be familiar with the feeling of slower breathing and heart rate, the mental quiet may feel disturbing – you will get used to these feelings and grow to enjoy them). Negative associations with the facilitator (perhaps the imagery used, the facilitator’s voice etc. This can be avoided by giving yourself control over the imagery used. The voice issue can be an opportunity to heal a past association).

Increased Sensitivity - Some can have difficulty with increased sensitivity to noises, e.g., clock ticking, feelings in the body and other subtle stimuli. This is normal and needs to be transcended, so use the techniques discussed in the course that relate to distracting thoughts for noises as well.

Disengagement, Depersonalization and Disorientation - It is normal to feel this way during meditation, but not during everyday life. If this is happening for you then use some of the techniques to help you feel more grounded that you have learnt in the course. If this doesn’t help, then seek help as this may be a pre-existing mental health issue.

Reduction of defensive barriers - Relaxation can reduce defence mechanisms used to deny or ignore negative or threatening thoughts or feelings. Help is available if the feelings feel overwhelming or if you feel ill equipped to handle them.

Hyperventilation/Hypoventilation - Breathing changes can result in decreased or increased levels of Co2. This can cause dizziness and anxiety. These symptoms usually pass, but perhaps take your meditation practise slowly for a while. You can focus on moving meditations and balance this with more physical and grounding activity such as walking.

Shifts in brain function - As relaxation deepens, parts of the brain, usually the cerebral cortex, may become less active, and other parts may become more active. This can lead to spontaneous wakeful dream like activity. This can include an increase in clairvoyance (vivid imagery due to 3rd eye chakra opening), novel or intense emotional states (increased sensitivity to and movement of emotional energy), changes in body image and psychic sensitivity. These symptoms are all signs that the meditation process is working and therefore they don’t need to be alarming and should pass with time.

If the problems persist or become disruptive then you can experiment with the following modifications:

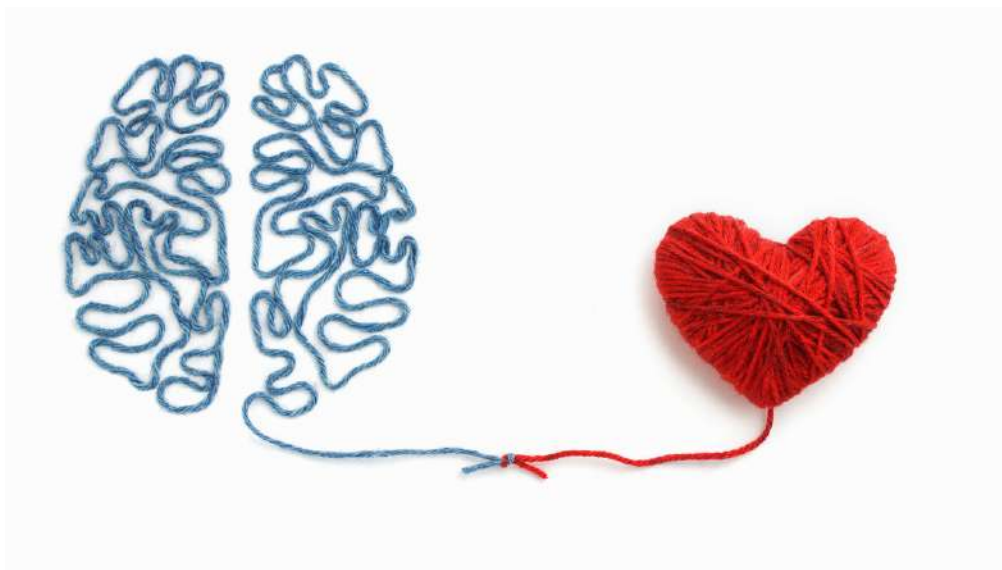
- Shorten the exercise or make it less intense
- Practise the exercise less often
- Do some physical exercise prior to meditating
- Select more active meditations such as moving or chanting
- Attempt a different meditation technique
- Increase exercise complexity by introducing multiple techniques (this can act to lessen the intensity of a singular technique)
- Revise an exercise, deleting any elements that trigger distressing associations.
- Provide greater structure and more talk in the guided exercise and less silent time.

- Introduce more phrases of encouragement and support to help the client feel safer and more comfortable.
- Replace activity with music meditation or nature sounds.
- Increase extraneous stimulation; turn up lights, meditate in a familiar environment, sitting instead of lying down.
- Practise in a group rather than alone, using a guided exercise rather than a self-guided exercise.
- Take a break from meditation and do another form of stress therapy.
- Make meditations more body centred than abstract
- Add instructions that emphasize specific positive feelings needed by the client.
- In any case, if the problem persists, seek counselling.

Difficulties with relaxation and meditation can also happen as a result of:

- Meditating after consuming alcohol or eating
- Medications that cause drowsiness
- Lack of sleep
- Illness
- A pre-existing mental health condition [1].

[1] Contra-indications adapted from Meditation an In-depth guide Ian Gawler and Paul Bedson.



Atmosphere and position

ATMOSPHERE

Let's start right at the beginning. Where are you going to meditate?

Consider the following when creating or deciding on a meditation space:

- It has to be easy. If you have a special room then that's great. You can set it up and have it ready. If you don't – then keep the items that you need to use to create a special space in a drawer, cupboard or box near the area you meditate in. That way setting up is quick and easy and won't deter you from meditating. You don't need any special tools or props to meditate, so nothing is fine too!
- If you like gentle background music have this prepared and ready to go. Start to gather some soothing background music (without lyrics) for meditation. Some suggestions are Deuter, Tony O'Connor, Neil H, Tania Rose, and there are tons more. Background music is not essential – it's really a matter of preference. Some people really need it to relax and focus and some find it an annoying distraction.
- Create your meditation area by choosing a cushion, shawl, candle and candle holder or anything else you might like to create a suitable atmosphere. Whilst I love setting up a beautiful space to meditate in eventually you can let go of needing props. But to start with they really help us make the mental transition into the activity of meditation. Make sure you wear loose clothing and are comfortable. It should be as quiet as possible especially when you are beginning. Early in the morning is a great time for that reason. Before everyone is up the house is quiet and the energy is still. It's also the time that many other people are meditating, so it is easier to connect to the frequency of stillness and peace.
- Create boundaries for yourself with people you live with. If you have family or housemates around; ensure they understand that you can't be interrupted unless it is an emergency. You really need to feel safe and secure when you are meditating and you don't want to have the fear that someone will barge in whilst you are in a meditative state. For some, this may pose a challenge as these boundaries may not currently be in place. Make this is a project for yourself if you want your meditation practise to deepen. A clear explanation to others and a sign on the door that you are not to be disturbed is a good start. Remember that this time for you will ripple great benefits for your whole family.
- Where possible try to meditate in the same place each time. Again, this is not essential for everyone. It does help some people create a sense of routine and space. Do what feels right for you, after all this is all about listening to yourself.
- If noises happen, use them to practise developing your exclusive focus on meditating. This is a great way to build a resilient meditation practise that is not overly dependent on the environment being perfect.



Integrating the principles of meditation into your life

Start to play with the principles of meditation by bringing them into your daily life.

Look at what you are trying to achieve, or the principle that you are currently working on and design an activity that helps you integrate that principle or achieve that goal in your life.

For example, if you are trying to slow down then why not have a slow day? Slow down everything you do for the day and see how it feels. How about a “joy” day? Enjoy and make the most of everything that happens today. E.g. really savour the warm water in the shower, smile at everyone, choose to be calm and joyful even to those who are not.

Choosing to have these kinds of days can create real change in your life as you begin to normalise and integrate the life choices of meditation.

POSITION

Lying

To lie down or not to lie down? If you are going to lie down then lie on a hard surface like the floor (with padding beneath you) or a yoga mat. Lying on a bed makes it too easy to fall asleep, as you will be extremely comfortable. Although comfort is important, a little discomfort will keep you alert and make it easier to focus.

If you have attended a yoga class, Savasana (pronounced sha-VAH-sanna) is an ideal position.



I would suggest covering with a blanket as you will cool down, unless it is very warm.

The basics of Savasana are:

1. Flop your legs and feet from side to side and then let your feet fall gently outwards to the sides.
2. Arms fall gently along the body, slightly out from the body, palms facing up.
3. Turning your head from side to side to centre your neck and spine.
4. Stretch your entire body out lengthwise, as though someone is pulling your head away from the rest of your body, and then relax.
5. Chin tucked a little towards the chest.
6. Pelvis tucked under.
7. After your meditation activity, bend your knees. Using your legs, push yourself onto one side to get up.

If you would like to have a cushion under your head, it should be as flat as possible.

Most importantly do whatever your body needs to be comfortable but alert. If you suffer back problems then it is best not to aggravate them, so lie or sit in a position that works for you initially. I have found a lying position excellent for Health Meditation (Relaxation), but not so much for the other techniques that require more focus and control and whose primary aim is to uplift and connect rather than relax and let go.

Sitting

In any sitting position maintain a relaxed but straight spine. Sofa chairs are fine provided that your back doesn't slump into the chair, as this will strain your back.

Sitting in a place that has a back rest, such as at the head of a bed, on the floor against a wall (perhaps with a cushion against your back, on the floor against the base of a sofa, or in a high backed chair is great.

Palms can be placed downwards on the arm rests of the chair or on top of your thighs, wherever feels comfortable.

Chin tucked a little towards the chest.

If sitting in a chair, feet should be flat on the floor. If you don't reach the floor, then place enough flat cushions under your feet until you have enough support under your feet.

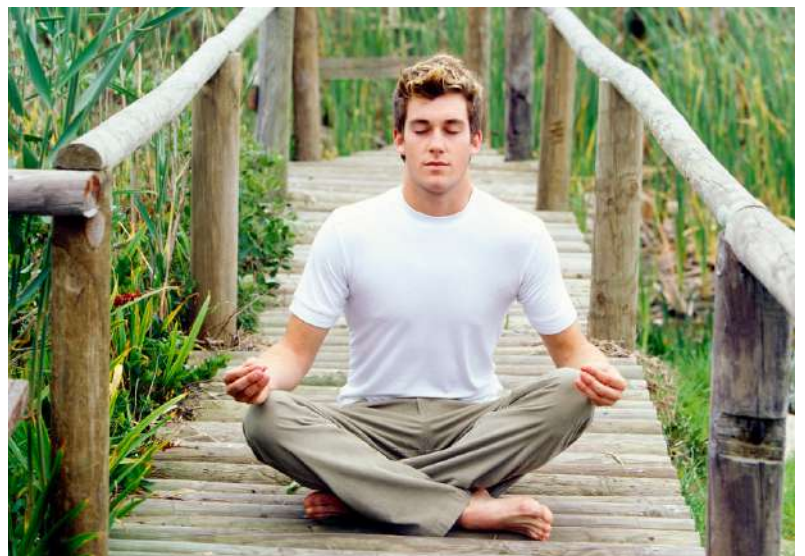
If you have a meditation stool, then this is wonderful provided your back is strong enough to sit for the time required without getting sore. If you get sore then change to a position where your back is more supported until you get used to sitting for longer periods. The advantage of the meditation stool is that it tilts the pelvis forward, providing a stable position.

If sitting on the floor or on a flat surface like a bed or lounge, then you might like to place legs in a cross-legged position or a yoga lotus position.

When it comes to position choice, it's worth experimenting with a few that feel comfortable and settling on a favourite. The very basic easy pose (below) will also do nicely. As you go through the program, you might like to note which positions you used and the resultant effect on the quality of your meditation.

Easy pose is perfect for the beginner. Called Sukhasana in Sanskrit, meaning "joy pose". It involves sitting on the floor cross legged with hands resting on the knees, palms down. You can rock back and forth a little to find the perfect centre of stability.

If you find your spine is not comfortably straight in this pose, then you can sit higher by sitting on several firm blankets, or on a bolster and even give your knees support if necessary to make the pose easier.



Expectations and motivation

Some people take naturally to meditation.

Most of us however, will go through a learning curve. Initially it may feel challenging to sit still even for a short time, so approach meditation with the belief that you will have a beneficial experience no matter what you do or don't achieve. It is also useful to have an attitude of acceptance to whatever comes up during your meditation time. Often, this is the time when emotions want to be heard, so if there are a few tears, or a feeling of gladness about the week so far, then take a moment to feel and acknowledge these emotions and let them be.

Attending a meditation retreat or group, retreat or doing a workshop can be a helpful way to accelerate your progress and stay motivated, as well as having someone to ask questions of.

Getting started

Here are some areas to ponder before starting.

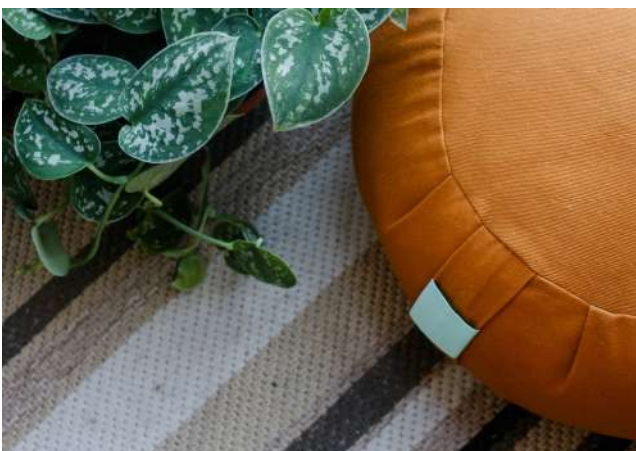
Decide the place in the house where you will be meditating. What do you need to do to create complete privacy and emotional safety? What time of day will you try out initially?

Are there any props that you will be using? Where will they be kept?

Which position/s will you be starting with? Is there a reason for your choice?

Remember this is your chance to start afresh even if you have meditated before. If there is a position that you are drawn to intuitively for no reason whatsoever, then take a chance and give it a try.

The first step is to sit still and begin to focus your attention inwards.



This may feel uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and even selfish for some. You may need to go to battle with voices from the past (well-meaning adults) who came from a time when idleness was a sin and we were criticised for being leisurely or resting.

Start to turn these old beliefs on their head by making your meditation time the most important part of your day. As you care for yourself, the ripple effect creates benefit for everyone around you. But it all starts with you.

Grounding meditation

The aim of Mindfulness meditation is to help us to become more aware of and present to each moment.

As we build our capacity to be aware, and become more present, we become better able to engage more fully in life; savouring the feelings, experiences, interactions, sights, sounds, tastes and smells that make up our life experience.

In order to be present to these moment to moment experiences, we need to be paying attention. Often our thoughts are far away from what is going on right in front of us, or the person who is before us. We may be thinking about something that is worrying us, planning, analysing, preparing our response or thinking about what we want to talk about next.

Whilst it is completely normal to have an active brain and thoughts will always be there, we can direct our attention to activities that will help us become more aware and present.

Grounding is a foundational technique used in both attentive and concentrative practices that enables us to cultivate presence and awareness quickly and easily.

Grounding involves a few steps:

1. Becoming aware of your 5 senses by tuning into each one in turn
2. Taking this awareness inside your body and noticing any inner sensations
3. Paying attention to the inner and outer sensations at the same time

Listen to the guided audio below to work through each step. As you become more familiar with the steps of this practice you can do it without the audio. When you practise on your own, you can sit with the practice for 5, 10, 15 minutes or as long as you like, in order to extend the length of the practice you can take longer with each step individually or rest in silence with your present awareness as long as you want to. In this silent (non-active) time you may like to use an anchor such as the breath or your senses to return your focus to when your mind wanders away.

Here is an 11 minute grounding and breath practice by Julie Bond-Rowe (for when you have less time):



Here is a 20-minute grounding practice with Lisa Forde for when you have a little more time.



Getting grounded is beneficial in so many ways:

- It helps us to become more relaxed and relieve stress.
- It breaks the circuit of ruminating thoughts (although we are always thinking in some form). I find it is helpful to interrupt negative thinking.
- It assists with digesting emotions so that we feel clearer (excellent after a challenging or busy day).
- It restores energy as it helps to relax muscle contraction in the body and clear the system of negative emotions.
- It helps with focus and concentration as we can think more clearly.
- It helps with decision making.
- It is a great starting practice for meditation or mindfulness that can prepare you to lead into other techniques such as listening to the natural breath, using a mantra or a body scan.

You can practice grounding in 2 main ways:

1. As part of your daily meditation practice (a sitting practice)
2. As part of your daily life. (Going through the first 2 steps above wherever you are – though not if you are driving or operating machinery.)

A much longer version of a grounding meditation can be found on itunes by Ken Mellor – it is entitled simply Grounding Meditation.

For the next 7 days have a play with grounding by listening to either one of the audios. You will continue with the grounding technique for the entire programme, building other techniques onto this foundation. For now, enjoy getting grounded and notice how it feels. You can listen to the audio or practice on your own, once you become familiar with the steps.

Day 1 Date..... Duration of Session.....

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 2 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 1's session yesterday

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Then begin your Day 2 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 3 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 2's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 3 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 4 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 3's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 4 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 5 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 4's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 5 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 6 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 5's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 6 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 7 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 6's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 7 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

CONGRATULATIONS

on completing your first week of the programme!!



Health meditation (relaxation)

Body relaxation can be a helpful antidote to anxiety and fatigue. When the body is relaxed, fear and anxiety depart and the body's natural balance can be restored.

Relaxation can also be used at night before sleep to help create a more restful and better-quality sleep. (This is the exception to the "no meditation just before bed" suggestion.)

We can relax the body by taking our attention through various parts of the body (many or just a few) and bringing kind, compassionate attention to each part. This is again, relatively simple to carry out and with practise, can bring about a state of deep relaxation.

A concentrative meditation style guides us to take our attention through the parts of the body and focus on relaxing each one in turn. This is the basis of Yoga Nidra (A guided body relaxation commonly used at the end of Hatha Yoga classes).

An attentive meditation style also moves step by step through the body, simply taking our awareness to each part but without seeking to change anything. Simply being aware and accepting whatever we find. This is the basis of the Mindful Body Scan made famous by the "father" of mindfulness Jon Kabat-Zinn. It doesn't take much to learn and can be very effective at inducing relaxation.

Techniques for Relaxation

A body scan is an attentive method and an easy way to relax the body. It involves bringing attention and awareness to each part of the body in turn. There is nothing else you need to do other than pay attention. With this technique we are not trying to change anything, simply bringing awareness to that part of the body, pausing a while and then moving to the next part.

This simple Body Scan can be completed from head to toe, from toe to head, or simply moving randomly from one part of the body to another. Awareness has a magical effect and automatically helps us relax.

This kind of mindful body scan helps us to become present to how the body is feeling and allows us to be more aware and more present to its needs.

It encourages self-care and self-love and is a way of nurturing the body with our attention. We tune into the body and the sensations we find there.

The idea is to explore each part with a gentle curiosity that is free from judgment regardless of whether you experience the sensation of pleasant or unpleasant. In the beautiful Buddhist way, it teaches us to be accepting and loving towards whatever we find.

Here are some instructions for the Body Scan:

- Begin by getting grounded; experiencing the 5 senses, each in turn.
- Begin at the scalp, and slowly and softly name to yourself the part of your body that you become aware of.
- As you name each part, feel the loving attention of your mind flowing to that part of your body, and feel that part responding by yielding to your gentle intention of relaxation and rest. Be as detailed or as general as you like and as time allows.
- Over the period of practising this exercise, you might like to give yourself the opportunity to practise both the quick and longer version.
- For the longer version, you might move through the body in more detail and stop at each body part for longer; taking as much time as you have to create a deep and satisfying relaxation session.
- Once you have relaxed your feet and toes, you might like to review your body and bring additional attention to the areas that need to release and relax more.
- Then, bring your focus to the whole body all at once and feel a letting go in the whole body.
- You can use your breath through the entire process to handle any tension in your body that you find unsettling by breathing gently, focusing on your inbreath and outbreath as they happen.

If you would like to use an audio, here is a Mindful Body Scan Audio by one of our meditation coaches Kate Gee. It uses an attentive style practice and runs for about 20 minutes.



As I said at the beginning of this programme, we can use an attentive or concentrative approach to meditate. The Body Scan is attentive; now let's try a concentrative style meditation, using guided instruction to create a particular outcome. In this Relaxing into Now audio, Julie Bond-Rowe guides us through the body, bringing waves of peace and relaxation throughout. This audio is a little longer; 30 minutes.



Meditations that focus on the body can sometimes be challenging for those of us with strong negative feelings around our body, a history of abuse or a history of receiving negative messages about our physical appearance. Be gentle and loving with yourself and only do what you feel ready for. If this meditation feels really challenging for you then stick with grounding until you feel ready, or book yourself in to receive support for what is triggered. Resources for this are available at the beginning of this manual.

Relaxation brings so many benefits, here are some that I have experienced:

- A softening and letting go in the body; muscles are more relaxed and less tight
- A feeling of clarity, like I have woken up from a refreshing sleep
- Energized and replenished
- A melting away of bothersome thoughts and feelings
- More optimism and positivity
- More patience and feelings of compassion and kindness towards others

You will be beginning these meditations on Day 8 of your program.

For the next 7 days test out these relaxation techniques, stick to one per session.

Day 8

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 7's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 8 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 9

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 8's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 9 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 10

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 9's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 10 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 11

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 10's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 11 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 12

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects you noticed from Day 11's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 12 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 13

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 12's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 13 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 14

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 13's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 14 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

CONGRATULATIONS

on completing your second week of the programme!!

Self compassion practices

In the first 2 weeks of this programme, you have tried grounding and relaxation. These are two fundamental practices.

I thought it would be lovely for the final practice in this series to introduce a self-compassion practice. Self-compassion practices direct kind and non-judgmental thoughts, feeling or words towards ourselves. We hold ourselves in a loving and parent-like awareness.

This practice is really useful for times when we are:

- Experiencing difficulty
- Being hard on ourselves or feeling down
- Feeling defeated by life's circumstances
- Very busy and pushing ourselves too hard
- Wanting to cultivate more love and kindness in our lives
- Feeling unfairly treated by others, or not getting the love we want.

You may have heard of the Self Compassion expert and researcher Kristin Neff. Kristin has authored several books on this subject and has free short recordings available on her website. Feel free to use these for this section of the programme if you wish, there are a variety of exercises, guided meditations and shorter practices. Her website is:

<https://self-compassion.org/>

and the free practices are at:

<https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#guided-meditations>.

In this program I have also provided a full length guided meditation recorded by one of our ACMM meditation coaches Morgan Jai-Morincome. Morgan runs her own psychotherapy and meditation practice – Sacred Inner Wild in Canberra. The length of this audio is around 30 minutes.



You will be beginning these meditations on Day 15 of your program.

For the next 7 days choose one self-compassion practice to use per session.

Day 15

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Technique chosen

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects you noticed from Day 14's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 15 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 16 Date.....Duration of Session.....

Technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 15s session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 16 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 17

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Technique chosen

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 16's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 17 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 18

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 17's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 18 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 19

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Technique chosen

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 18's session yesterday.

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Then begin your Day 19 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 20

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 19's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 20 session.

a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g.. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

Day 21

Date.....Duration of Session.....

Relaxation technique chosen.....

Before you begin the session, note any flow on effects from Day 20's session yesterday.

Then begin your Day 21 session.

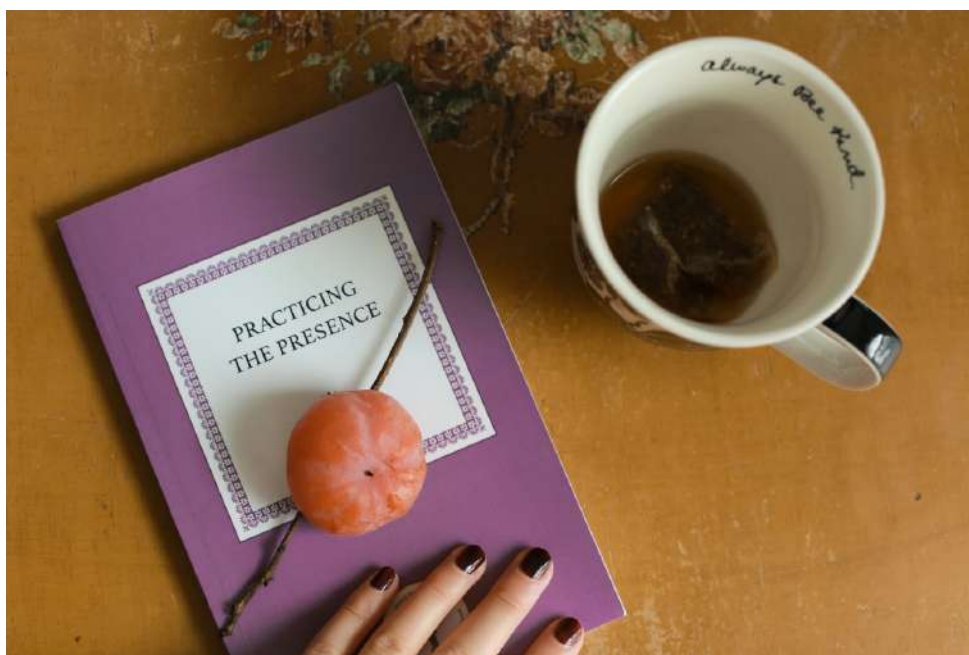
a) What I noticed. E.g. Level of ease/difficulty, any contra-indications and what you did about it/If anything, noticeable changes or benefits.

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b) Once you finish your session, take out into your day an awareness of what you have done and be prepared to notice any flow on effects, lasting changes or benefits that may pop up in the day e.g. less reactive, felt calmer, quality of sleep etc.

CONGRATULATIONS

on completing the 21 days of the programme!!



Using meditation in your life

If you weren't already then you may now be in the habit of daily meditation - congratulations!!

I am sure you have already noticed some subtle and marked differences in how you think, feel and operate thanks to your daily meditation routine.

Over these 21 days you may have noticed the varying effects of different techniques. You may like to think about whether you will continue with the practices included, which ones or if you will keep searching for more...there are so many choices!

Your daily meditation practise can be the foundation of your physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing, with benefits rippling out to those around you.

Keep this program in a folder, and if you wish you can continue with it in your daily routine, it can give you even more depth and understanding of the techniques.

Instead of focusing on each technique for a few days, next round, spend a week or even a month on each technique, and next time 1 or 2 months. Your knowledge and experience will build exponentially and you will become a deep meditator in no time.

Of course, meditation progresses and is best supported with a teacher. Go to our find a teacher page on our website to make contact with one of our graduates offering services in your area. You might also consider joining our FREE online guided meditation sessions that are conducted over Zoom on a regular basis.

If you wish to vary your meditation technique by the day according to your needs then start by sitting mindfully for a time and noticing how you feel. Allow yourself to intuitively pick a technique and use that technique trusting that you don't have to know why and that you will benefit greatly regardless. You may be surprised with how perfect that technique was for today. If you have no clue where to start, pick a random technique or fall back onto a comfortable technique and you can't go wrong.

Remember that from time to time it is really helpful to use a technique that challenges you, as there may be a gold nugget in that technique that you find once you have broken through any fear around using it.

Most of all enjoy your meditation time as special self-loving time that will be the foundation of support for your whole life and enhance your life experience in ways you could not have imagined.

With warmest wishes
Lisa Forde, Principal & Founder

