



THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE  
GUIDE TO MEDITATION  
EVER WRITTEN

# YOUR BEST MEDITATION

BOOK OF THE WORLD'S BEST  
MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

WRITTEN BY  
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[THE DAILY MEDITATION]



# Your Best Meditation

*Book of the world's best meditation techniques*

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"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,  
But in having new eyes." -- *Marcel Proust*

## Opening The Curtains Of The Mind



Isn't it funny how one simple thing can change the course of your life forever?

Having taught meditation to thousands of people all around the world, it never ceases to amaze me how the simple act of being mindful can change lives. But I've seen time and again how meditation can help cure depression, anxiety, and stress; how it can create happiness and joy; and how it can lead you to live a meaningful life. Meditation has changed the lives of millions, and it can change your life too.

My own experience of meditation began in the spring of 2004. I was training to be an actor at Oxford. It was a fairytale of a time, surrounded by artists, musicians, and my fellow actors, many of whom are unforgettably beautiful people whom I'm blessed to have met. Each day at Oxford was spent reading the classics of Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen and ilk, studying people and characters, putting on performances, and honing the art of acting.

My teachers at Oxford were a truly varied and contrasting bunch, from the ultra-strict to the feeton-table-carefree. But one teacher in particular struck a chord with me: my vocal coach. The moment I met him I knew there was something different about him. He wore a long string of beads, he had black hair tied in a ponytail down to his lower back, and his presence was strong and earthy. It was like he'd walked right out of an old dojo and into our drama class.

I'd already been training in classical singing for eight years so I felt a natural kinship to my new vocal coach. I was one of the few students who truly

grasped the purpose of the absolutely insane exercises he made us do (which included imitating apes and dancing like zombies).

One day, when we'd stopped for lunch, I was munching on a grilled cashew butter and blueberry sandwich, and chasing it down with a glass of cranberry juice, when my vocal coach spoke to the class. Little did I know that what he was about to say would change me forever.

"Imagine there's a closed curtain around your mind," he said. "Now imagine that curtain opening".

It was not a profoundly complex thing to say. It wasn't particularly philosophical or poetic. But nevertheless it immediately struck a chord with me. It put my hair on end. I knew there was some deep truth to what he was saying.

Up until the moment I heard that line, my mind had been closed. Stress and fear had led me to shut myself off from the world. It was the unfortunate result of having lived in a rather volatile and turbulent home. My father was an alcoholic—great man, terrible problem. His alcoholism caused my family a hell of a lot of pain. That pain stopped whenever I went to school, but there it was only replaced by a hailstorm of bullying. Feeling unsafe at both home and at school, I had sequestered myself to the one place where I felt safe. I'd shrunk into my shell and lived in my own head, rarely daring to come out.

I'd been closing myself off for as long as I could remember. Since childhood I'd severed myself from external reality in order to prevent myself from being hurt. I'd unwittingly decided to close my mind to reality rather than to live in a world where my father could be drunk at any moment, a world where I could end up humiliated or beaten-up and hiding away in the school's sickroom.

But somehow I never realised I was doing it. I never realised that the curtains were drawn on my own mind.

Then, when my drama teacher happened to say that line (about there being a closed curtain in my mind that needed to open) it was like a lightning bolt struck my temporal lobe and ignited my mind with a profound epiphany. I realised that I was master of my own world, and that I had the power to dim the lights of my conscious mind, or to turn them up to full. I alone determined precisely how *alive* I was. I chose whether the “curtains of my mind” were open or closed.

I knew there and then that I needed to open myself up to the full richness of life, for good and bad, for better or worse. I swore to myself that I would dedicate myself to living consciously, to being fully awake to the world.

Little did I know back then that this process, this mental attitude of being present and conscious of reality, is called Mindfulness.



***Mindfulness:*** *The art of focusing the mind on the present moment, without judgment and without thoughts.*

Before I even knew anything about mindfulness—before I even knew the term “mindfulness”—mindfulness became my top priority. My primary goal in life became to live every moment consciously and with clarity.

Within a few days of practicing mindfulness it felt as though someone had turned the brightness and contrast levels up on my life, as though they’d taken my old CRT TV and replaced it with a 1080p 3D monitor.

It was such a joy just to be *truly alive* to the world, to notice what I hadn’t noticed before, like how a clap of distant thunder sends a tingle through my skin, or how the whistle of the wind in the trees makes the leaves dance. The world was coming to life in a million colours and in an orchestra of sound. I felt a level of joy I’d never felt before. I spent the next few weeks in a state of pure joy, feeling intimately connected to the world.

But then it suddenly dawned on me: What if other people weren't experiencing the same state of consciousness and mindfulness that I was?

In my teenage years I'd always considered myself to be a freak, to be the odd one out. It always seemed to me that it was I and I alone who was living closed-off from the world, as though everyone else in the world was living in the same grand hall while I was hidden alone in some unknown cupboard.

Then, one day when I was walking with an old friend through the local park, we happened to pass by the most beautiful swan, which was gliding so gracefully on the lake. Bathed under a red sun the whole scene seemed more like a romantic oil painting than real life. Completely captivated, I stopped to take in the breathtaking sight. But my friend just kept right on walking. Noticing that I'd stopped, she said, "Come on, we're in a rush".

"A rush for what?"

"X Factor's starting in half an hour".

*X Factor? A "reality" TV show? That's what was so important?* She tapped her foot on the ground impatiently. Somewhere between that impatient foot tapping and that serene swan on the lake, I realised the horrifying truth.

I realised that it wasn't just me who had been living mindlessly and with "the curtains closed"; it was my family, my friends, the people passing me by on the street typing away on their cell phones, the people staring at the TV. I felt like Cillian Murphy's character in *28 Days Later*, when he wakes up as the only person on Earth, surrounded by zombies. Because the reality was that the vast majority of people were barely conscious of the brilliance and beauty of the world around them. They were stuck in their thoughts, they were worrying about their work, they were thinking about tomorrow— always, always tomorrow, never now.

The majestic swan flapped its wings, beads of silver water dripping, and flew off into the distance, a white fleck fading into the crimson sun. Stunning. But no one witnessed it but me. Beyond the swan the crowns of oak trees reached towards the heavens. Beyond them the sounds of the city, where the people were too busy with stresses and pressures to just stop and enjoy the beauty of it all.

I knew then that the very best thing I would ever achieve would be to spread mindfulness and meditation, so that we could all let go of the stresses, the thoughts, the anxiety, the depression, the worry, and all those other problems; so that we could all enjoy bathing in the brilliance of the moments of our lives. Even if I could just help a few people to become more mindful and more alive to the present moment *that* would be a noble accomplishment.

And so, before I knew it, I'd taken my first step on a new journey: The journey to spread consciousness, or *mindfulness*, to as many people as I could.

Of course at that time I didn't actually *know* a great deal about mindfulness and meditation. It was a new field of study to me. I knew it made sense. I knew it made a powerful difference in my own life. I felt it could help others too. And though I didn't know much about it, I already knew what mattered. I knew I had a goal—to help people to live in the moment without the stress and worry that holds them back. And I knew I had a means of achieving it—through mindfulness and meditation. My quest was set.

I immediately took to discovering everything I could about mindfulness and meditation, learning from the very best in the field, some of the most brilliant and inspirational minds in the world, among them being spiritual gurus, lecturers, and scientists, as well as everyday friends and acquaintances who happened to have some truly insightful wisdom to share. In between taking my acting lessons and performing in stage shows I tirelessly studied meditation, eagerly digging into the culture, the science,

the *when*, the *where*, the *how* of it. I was a tiny sponge in a whole ocean, soaking up all I could.

I was lost in a journey of discovery.

Looking back now, I realise that the journey itself is what means the most. As much as I love meditation and teaching meditation, that journey of discovery was the most wonderful thing in the world. After all, life is in the journey and in the steps, isn't it? It's not where we end up, it's the paths we take, the scenery we take in. My own spiritual journey has been one of the most adventurous and enjoyable paths through which I've wandered. It's that same sense of discovery and of journey that I want to share with you in this book.

In this book you will learn every major meditation technique, and you'll discover how to use those techniques to create happiness, joy, love, and peace, and to end problems like anxiety and depression. Together we will journey through numerous religions, spiritualities, and cultures. As we journey through meditation I would like to ask just one thing: Regardless of who you are, regardless of what you believe, *have an open mind*. There will be times when you question or outright disagree with some of the beliefs and practices we will be looking at. But being right or wrong, believing or not believing, agreeing or disagreeing... these are not as important as the journey itself. We're moving across a vast landscape. Wherever we stop on the map, have an open heart and mind. Take the full journey. Appreciate every step.

As you progress through this book you will experience many powerful and beautiful moments. Enjoy those moments. Live them. Embrace the journey we're about to take together. Life is a journey, and this book represents just a few oh so precious steps.

**Walk as though you are kissing the earth with your feet. – Thich  
Nhat Hanh**

Throughout the course of this book, I'll invite you to ask your friends and family to join us. Click these social buttons to share the book on social networks so your friends and family can join in.



## **Hearing the call and beginning the journey**

*"Just to let be and to live this moment, this step, now. That is all we truly need."*

*Click the bird to Tweet this quote!*

Looking back on that moment when my drama teacher told me to open the curtains of my mind, one of the main reasons why his words resonated with me was because they were unquestionably true.

For years I'd been living life inside my head, not truly living in the moment or experiencing the full richness of life. I'd been barely conscious. And I hadn't noticed it until my drama teacher pointed it out.

"I want to truly thank you," I said to my teacher, my mind still abuzz with the poignancy of his words.

"For what?" he asked, his deep brown eyes searching me curiously, completely unaware of the importance of what he'd said only minutes before.

"I've always known something wasn't quite right with my mind. When you said about opening the curtains I immediately realised what was wrong. And now I think I can change it."

“That’s fantastic, Paul,” he said with a big, broad smile.

I nodded to myself, because for the first time I knew what the problem was. The problem was that I was closing those curtains around my mind. I was preventing the true light of day from coming in, and I was preventing my own consciousness from reaching *out*. I was closed off, living inside my own delusional view of the world. Or, to put it another way, I was living with what Buddhists call *Avidya*.

The word *Avidya* comes from Sanskrit, the sacred Hindu and Buddhist language. Translated, *Avidya* means “inability to see or to know”. To the Buddhist, *Avidya* is ignorance; an ignorance created by the mind. It is lack of awareness, lack of understanding, and it is caused by an inability to accept reality as it is.

An “inability to accept reality as it is”. Perhaps you can sympathise with that, because the truth is that the vast majority of people live with some degree of *avidya*. Most of us have at least some areas of our lives or of the world that we feel we simply cannot accept, and that *avidya*, that inability to accept reality, is the chief cause of suffering.

Happiness is accepting things precisely as they are. Unhappiness is rejecting reality and twisting the real world into your falsified view of things. Stripped of all worldly possessions, you could still be happy if you accept reality as it is, if you don’t think “If only I’d...” or “Why can’t I be like *them*...” or “How did my life get so bad...” Some of the happiest people in the world are poor. And conversely, some of the unhappiest people are rich because they’re constantly comparing themselves to others and wanting more and more. They’re always focusing on what they don’t have; counting their sins rather than their blessings. In fact, statistics show that more people are depressed in affluent countries than poor countries, and that highly successful individuals are much more likely to develop depression. Though we tend to believe that “real world problems” are the main cause of stress, anxiety, and depression, the real

culprit is much more fundamental to the human mind: it's the inability or unwillingness to accept your life as it is. It is *avidya*.

It was my own *avidya*, my own inability to accept reality, that caused my suffering when I was younger. That may sound ridiculous, because having an alcoholic father and being bullied at school aren't really *my fault*, are they? They're surely caused by my dad drinking and by bullies bullying me. How could my ignorance, my *avidya*, my inability to accept things as they are, possibly be causing my suffering?

Here's the thing. What truly hurt me the most when my dad was drunk wasn't the fact that my dad was drunk. It wasn't the things he did or didn't say to me. Sure some words stung. But what really hurt, what cut me up so bad inside, wasn't the fact that my dad was drunk, it was the fact that *he wasn't like other dads*. Other dads spent time with their kids and were positive role models, they certainly didn't get blind drunk and humiliate them. In my mind I was constantly, *constantly* thinking "Why can't he be like other dads". I would incessantly compare myself to other kids and that comparison would cut me up bad, making me wonder just what was so damn wrong with me that I was the one with the alcoholic father. That's what hurt. And that was *avidya*. Because if I hadn't created an "ideal dad" in my head and then constantly compared my real dad to that dad, I never would have felt so much pain; I never would have wondered "Why me?", "What did I do wrong?", and all those other thoughts that plagued my mind.

Same thing for the bullying. I was smacked around a few times at school. Insulted and humiliated too. But here's the deal. When I was smacked around or insulted, it wasn't the force of the punch or the sting of the words that hurt. It was the idea that people were bullying me because I wasn't good enough. In my head I presumed that there was something wrong with me, that no one liked me, that I was alone, and that I was pathetic. That was my *avidya*. That was my ignorance. That was my suffering. If I had just looked up and seen through those thoughts for a couple minutes, I would have seen a different story. I would have seen

that those bullies were in pain themselves, that they were angry and upset themselves. I would have seen all the other people who were bullied, and that would have made me feel less alone. I would have seen the compassion that the majority of other kids had. I would have had a completely different perspective on everything, if only I'd focused on the truth and not on what I *thought was happening*. *Little Me* simply wasn't old enough and wise enough to see the true nature of the mind, though, and the result was suffering caused by avidya.

Avidya, ignorance, the "inability to accept the truth" is what causes suffering. Seeing the true light of day and living in the moment cures the pain and creates happiness. I know that probably sounds overly simple and you may well be wondering how *all suffering* can be caused by an inability to accept the truth. But as Buddha said, that truth is something that cannot be taught and must instead be shown by *the path*, through meditation, which we shall begin in just a moment.

For me, the first step on my path was when my vocal coach told me to "open the curtains of my mind". That was when I realised that I was living mindlessly and that my ignorance, my avidya, my inability to accept reality, was causing me to suffer.

The moment my vocal coach said those words to me I knew I was pivoting on a turning point, that that moment represented a tremendous bend in the road. That moment was what I call a "profoundly simple life changer". Because what my teacher said was in many ways obvious. He essentially said "open your mind and live in the moment". It was so obvious, and yet even though it was so obvious, I'd never realised I needed to do it.

Meditation is often that way. It's the most obvious and simple thing in the world, but somehow most of us forget to do it. Indeed in many ways meditation is *the* most obvious and *the* most simple thing you could ever do. Honestly. What could be simpler or more obvious than focusing on the present moment? And yet somehow, despite the fact that it's so easy and so obvious, we all forget to do it.

Lost in the stress of day to day life we forget to actually *live life*. We spend so much time and effort trying to create a good life, but then we forget to actually *live* it. We put so much time into getting a good job, securing a mortgage, having a family... but then we forget to enjoy that good job, to make the most of time with the family, to appreciate our homes and our possessions. And then we come across that influential person, like my drama teacher, who tells us to “open the curtains” or to “live in the moment” or to just “be mindful and enjoy life”. And we often find the advice so ridiculously obvious that we almost ignore it.

“You’re alive now. Live this moment,” says the bodhisattva.

“Well obviously,” says the student.

“And yet for years you have been consumed by your own mind and your own thoughts,” the bodhisattva says. “If it is so obvious that you should live in the moment, why don’t you do it?”



**“Bodhisattva”**: One who, motivated by great compassion, has generated bodhicitta, which is a spontaneous wish to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Simply “being alive”, living in the moment, is so obvious that most of us forget to do it. It’s *profoundly obvious*, like when someone says “The sky is blue”.

“Well of course the sky is blue,” you say. But then you stop and for the first time in a while you look up at that grand majestic overhanging canopy and you realise just how blue it is, and how beautiful. It’s always been there. It’s always been beautiful. But you’ve taken it for granted. And then one moment you actually stop and just look up, and you’re completely awestruck by the beauty of it. That’s what meditation gives us: the ability to stop and appreciate the beauty of it all.

Thankfully none of us is completely mindless. There are many times when we do live in the moment, and there are many times when we meditate too, even though we may not actually be aware that we're doing it. Even if you consider yourself to be an absolute beginner at meditation, you will already have meditated many times in your life.

Think about the last time you were really stressed. Let's say you had a bad day at work. Your team didn't make your projected quarterly figures. You were angry. Your mind was consumed by thoughts: thoughts about how it was everyone else's fault, thoughts about how maybe it was your own fault, worry about getting fired, guilt that maybe you'd let your team down.... There was so much going on in your mind that you could hardly see straight. You needed to get away, to chill out, so you took off, perhaps to the park near your office. Your mind shut down because it needed to. The stress dissipated. You sat there in the park not doing anything, just relaxing, just focusing on the moment. You let all those thoughts slip away like water down the drain. Your mind emptied. Into your empty mind poured the pure light of day. Suddenly all that was there was the present moment, the blue sky, the scent of the freshly mowed green grass, the happy people walking by with that golden lab' chasing a ball....

Those moments when you were living in the moment? That was meditation. That was precisely the same thing that happens when a Zen monk sits to focus on their breathing for twenty minutes. They simply sit and allow life to come to them as it is, not polluted with thoughts and feelings, just pure like spring water.

The same thing happens when you experience a moment of pure joy. Think about the last time you saw a beautiful night sky. A few days prior to me writing this it was the total lunar eclipse, when the Earth's shadow blocked the sunlight from reflecting off the moon, turning the moon red. A stunning moment. Maybe you witnessed it to. And if you did witness it

you probably noticed how the world stopped and everything felt still, and how there was nothing in life but yourself, the stars, and that red moon.

That was meditation.

Or the last time you made love, and you felt a deep and profound connection, and it was like the world stopped and there was just the two of you.

That was meditation.



*When you see something truly beautiful, like a sunset, you naturally live in the moment and enjoy the beauty of the world.*

*And in so doing, you experience a moment of meditation.*

You see, you already meditate often. You meditate when you need to relax and when you experience moments of pure joy. You may never have thought of those moments as “meditation” before. But that’s precisely what they were. They’re moments when you let the stress and the thoughts and the feelings stop, when you simply live in the moment. That’s what meditation is, and that’s what you and I and every other person on Earth has naturally been doing our entire lives.



**Meditation:** *The intention and practice of focusing the mind on the present moment.*

**Those moments of meditation that we all enjoy are immensely important to our wellbeing.**

It isn't by accident that we naturally meditate, that when we get stressed we come to a stop, sit somewhere quiet, and focus on nothing but the present moment. That's nature's design. Our bodies and minds need those meditative moments in order to rebalance, to calm, and to heal.

For millennia men and women have sat and listened to the waves or gazed out over the stars, letting their minds unwind. It's the oldest form of therapy in the world. And it's something we would all do naturally if it wasn't for the fact that society makes it difficult. Work, health, family problems... when all the stresses of the day are taken care of there's often simply not enough time to just sit and *be*.

Think about the countless times you've said to yourself "I'll relax when I just get this next thing done". But many of us never actually relax. We just keep going until we're spent, and then we hit the sack. We never allow ourselves to enjoy that most basic form of therapy: simply *being*. And because we don't allow ourselves to simply *be*, we don't allow ourselves to heal. The result is the plague of physical and mental health problems that afflict us all.

*Make time every day to stop doing and to simply be.*

Inevitably, the less you allow yourself to relax, the more stressed you will be. Stress is perhaps the biggest enemy of all, causing more suffering and harm than war, plague, or famine. Stress is the number one leading cause of death, and the cause of innumerable health complications, ranging from high blood pressure to diabetes and Alzheimer's.

But there's good news.

The more you allow yourself to enjoy those "natural meditations" as well as the traditional meditation *techniques* that we'll cover later on, the more you'll relax. The more you relax, the less stressed you'll be and the better health you'll enjoy.

Meditation is truly powerful. But it's powerful *because it's natural*. It is the absolute most natural thing in the world. The mind needs to slow down and to calm. It does that by living in the moment. That's nature's way of allowing you to heal. But society makes it all but impossible for you to live in the moment. You have responsibilities and pressures, things you need to take care of, and it can be a real challenge to be mindful.

Enter meditation. Meditation redresses the balance. Meditation gives you those twenty minutes in which you do nothing *but* live in the moment, nothing *but* be mindful.

That's why the next time you tell yourself you need to take 10 to relax, you should do it. Give yourself those natural meditative moments. That is the best way to begin to learn to meditate: to embrace those times when your mind and body *naturally* meditate, times like when you look up at the sky and you feel like doing nothing but just gazing; times like when you lie in the bath and you want to just stay there meditating on the feeling of the warm water on your body. Those moments are nature saying to you "This is your time to meditate. You need it. Take 20 and relax".

The very best thing you can do for your health is to *let yourself enjoy those natural meditations*.

See a sunset? Appreciate it. Love the feeling of cold water on your body? Enjoy it. Feel like closing your eyes and focusing on your breath for a few minutes? Do it. Those are all meditations; they will all improve your quality of life and your health; and they are also the very best way to begin to learn meditation.

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