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PREFACE

Welcome to the Short Meditations ebook where you'll find valuable information and practical suggestions to help you succeed with meditation. Since this is a guide both for people who've never meditated and also for those who've meditated in the past, it contains basic as well as detailed information. So feel free to jump to whatever sections interest you.

As you now know, the ebook password is success in meditation. What do we mean by success in meditation? To me, it is simply being able to maintain a practice over time, one that becomes part of your life, something you want to do like taking a shower in the morning. My main hope in creating this CD program is to help people successfully begin and maintain a meditation practice. It is a

program that is accessible to anyone who wishes to do meditation, regardless of life circumstance or personal limitations. It includes an abundance of information and strategies to address all that can get in the way of successfully meditating. My wish for you is that meditation will be an enriching, creative journey of self-discovery.

The practical material in this ebook is based on both my professional and personal experience. If you've never meditated, I suggest you read from the beginning to help prepare you for what I consider a worthy adventure. If you have meditated before and fell away from your practice, I encourage you to especially study the body type information as well as the challenges and obstacles specific to your type. Understanding what happened to you in the past will help you succeed this time around.

Lastly, this ebook contains all the information available in this CD program, including the contents of the booklet and body type quiz, the program descriptions that you hear on CD's first five tracks, and finally information about meditation and the Ayurvedic body type system. That way, you have all at your disposal in one place.

A word about no background music

Traditionally, meditation is done in the quiet with no music whatsoever or out in nature away from the noises of civilization. Meditating with music seems to be a modern practice. Since my training in meditation has been in traditional ways only, I have excluded it in the guided meditations.

Although music can be inspirational, from my perspective, it can detract from focusing on the meditation itself and become instead a way of relaxing and being in a better mood. There's nothing inherently wrong with that only that it's not true meditation. Also, taste in music is highly personal and varies considerably. So adding it as a background can work for some people and not others.

For beginners in meditation, music can be a helpful support. If you prefer having background music, I recommend you play it on a separate device while you are listening to the guided meditation tracks, choosing peaceful, calming type of music. If and when you become more serious about meditation, it's best to let go of using music altogether.

PART 1 – INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

Meditation is found in many different cultures throughout the world and has existed throughout antiquity. In the East, meditation appears to have originated in India over five thousand years ago and has evolved into a broad variety of practices. It was considered to be an integral part of spiritual practice with the Buddhist tradition being the most readily recognized. After spreading throughout the East over millennia, Eastern meditation eventually found its way to the West where it is better known for its health benefits.

In the West, meditation seems to have taken a different course. Georg Feuerstein, a yoga scholar and teacher, in his book *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*, comments on meditation in the West:

“Meditation, often of the visualizing variety, has been a part of Western religious and esoteric traditions. Often this practice took the form of prayer and visualization combined, as in the case of the “heart prayer”. Christian monastics also used mantras like “Hail Mary” in their practice (*exercitium*). But these efforts never produced a system of meditation as intricate as the systems we encounter in Hinduism and Buddhism.”

What is meditation?

Experts and teachers differ as to what meditation is. It is variously defined as techniques for developing concentration, enhancing awareness, emptying the mind of extraneous thoughts, finding happiness and peace of mind and “coming home to oneself”.

Adding to the complexity, dozens of meditation traditions exist, making it challenging for beginners to find a suitable approach. While we can discuss meditation and understand it intellectually, in the end, just like life and love, we have to experience meditation in order to truly understand it for ourselves.

Benefits of meditation

Ample research exists on how meditation can benefit our health, our emotional well-being and our personal and spiritual development. Although most research has been of TM or Transcendental Meditation, more recent studies indicate that technique is less important than the basic universal meditation practice of focusing the mind.

Meditation as mind-body medicine: Mind-body research has shown that our thoughts and emotions affect our physical state. Meditation tends to settle the mind and calm the emotions, thereby benefiting our body and health. Meditation has been shown, for example, to reduce the risk of heart disease. In long-term practitioners of relaxation methods such as yoga and meditation, Harvard researchers found far more active genes known to fight disease, compared to those who practiced no form of relaxation.

Psychological benefits: One of the greatest benefits of meditation is experiencing a different way of thinking and perceiving. This can radically alter our life since what we think and believe affect our choices and actions. At first, it's disconcerting to see all the various thoughts going on, the constant inner dialog some of which may be quite negative. The natural impulse is to run away from seeing that. When we stay with this process, something begins to transform. A new comprehension, a more expansive perception begins to arise.

Emotional benefits: With the right kind of meditation, one that is suited to our body type, agitated emotions can calm down. In the process, we develop the ability, albeit slowly, to manage difficult or painful emotions. This in turn prepares us to deal more effectively with life's inevitable challenges.

Research by the Harvard Medical School showed that meditating for as little as 10 minutes decreased anxiety and created relaxation of brain waves (increased alpha waves).

Spiritual benefits: Focusing the mind in meditation may seem quite mundane and boring. There are no fireworks, no drum rolls, no exciting images to entertain us yet paradoxically it can lead to inspiring moments. We can suddenly understand something about ourselves or a situation, or receive a creative idea or way of looking at things. We might gain insight into the deeper meaning of life or have a moment of gratitude for the precious things we have that we often take for granted.

Why meditate?

Although meditation has many benefits, not everyone undertakes a practice. The reasons people meditate seem to be as varied as personality types. In the West, the emphasis has been on meditation's health benefits, perhaps because that's been the focus in many studies.

Psychologist Lawrence LeShan, who wrote *How to Meditate* in the 1970's, describes how he was introduced to meditation. He was at a small conference with a group of scientists who were meditators. When he asked them why they meditated, they began to give different answers such as: "It helps to calm me down. It helps to know about the thoughts constantly going through my mind," and so on. Then there was a silence in the room and eventually one person said: "It's like coming home." Everyone nodded in agreement.

Since antiquity, spiritual masters have taught that human beings have a potential to experience something greater beyond the mundane level of life, beyond putting food on the table and clothes on our back. We have within us the possibility of experiencing qualities such as peace, joy, love, compassion, and beyond those, an "awakened" state of being. Meditation, whatever form it takes, can lead us to these finer human qualities.

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PART 2 – PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

When we're about to set off on a trip, we usually make preparations to ensure our success. We choose a destination, consult a map, decide what clothes to pack, how much money to take, our mode of transportation and so on.

Setting out on the path of meditation, we can prepare ourselves in ways that increase the likelihood of success, both in starting a practice and maintaining one over time. Understanding a few principles, like preparing for a trip, can really help us succeed in the long term. This section will introduce you to some basic principles associated with meditation.

Meditation is an inner practice

It may seem obvious to state that meditation is a form of inner practice, a development of inner skill. Yet, it can be helpful to examine this more closely. What do we mean by inner practice? Let's consider each word separately. Inner refers to focusing our attention inwardly, observing the thoughts that run through our mind, our attitudes and emotions, and what's going on in our body, the sensations, tensions and discomforts.

Why would we want to know this about ourselves? As the creator of Feldenkrais, an awareness through movement exercise, once said: "You can't do what you want till you know what you're doing." The initial part of our journey then is to know ourselves better.

The word practice is easy to understand in relation to outer activities such as physical exercise. In order to develop, for example, a skill such as gymnastics, we need to repeat specific maneuvers. Or if we want to learn a language, it's obvious that study and practice are necessary. In meditation, we practice keeping the attention focused on something specific, such as the sensation of breathing, what in many traditions is referred to as the "object" of meditation.

When it comes to meditation, we seem to have an assumption that we should be able to do it without much practice. Maybe because it seems deceptively easy. After all, we're just sitting there being quiet. It can't be all that complicated.

The power of meditation lies in regular practice, over time

Success in meditation is having a regular practice that we maintain over time. There's no point in learning great meditation techniques if we are unable to stay with it. We all know that in order to keep our teeth healthy we need to clean them a few minutes each day. It makes no sense at all to clean your teeth for an hour each day for a month so you won't have to clean them for the next eleven months. It's the small, consistent effort that pays off and keeps your teeth in good shape. Likewise with meditation – consistent, regular effort is most effective.

It just so happens that staying with a practice in the long term is one of the biggest challenges in meditation and a common one for a number of reasons. In truth, it's actually not a big challenge

when we know why this happens and what to do about it. One of the strengths of this CD program is that it addresses this problem in detail.

The value of guided meditation

When I first started meditating decades ago, I became so frustrated with my mind and the relentless stream of thoughts. No sooner had I brought my attention back to the focus of meditation, then it would run off again. This went on for the whole length of the meditation. Eventually I gave up because it seemed like a waste of time and made me feel like a failure.

Giving up on meditation was no solution either. I was not content to have no meditation at all. A yearning deep inside me wanted to be in touch with something, perhaps the meaning of life, I knew not. I only knew that I suffered from the classic “can’t live with, can’t live without” syndrome in relation to meditation. I eventually had the idea that listening to a recording might help. There were few recordings available in those days, as far as I was aware, so I recorded my own voice using the meditation technique that I had learned. To my surprise, it really helped.

Many years later when I became a psychotherapist and had studied different kinds of meditation, I began to make personalized meditation recordings for my clients. At the time, I simply observed in my work with individuals that different people needed different ways to meditate.

Clients reported that having instructions to follow made it easier. Curiously, they also reported that just hearing my voice was comforting and calming. Our unconscious can’t tell the difference between real or imagined. This principle is used by athletes for training. They imagine in their mind doing the action perfectly, imaging it with as many senses as possible. Similarly, with guided meditation it seems that, even though it’s just a recorded voice, people don’t feel alone in their solitary experience.

To summarize, guided meditations give you several elements of support: instructions to follow that make it easier to remember what to do, a voice that brings you back when you’ve drifted away so you’re not gone away as long, and the feeling that you’re not alone in your experience.

How often to meditate? When and for how long?

Traditionally, meditation involves sitting for twenty to forty minutes at least once a day for five to six days a week. For many of us, this is just not possible. Either our life circumstance is such that we have many responsibilities such as family or children or we suffer from emotional issues such as depression or anxiety or a debilitating illness. Or maybe you simply are not interested in dedicating yourself to that kind of intense practice. After all, as discussed previously, we are looking at what is possible over time, a lifetime.

My motto is: some is better than none, indeed it is much better than none. The guided meditations in this CD program are all under ten minutes long. They are intended for those of you who are beginners or who are only able to have a small practice.

If discipline is the issue – and it is for many – ideally, it's best to meditate about four to six times a week for ten minutes or less per session, depending on which guided meditation you choose. Any less than four days makes you vulnerable to falling away from the routine. If you can manage six days a week, having one day off eases the effort and helps you appreciate how the days that you do meditate feel different, however subtle that might be.

What time of day? Find an optimal time that you will be consistent with. According to tradition, the most ideal time to meditate is first thing in the morning or almost first thing, so if you need to, take time to have your tea or coffee first. If you tend to feel groggy or sluggish in the morning (a Kapha body type tendency), you might want to take a shower to rejuvenate yourself. So long as you don't do too much before you sit down to meditate, otherwise you risk not getting to it or forgetting about it altogether (a Vata body type tendency).

One reason to meditate in the morning is that it sets a precedent – that meditation is a top priority rather than just one other task on your long list. It sends a signal to your subconscious that you are important and that you want to do it for you, rather than something you *should* do.

Another reason why morning is better is that our usual thinking and behaving haven't yet kicked in, at least not to their fullest extent. So it is more possible to imprint new behavior, new patterns of relating to ourselves.

Your schedule may not permit you to meditate in the morning. Or you might be a night person. (Make sure you really are a night person and not just the many of us who are habituated to staying up late. Before the invention of electricity, people retired much earlier for the night.) Whatever your situation, you need to pick a consistent time and stick to it. Refer to [Making a vow to my Self](#).

Eliminate or reduce distractions / Where to meditate

Communicate with family members – and pets! – of your intended practice so they will know not to disturb you. With children, remind them that it's only for ten minutes. Give them something enjoyable to do while you meditate so they have a positive association with not having your attention. I remember seeing a funny video of a mother doing her yoga practice with her toddler in the room. She was upside down in a head stand and the baby came up and pulled her top down, exposing her breasts. Although somewhat amused, she just calmly stayed in her pose. Now that's determination.

If your pet insists on being with you, train it to settle down and not distract you with its need for your attention. This may take some time but many people have reported success. Simply sit down and do your meditation and for the most part ignore your pet. They will eventually get the message and settle down themselves – good pet therapy. Naturally, it will initially be challenging for you to concentrate as your pet distracts you. Just keep bringing your attention back to your meditation as best as you can.

The mind is always looking for distraction, for any excuse not to turn attention inward. It wants to remain active all the time! That is its job, to constantly be thinking. Just keep reminding yourself that you want to grow something in yourself that is of great value. A focused mind can go a long way to helping you in ways you have no idea of.

Where to meditate? If possible dedicate a space, however small that may be, to your meditate practice. The more you are prepared, including having easy access to your cushion or preferred chair, the easier it will be to start.

The body and meditation

The physical body plays an essential role in our moment-to-moment experience. Body posture, for example, has been shown to influence our moods. You can experiment with this yourself. Notice how you feel if you let your chest collapse inward and your shoulders droop. Notice what happens to your breathing and your emotions. Now lift and open your chest so that it is fully expanded. You might notice that your breathing is full, that you naturally feel more confident or maybe vulnerable.

When you are suffering from a painful injury, illness or even a common cold, both your mood and outlook will be dramatically affected. The latest in mind-body research has demonstrated that our body and mind are much more intimately connected than previously believed. In fact, body and mind operate as one whole system.

One neuroscientist, Dr. Candice Pert, discovered and measured what she calls the molecules of emotion. These molecules, called peptides, carry information not only about the nervous system and the body's physical functions but also information about the emotions. What is most startling is that originally these emotion molecules were believed to exist only in the brain but have also been found throughout the entire body.

As Dr. Pert puts it: Mind doesn't dominate body, it becomes body. Body and mind are one. If this sounds rather mystical, keep in mind that this statement comes from a scientist originally trained in the Western scientific paradigm.

Body posture

The traditional body posture for meditation is sitting on a cushion cross-legged or in lotus pose. Sitting in a chair is a more recent Western invention, given the reduced flexibility of our bodies. In either case, almost all meditation teachers advise that you sit with your back as upright as possible to help your mind remain alert.

My approach, given I am a therapist, is to place less emphasis on sitting upright and more on sitting in a way that helps you relax. This may even mean reclining back a little and resting your head. That way, your first experience of meditation tends to be a more enjoyable, positive one that you're more likely to stay with. Since the whole point of meditating is to have a regular practice, this

is for me an important consideration. The only exception I make is for people who are Kapha body types (see description of body types). Kaphas are inherently prone to a foggy or daydreaming state of mind. They need to make sure they sit quite upright.

If you feel like you easily lose focus as you meditate, sit in a more upright position yet one in which you're able to be comfortable. It is a balancing act between keeping the back properly aligned to maintain alertness yet minimizing discomfort which tends to distract the mind. For example, if you start feeling pain in your back or neck, your attention will be pulled towards the pain and you'll find it difficult to focus your mind on the meditation itself.

If you are sitting on a cushion, make sure it is high enough so that your lower back doesn't slump backwards. If you are using a chair, sit with your buttocks as far back as possible. That way, the chair back will support the whole length of your spine and keep your chest lifted. Or you can place a cushion at your back to achieve this.

If you have short legs and find the chair seat digging into the back of your thighs, place your feet on a cushion.

The body's intelligence

Our physical body is the only part of us that is truly in the present moment. The thinking mind most often takes us into the past or future, or into imagining and fantasizing about things that don't exist in our immediate environment. In meditation, especially in the beginning, focusing on the sensation of the body helps us be more present, acting like an anchor for our attention.

Body relaxation, for example, helps us become aware of how our thoughts and emotions affect what is happening in our body. When we experience worry, for example, we notice how it causes contraction in the chest and abdomen. When we get angry, our jaw clenches and our muscles tense up. In other words, the body is a concrete, practical measuring tool.

The body has its own intelligence and its natural state is one of relaxation. It is also a faithful servant and responds to our will and intent – like a dog that obeys its owner yet can act on its own. So the body will tense up when you have tense thoughts or upsetting emotions and it will relax when you relax your mind and calm yourself down. Many years ago, I worked as a shiatsu therapist, and of course, people came for treatment to relieve body tension and pain. Curiously, when clients

went on a relaxing holiday, they would return and the tension in their bodies had relaxed to the extent that, to my hands, it felt as if I had given them a years worth of treatments. They didn't consciously try to relax, it just happened. So our bodies know how to relax when given a chance.

Eyes open or closed

Different meditation traditions vary when it comes to having the eyes open or closed. In many Zen traditions, for example, practitioners sit facing a blank wall and keep the eyes open and softly gazing at the wall. Their reasoning is that having the eyes open keeps us more in the here and now rather than drifting off into thoughts or fantasy.

Other traditions recommend having the eyes closed to tune in to our inner world, to be better able to observe our thoughts, our emotions and sensations, and the general goings-on inside. When we have our eyes open, our attention is drawn outward.

You can explore this yourself by meditating for a few minutes with eyes closed and then a few minutes with eyes open and repeat a few times, observing what happens with each. I have practiced both ways and when my mind wants to escape, it makes no difference whether I have my eyes open or closed. I have caught myself completely absorbed in thought, not present at all, with my eyes wide open!

If you are not accustomed to turning your attention inward, you might find that you are afraid to close your eyes and experience your inner world. Maybe you are afraid of encountering old painful feelings or you are afraid of the unknown, afraid of losing control and so forth. If that is the case, then begin with eyes open, keeping your gaze a few feet on the floor in front of you and your eyes softly gazing and not staring. In general, we want our first experiences with meditation to be, at the very least, doable and not frightening. Over time and with experience, you will become less afraid and more skillful.

Why do you want to meditate?

“If we do not know what port we are steering for, no wind is favorable” – Seneca

Discovering your wish to meditate, what motivates you, will go a long way to helping you stay with your practice. If you simply got into your car and started driving without knowing your destination or whether you were going on a holiday, visiting family or doing a business trip, you would most probably end up either confused or disappointed. If we are not familiar with what motivates us in meditation, then when motivation begins to wane, we will not have a clear understanding of what is happening to us.

The strongest motivation we human beings can have is one that has the power of passion or emotion. Passion drives action and movement. It is like fuel in a car. So knowing why you want to meditate can help you along the way. At the same time, it can help identify any unreasonable or overly high expectations which will likely create obstacles along the way. Meditation is not a cure-all or a quick fix. It is a way of life, one that says “my quality of life is important.”

Writing exercise: Take a moment to relax your body, then reflect and ask yourself, without expecting an answer: “Why do I want to meditate?” or “What am I hoping for?” Simply write down anything that comes to you.

We could say there are two levels of goals or motivation: one is the mundane level in which we want to feel better, free ourselves of pain, have a more focused mind, improve health. The other level is the spiritual in which we aspire to know ourselves more deeply in order to develop our human potential, our higher nature. It matters not where we begin, only that we begin. In time and with practice, our goals can change or they become obscure. If you notice your interest waning and your efforts decreasing, it is helpful to re-examine why you want to meditate.

It’s natural to encounter resistance, challenges, difficulties

It is helpful to acknowledge at the outset that even though meditation has many benefits, almost everyone encounters challenges and obstacles. It places us in front of ourselves, warts and all, as they say. This is not to discourage you but rather to prepare you. The more we prepare for these challenges, the better our chances of success.

If you went on journey that involved traveling on some secondary roads with no service stations, you would be wise to pack some water and food and thereby avoid discomfort.

So if you know in advance that you will experience some discomfort in meditation and if you have some tips and strategies on how to deal with those discomforts, then your experience will be much better and your likelihood of success higher. And curiously, the challenges we personally face in meditation are similar to the ones we face in our life, except that meditation offers us an opportunity to quietly examine the habits that cause these difficulties. More about that in the section, [Obstacles to success in meditation](#).

Lifestyle and meditation

What we do when we are not meditating, how we are living our regular life, will greatly affect our meditation practice. If you are always super busy and rushing around the whole day, eating on the run and so on, when you finally sit to meditate, you will be so full and so frenetic inside, that it will take the whole meditation time just to catch up with yourself. Or if you eat poorly, don't exercise, spend hours watching TV or playing computer games, you will feel sluggish and unmotivated to meditate the next morning.

Meditation was originally intended to enhance our lives, not be a cure all. So our lifestyle and our meditation practice are like a marriage. There needs to be compatibility for it to work in the long run.

PART 3 – FOUNDATIONS OF INNER PRACTICE

Meditation, as an inner practice, deals primarily with our mind and our attention. So it is helpful to look more closely at what the mind is and how it functions.

The qualities of the mind

In the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which is generally considered to be the bible of yoga, the mind is understood to have different qualities or levels of function.

In the West, many people think of yoga as a series of physical exercises and stretches. At its source, yoga is a complete spiritual way of life and practice, including meditation. In fact, yoga postures were originally intended to prepare the practitioner for meditation and contemplation. And they were taught individually, with students being given a personalized practice suited to their specific needs and body type.

The Yoga Sutras describes the mind as having different levels of function. In the first level, considered the lowest or least refined, the mind is like a wild monkey swinging from branch to branch and never settling. All kinds of thoughts race through without our conscious intent. We are generally unaware of this endless stream of thoughts and attitudes as we go about our daily life. In fact, we even believe that our thoughts are reality.

In the teachings of the Theraveda Buddhist lineage, a distinction is made between the mind and the mind's transient states. In meditation, an opportunity exists to observe these transient, conditioned thoughts and begin instead to be within the mind itself, rather than being taken by its impermanent states, like sitting quietly at home while a storm rages outside.

Thinking is essential, of course. We need our thinking mind to function in life. Without it, we would not be able to walk, talk, know when to cross the street, etc. The problem however is that our thinking mind is in control of us rather than serving us. It has usurped the role of master when it should be a servant.

How do we know this? Try meditating and you will quickly have a first hand experience. This tendency doesn't occur only in the weak willed. It is a universal phenomenon. One of the benefits of meditation is that it can train the mind to be less dominant.

Thoughts consume energy

People may not realize that thinking consumes energy. We go to bed every night and, hopefully, have our inner batteries recharged to live another day. How we use this energy has a big impact on our quality of life. Worrying, for example, consumes this valuable energy unproductively.

Any process that happens within us requires energy. Thinking requires our brain cells to operate in specific ways. And brain cells need energy to manufacture the required neurotransmitters. Meditation can help us learn how we are actually using our energy by observing our thoughts and the tension in our body when we have those thoughts. Over time, we learn to use our energy more wisely.

Thoughts are just thoughts

I remember the first time I witnessed my thoughts. It was a powerful moment that occurred right after a meditation. Up to that point, I had assumed like most folks that my thoughts were telling me the truth about things, that my thoughts were reality. In that powerful moment of awareness, however, I instantly saw how my thoughts were just a stream of thoughts simply going on. I realized that even though these thoughts were based on fact or past experience, they were interpretations of my actual experience. They were not real, but they were telling me what is real. And most importantly, some of them were misinformed! Filtered through past experiences and beliefs.

To give you an example, I caught myself thinking one day after a failed recipe, I will never be a good cook! It is true that I struggled in the past with not knowing how to cook. Eventually, I took classes and learned how but I never felt completely confident until much later. So in the moment of catching myself saying I'll never be a good cook, I realized it was no longer true. It was just something I still believed about myself. The reality was that I had cooked a number of things very well.

If we think something often enough and with enough emotion, it becomes our reality. It molds how we respond to situations, to the decisions we make and reactions we have.

Meditation offers us an opportunity to study our thought patterns. How can we improve our thinking if we don't know, truly, what we are thinking most of the time. We believe we know and it is only when we investigate do we truly know. During meditation, we get to know our thoughts more intimately. Through witnessing them, the possibility of thinking differently emerges.

Training the attention

No matter what meditation you embark on, you need a few fundamental skills, the main one being an ability to focus your attention and to keep it focused. Whether you are relaxing your body, sensing your body, repeating a word or mantra in your mind or observing the breath, your mind must stay on the point of focus. Even if you are meditating to be happy and at peace, an ability to maintain your attention is required.

Attention vs thought

Thoughts are not the same as attention. People often are not aware of this distinction yet it can help us in developing our skill in meditating. In Western culture, there is a strong emphasis on logical thought. We worship at the altar of rationality and believe that the brain is the center of our thinking and consciousness. The evolving field of mind-body research is now proving this to be wrong; that in fact the mind exists throughout the body.

Psychologist Carl Jung recounted an interesting story in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. He described a meeting with the chief of an Indian tribe in New Mexico and wrote of being deeply affected by what this elder said about Westerners:

“The Whites are always seeking something. What are they seeking? They always want something; they are always uneasy and restless. We do not know what they want. We do not understand them. We think they are mad.”

I asked him why he thought the whites were all mad.

“They say that they think with their heads,” he replied.

“Why of course. What do you think with?” I asked him in surprise.

“We think here,” he said, indicating his heart.

Jung went on to say: “For the first time in my life, someone had drawn for me a picture of the real white man. He had struck our vulnerable spot, unveiled a truth to which we are blind.”

So what is attention? We could say it is like shining a spotlight on something and keeping the light shining on it. We can have a continuous stream of thoughts that pull our attention in many directions. When our mind is focused, however, our predominant attention is on what we’ve chosen., even though thoughts may continue in the background. So focused attention, according to the Yoga Sutras, is the mind functioning at a higher level.

Relaxation: a strong ally in meditation

You will find that several meditations on the Short Meditations CD guide you in relaxing your body. From my experience, this is an important foundation for meditation practice. In fact, the Yoga Sutras advises that yoga postures be practised in a relaxed yet alert way, and both those qualities are considered essential.

In meditation as well, these two qualities, relaxation and alertness, are a good foundation. In the past, I have taught mind-body health workshops. One of the exercises I would guide people through was body relaxation. A participant in one of these workshops was a woman who had been a long time meditator, for fifteen years or so. She approached me afterwards and exclaimed how the body relaxation I just did made her realize that she had never been completely relaxed while meditating. She was quite excited about this revelation and planned to include it in her practice.

Attitude for practice – a neutral, impartial quality

Attitude is an important element in meditation practice. Our attitude needs to be, at the very least, impartial or neutral and ideally, friendly or accepting. This is easier said than done. Often, when we sit to meditate, we begin to see things about ourselves we don’t like – how little control we have over our thoughts, agitation, disinterest, self-criticism, getting sleepy, having old anger flare up

and so on. The practice of observing how we are in the moment in a neutral, non-judgmental way is just that – a practice. Most of us find ourselves repeatedly having reactions and being far from impartial. So the practice is to see this and return to the focus of our meditation.

The things we observe in ourselves are mostly conditioned habits whose roots lie in the subconscious. We have been taught that we have a will and so we should be able to have control over ourselves. Meditation tells a different story; that automatic habits are not under our control, especially when they involve strong emotion. Knowing this can help to soften our reactions.

In shamanic and energy therapy teachings, there is a recognition that all life is animated by a subtle life energy, what in various cultures has been called prana, qi (or chi) or ki. This subtle energy operates according to specific principles with an important one being: “Energy flows where attention goes.” If you pay attention to your arm, for example, energy will flow into it. It follows that the quality of attention determines the quality of energy. If you are feeling angry, there will be a different quality of energy than if you are feeling happy. If, during meditation, you don’t like what you see in yourself, or want it to be different, this is a subtle form of aggression towards yourself.

Identifying expectations

One of the challenges many people encounter in meditation – and in life, as well – is having expectations. Some are obvious, others are hidden and only become apparent when we begin meditating. You might be wondering: what’s the difference between why I want to meditate and my expectations? A distinction can be made between having aspirations and holding expectations.

Aspirations versus expectations

It seems to be universal to strive for something, to want to feel less pain, to improve ourselves or our situation. This is a natural and valuable human drive. So how do we reconcile this natural tendency with expectations that are, for the most part, unrealistic. I find it helpful to distinguish between aspirations and expectations.

When I aspire to something, I take action, i.e., I sit down and meditate yet I stay open to what presents itself. I am curious and observant. When I expect something as I meditate, I rigidly hold on to my conception of how things should be. I don’t like what is really going on and try to change it,

fix it or analyze it. This creates unnecessary tension and actually takes us further away from the very thing we wish for.

Letting go of expectations: Why it's important

It may seem paradoxical or unproductive at first glance to let go of expectations. But as you progress in your meditation practice, you will begin to see why this is important.

For example, if I expect that meditation will make me calmer but I have episodes where I feel more agitated, then there is a likelihood that I will get discouraged. I will not understand that I am encountering something in myself that I need to deal with. If you went out and bought a whole new set of clothes and expected to hang them up in your closet without first sorting through your old clothes and making room for the new, it would get very crowded and messy. Likewise with meditation. We inevitably will encounter old emotions, old memories and reactions, or habitual tendencies, like being tense inside even when there is nothing immediately going on to make you tense. If you expect that meditation will calm you down and that doesn't happen, you will either get frustrated, disappointed or even frightened.

How to let go of expectations

In the guided meditations on this CD, you will hear me instruct you at times to practice a neutral or impartial attitude to what's going on inside, to observe it like a curious scientist. This may seem ineffective or lame at first, but in actuality it is a powerful technique. It will help you both to deal with what's going on in your meditation and also to develop an ability to handle life's challenges in a calmer, more relaxed way – thereby conserving energy and contributing to your overall health. In other words, practicing staying calm when you are not calm will foster the ability to stay calm.

Understanding ourselves

We have seen how meditation helps to train the attention and settle the mind. By doing so, it contributes to our overall health and well-being. Ultimately, meditation is an excellent tool to understand ourselves and through that, we can understand the course of our lives as well as how we are in relationship with others. In other words, self-knowledge is self-empowerment. The more we

know about how we operate, the more we can make changes that are informed and effective. Of course, getting to know ourselves is not always fun, yet it is essential. One of my favorite quotes and a guideline I have used for many years is by Carl Jung:

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves”

Whenever we react, regardless of whether it is justified, it says something about ourselves. This is difficult for many people to accept but when you engage in self-observation, you will discover the truth in it.

Here are two other guidelines I have found helpful in meditation.

“It is not important that I have gone away, it is only important that I bring myself back.”

This is an excellent phrase or teaching that you can repeat to yourself whenever you get frustrated with how often you drift away from paying attention in your meditation – even with guided meditation.

It reminds us that our attempts to stay present in meditation, to keep our mind focused, is not the only thing that is of value. It is also the returning that builds something. One of my teachers used to say that it is lawful that we drift off and have to bring ourselves back, that the universe is built on the qualities of opposites: dark/light, upstream/downstream, yin/yang and so forth.

So when we realize that we have gone away, we have an opportunity to come back, to make the effort to return. In the process, we experience the difference between being lost in thought and returning to a state of being more present. Over time, we begin to prefer being present.

“Even if you have to bring yourself back a thousand times during your meditation, your time will have been well spent” – a Buddhist teaching.

This is another teaching that helps with the struggle to stay present in the moment. It reminds us that the return back to ourselves is itself the practice.

PART 4 – WHAT IS AYURVEDA?

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The Wisdom of Ayurveda

Ayurveda, which means the science of life, is India's most ancient holistic healing tradition. It is a comprehensive system that treats mind, body and spirit as one entity. Ayurveda has a rich array of remedies and practices that address all aspects of health and well-being, including diet, herbs, lifestyle management, yoga and meditation. We can say that Ayurveda is a way of life, one that harmonizes with Nature and the cosmos.

Ayurveda is sometimes called the sister of yoga, having evolved from the same ancient Vedic roots. Each complements and enhances the other. Yoga's focus is primarily spiritual development, at least at its roots, whereas Ayurveda focuses on maintaining health and vigor in order to make spiritual practice more accessible to each individual. In other words, when we are healthy in mind and body, we have more stamina and clarity of mind for inner practice. Both yoga and Ayurveda recognize the interconnectedness and unity of mind, body and spirit.

Meditation is an important therapy in Ayurveda, both for maintaining health as well as treating psychological and nervous disorders such as insomnia, anxiety and stress. Meditation is considered an important tool to clear any imbalances in the functioning of our mind and our subconscious that contribute to pain and suffering. The mind is healed by training it to be in a calm and focused state which in turn reenergizes and transforms one's mental state.

In Ayurveda, each individual is considered a unique phenomenon. There is a recognition that not everyone goes into a meditative state in the same way. How we take in information and process it is different for different people.

PART 5 – AYURVEDIC BODY TYPES

Ayurveda provides a valuable body type system that describes each individual's unique mind-body make-up and natural inclinations, essentially your inborn nature. It influences your way of thinking, your emotional temperament and your lifestyle choices.

In Ayurveda, there are three main body types or constitutions called Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Each type is associated with a particular element of nature: Vata with air, Pitta with fire and Kapha with earth/water. Each type has their characteristic physical attributes, emotional disposition and psychological makeup.

No single body type is better than another. Each has their strengths and vulnerabilities. So, for example, a Vata type can be enthusiastic yet be restless and scattered. Pittas can have strong discipline but can get willful or impatient. Kapha tends to be calm and easy-going but can have difficulty with motivation.

Your body type also determines the kind of metabolism you have and hence how foods, environments and activities affect you. For example, the same food can affect each type differently. Sweet foods have a calming effect on Vata but create heaviness in Kapha. Pittas strongly dislike hot weather whereas a windy day unsettles Vata. In exercise, Kapha does well with endurance exercises whereas Vata fares better with short sprints and light exercise.

Ayurveda's body type system can help people find a suitable meditation practice by assessing each individual's tendencies in thinking and feeling. For example, in meditation, Kapha's dreamy mind needs to be kept busy, whereas Vata's busy mind needs to be quieted and Pitta's striving mind needs to be calmed.

Assessing your body type

Knowing your body type can help you better understand yourself and your experience with meditation. It will guide you to the right meditation for you as well as alert you to the things that can get in the way of maintaining a practice over time.

The body type quiz that follows (also found in the CD booklet) will give you a general idea of your Ayurvedic body type . The quiz is only a guide to get you started. Over time, you will get to know more accurately your true body type by observing yourself. In other words, assessing your body type is a work in progress. It might even be a good idea to return to the quiz at a later date.

Tips on answering the quiz

Keep in mind two considerations when answering the quiz: how you have been in general throughout your life and how you are when out of balance or under stress. Also, as we age, our body type changes. Usually Kapha increases with age, slowing us down and creating more contentment and less striving.

Most of us do not know ourselves as well as we think especially when it involves undesirable traits. It is difficult, for example, for a Vata to recognize just how ungrounded they can become or how high strung they are because it is all they have ever known. As Einstein once said: Fish will be the last to discover water. In other words, we are so immersed in what we are born with and our inclinations, we can't see them.

Pittas might not recognize their perfectionistic or critical ways, believing that they are simply being objective. Kaphas might have difficulty owning up to their possessive or stubborn inclinations. It is only over time and with inner practice and self-observation that we can become more honest with ourselves and thus more self-aware.

There is an old Sufi saying: You can not see the back of your head no matter how quickly you turn around to look at it. One way we can see how we really are is to get feedback from others, at least those who have earned our trust. They act as a mirror for our personality. If you are feeling brave enough, have a good friend or trusted family member fill out the quiz for you. It can be an illuminating experience to discover how others perceive us.

The following quiz and the information that follows are focused primarily on how Ayurvedic body types can be applied to meditation with the focus being more on psychological and emotional traits. If you would like information about the health aspects of Ayurvedic body types, I recommend Deepak Chopra's book, *Perfect Health* or his free online quiz at: <http://doshaquiz.chopra.com>. It was my first introduction to Ayurveda and I still refer back to it at times.

Instructions for quiz: please print out the following two pages and answer according to the instructions.

The body type quiz

Answer a, b and c of each statement, as it applies to you generally, by rating it 0 - 3:			
0 = never, 1 = occasionally, 2 = often, 3 = always	a	b	c
1. When under stress: a) I get anxious, nervous or unsettled b) I get impatient, irritated or angry c) I withdraw or avoid, I don't like stress	—	—	—
2. a) I have difficulty making decisions and tend to second guess myself or want to change it b) I make decisions methodically, purposefully c) I am easy-going, I prefer others to make decisions	—	—	—
3. a) I am energetic and quick paced by nature b) I am disciplined and prefer things to be orderly c) I tend to stay calm and prefer a slow pace	—	—	—
4. a) I often don't sleep well, thinking too much b) My sleep is sound, I need an average amount c) I need a full night's sleep and easily sleep in	—	—	—
5. a) I tend to speak fast and not always clearly b) I speak clearly, precisely and to the point c) I prefer to listen and to have long, slow chats	—	—	—
6. a) I am very sensitive to my environment and other people's energies b) I am ambitious and can get aggressive c) I feel deep caring and can be possessive	—	—	—
7. a) I like learning a variety of things quickly b) I tend to focus intently on one thing and finish what I start c) I like taking my time and being methodical	—	—	—

Answer a, b and c of each statement, as it applies to you generally, by rating it 0 - 3:			
0 = never, 1 = occasionally, 2 = often, 3 = always	a	b	c
8. a) I learn quickly but easily forget b) My memory is sharp and clear c) My memory is steady and reliable once I know something well	___	___	___
9. a) My motivation tends to be variable or erratic b) I tend to persevere and can be quite determined in meeting my goals c) Once I get going, I can work steadily towards a goal and tend to be loyal	___	___	___
10. a) I like being active and don't need a plan b) I prefer to plan things before I do them c) I tend to not take the initiative and prefer others to do the planning	___	___	___
11. a) I can eat all I want and not gain weight b) I need regular meals otherwise I get agitated c) I gain weight more easily than other people	___	___	___
12. a) My moods and feelings change quite quickly b) I can be intense and quick tempered c) I'm even tempered, slow to get angry, if at all	___	___	___
13. a) I easily adapt to different kinds of people b) I tend to choose friends based on their values c) I am slow to make friends but am very loyal	___	___	___
14. Other people would like me to be: a) more settled, calmer b) more tolerant, less demanding c) more enthusiastic, taking the initiative	___	___	___

Add up all your “a”, “b” and “c” answers:

a: _____ b: _____ c: _____
 Vata score Pitta score Kapha score

Determining your body type

As we have seen, Ayurveda has three main body types. Most people are a combination of two or three of these, making a total of ten different body types.

<p>You are purely or strongly one type:</p> <p>Your score will be significantly high for one of the three types with lower scores for the other two.</p>	<p>Vata Pitta Kapha</p>
<p>You are a combination of two types:</p> <p>This is the most common among people.</p> <p>Your score will have two that are almost equal, with maybe one of those that is slightly higher and the third much lower.</p> <p>You might want to revisit or redo the quiz at a later time.</p>	<p>Vata/Pitta Pitta/Vata Pitta/Kapha Kapha/Pitta Kapha/Vata Vata/Kapha</p>
<p>You are all three types:</p> <p>Your score is almost equal in all three, which is rare. You might want to revisit the quiz at a later time.</p>	<p>Vata/Pitta/Kapha</p>

Regardless of what type you have assessed yourself to be, I recommend that you read all the information about each of the three main types plus the combinations. In becoming well acquainted

with the material, you might discover a few things you didn't know about yourself, or recognize traits you had not remembered.

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Characteristics of the three main body types

Now that you have completed the quiz, here are descriptions of the three main body types: Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

Vata traits

If you are a strong Vata type, you will have a quick, efficient metabolism. You tend to be energetic and enthusiastic, good at initiating things. You like to be active, always on the move, sometimes a virtual whirlwind of activity. However, your energy level is inconsistent and comes in bursts. Your mind also likes to be active; you love thinking of ideas. You are creative, have an vivid imagination and like to express yourself.

You are quick paced. You walk quickly and perform tasks quickly. You speak quickly and as a result, you are not always clear in your communication, leaving out relevant details. Because you crave activity and excitement, you are prone to crash and burn. It is difficult for you to slow down and not get overloaded. You're convinced that more is better so you can drive yourself to excess from overactivity and also because you love to expend energy.

Having a nervous disposition, you are prone to being anxious and to worry a lot. Like air, you can be restless. Your moods, like the wind, can quickly change. Being highly sensitive, you quickly react to situations. As a result, you can be high strung.

You can be very sensitive to your environment, especially noise, as well as bright lights and strong odors. Wind and cold can unsettle you. Being changeable, you don't like regularity in your life. You are very adaptable and flexible to the extent that you can become scattered and spacey.

You alternate between wanting companionship and then solitude. You easily make friends but your friendships can be short-lived. You find it difficult to concentrate on one thing and often do not complete projects.

Pitta traits

If you have strong Pitta energy, you will be assertive, focused and determined. Like fire, you can have strong drive and can flare up and become quarrelsome or angry. You have leadership qualities and are naturally courageous. You excel at planning and implementing new ideas and are efficient and practical.

As a Pitta, you have above average intelligence and tend to be impatient with those less intelligent or slower-paced than you. Although you believe in fair play, in your dealings with people, you have strong opinions and at times can be domineering and forceful. When in a good mood, you are exuberant and friendly. When angry, you can get critical and hurtful, making remarks that cut deeply.

Your manner of speaking is precise and to the point. You are confident about what you want to communicate and what response you wish to elicit. Your voice often sounds impatient or intense. Your anger can be explosive and, like a burning log, can smolder for a very long time. Or you easily feel angry inside and don't show it.

You make friends easily especially when you think those friends will be useful to you. You easily remember things but have difficulty forgetting. You are dedicated to your own self-development but can be a bit fanatical in your beliefs. You know how to pace yourself but often don't because you're naturally compulsive and competitive.

Kapha traits

Kaphas are emotionally steady, calm and easy-going. You are warm and understanding, the most loving and forgiving of all the types. Like earth, you are stable and dependable, have a strong build and good endurance with a high reserve of energy. Yet you often lack the motivation and discipline to put your energy to good use. With external prodding, you tend to stay the course. You are good at stabilizing and running a new enterprise smoothly.

As a Kapha, you have a slow metabolism. You prefer a slow pace and the pleasures of home or familiar environments. You are patient and compassionate but when out of balance, you can get passive, possessive, even greedy. You can become attached to food as a way to feel emotionally fulfilled.

What you lack in motivation you make up for with staying power. You tend to be loyal and consistent, so once you have a habit well-rooted in your daily routine, you usually stick with it. Before you commit to anything, you study it carefully. Once committed, you steadfastly, even stubbornly, stay the course.

You speak slowly and cautiously and normally do not initiate conversations. Your voice tends to be melodious and pleasant to listen to. You make friends slowly but once established, your friendships tend to last.

You don't have the makings to be a good fanatic but when you believe in something, your faith is unshakeable. Your tendency towards self-satisfaction and complacency makes you less motivated to pursue self-development than other types.

You are naturally coordinated in your movements and are able to tolerate vigorous exercise very well, especially endurance ones except that you have an aversion to expending your energy.

Characteristics of body type combinations

Vata/Pitta

Like pure Vata types, you are fast paced and talkative, yet you also have some of Pitta's sharp intellect and enterprising nature. You have a stronger, more stable disposition than high strung, fragile pure Vatas. You have Vata's lightness and Pitta's intensity.

In meditation, you'll be better able to settle down than a pure Vata who is easily agitated by noise, drafts and physical tension.

The influences of Vata and Pitta tend to fluctuate. When out of balance or stressed, you can experience alternating fear, which is Vata's response to stress, with Pitta's anger stress response. Since Vata is stronger in your score, anxiety would be your first response followed by anger.

Pitta/Vata

You are more assertive, intense and have better stamina than when Vata predominates. As with Vata/Pitta, the influence of Pitta and Vata fluctuate, yet with Pitta stronger in your constitution, you will tend towards anger rather than anxiety. Or you may be prone to being anxiously angry. With stronger Pitta, you tend to be more driven and aggressive than flighty, delicate Vata.

Your Pitta nature needs to be in control but the Vata in you has self-doubt about your capability to be in command. When in balance, Vata's capacity for original thinking combines well with your Pitta tendency to apply your ideas with precision and forward movement.

Pitta/Kapha

You will have a more solid body than Pitta along with Pitta's intensity and tendency towards anger and criticism. Kapha's endurance combined with Pitta's drive can make you a good athlete.

Combining Kapha's stability and Pitta's courage and discipline, you are better able than most to deal with the stresses and challenges of life.

Difficulties can arise when Pitta's tendency towards arrogance combines with Kapha's self-satisfied smugness, making you vulnerable to seeing only the reality you want. You then ignore feedback and only acknowledge compliments. Introspection and meditation can help open you to others' perspectives and viewpoints.

Kapha/Pitta

You will be slower moving and more relaxed than when Pitta predominates, with a steady temperament and less motivation than ambitious Pitta. Your Pitta anger and impatience is tempered by Kapha's cautiousness, creating good mental balance.

With Kapha as a stronger influence, you will have more patience and receptivity to others' ideas and needs yet also have a measure of Pitta's confidence and enterprising nature. Regular exercise using Pitta's discipline can effectively offset Kapha's lethargy.

Kapha/Vata

Vata and Kapha are opposites so you may experience conflicting needs and wants. You may even have trouble knowing what body type you are. With Kapha's solid build, stamina and slower pace, you will be more relaxed and not as anxious as when Vata predominates. Vata's enthusiasm may sometimes be dampened by Kapha's lethargy.

You are even tempered but can easily become anxious under stress. You have the deeply emotional nature of Kapha combined with Vata's erratic, changeable moods and reactivity. So emotional hurts can go deep. Because Vata and Kapha are both energetically cold, emotionally, you have a double need for warmth, both physically and emotionally.

Vata/Kapha

Vata's indecisiveness with Kapha's easy-going way, plus these two being quite opposite makes it difficult to identify this type. You are enthusiastic about what you do but variable in your approach, sometimes light and airy, other times deep and secretive, reluctant to share your inner feelings.

In meditation as well as in your life, you may experience a conflict between what you want and what you need, or between different opposing needs, creating a push, pull experience. The Vata in you doesn't want to sit still and feels a need to get up whereas the Kapha in you is fine to sit quietly but is unmotivated to make efforts, i.e. to keep your mind focused.

Vata/Pitta/Kapha

Having a combination of all three body types in equal or near equal proportions is rare. You are at an advantage, on the one hand, because you have a good balance of various qualities. On the other hand, it may be difficult to identify your body type and when you get out of balance, it may be difficult to know what you need most.

In choosing a meditation that is suitable to you, go more with how it feels, not only in the moment but over time as well. You may need to vary your meditation depending on your mood and on what you need.

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PART 6: RECOMMENDED MEDITATIONS FOR EACH BODY TYPE

In this section, we'll be covering the meditation styles that are most appropriate for each body type. In general, a meditation is well suited to a particular body type when it provides the opposite quality to that types' nature.

Recommended meditations for Vata

The recommended meditations for Vata are: conscious relaxation and body sensing. Both these meditations involve a strong focus on the body. Vata, being of the air element, needs a stronger connection or contact with the body or what we often call getting grounded. This will help settle Vata's overactive mind and to calm stressful emotional states such as anxiety.

Since you are naturally enthusiastic and good at initiating things, you will probably find it easy to begin a meditation practice. Make sure your body is very comfortable when you're meditating, otherwise you can easily get agitated. So, if in the past, you tried meditating cross-legged on a cushion and found it uncomfortable, consider sitting in a chair, removing your shoes and placing a cushion under your feet.

As a Vata, you love movement and being active. With your sensitive disposition, you need to gently restrain your urge to move around while you meditate. If you're experiencing fatigue, overstimulation or burnout, the lying down with legs up meditation is particularly beneficial. The operative word for Vata might be "enjoy".

Conscious relaxation for Vata

For Vatas, the practice of relaxation will help to slow down your overactive mind and calm your hyperactivity. It's difficult to be anxious and worried when you're relaxed. So relaxation of the body sends a message to your subconscious of ease rather than stress.

Notice what happens to you when you focus on relaxing your body. You might notice that you start breathing deeper. Maybe you never noticed how shallow your breathing actually was. You might feel a resistance to slowing down, even a rushing sensation. Simply notice this as best you can

and try not to give up with the practice. This rushing or feeling of speediness is a sign that your Vata is out of balance. As you continue to practice, you will gain more ability to settle down.

Body sensing meditation

In many meditation practices, awareness of the body is included in the process of observing oneself. However, a meditation that focuses exclusively on body sensing is perhaps a lesser known approach. The body sensing meditation in this program is unique in that it incorporates energy principles. Many Eastern healing traditions recognize that all life is animated by a vital life force or subtle energy and that human beings have an energy field, similar to the earth's gravitational field.

The act of consciously bringing your attention to the subtle sensations of the body in a neutral way helps the energy system find its natural, balanced state. Our energy field is part of our consciousness and of the body's intelligence. It is an integral part of our whole being and is affected by our thoughts and feelings.

What are subtle body sensations? We are all familiar with gross body sensations such as: hunger, thirst, cold, hot, tired, pain, etc. The body also has much more subtle sensations for which language is somewhat inadequate to describe. If you sit or lie down quietly and remain completely still without moving for a while, you begin to notice these subtler sensations. They might feel like: vibration, pulsing, tingling, empty, full, expanded, contracted, relaxed, tense, or energy moving through your body, to give some examples. The more you keep your body completely still, the more you will experience these sensations.

As with conscious relaxation, the more we pay attention to our body, the more awareness we develop and the more we get to know its signals and messages. Body sensing also helps to slow down a frenetic thinking mind. Although the Vata energy endows people with a creative mind full of inspiring new ideas, when out of balance, the mind gets out of touch with reality – with how things actually are and with the practical aspects of innovative ideas.

Body sensing also helps generate an awareness of a particular kind of intuition – the intuition of sensation/feeling or what is often referred to as a gut feeling.

Recommended meditations for Pitta

As a Pitta, you will have good concentration and willpower so you can meditate more easily than others. Although Pittas can do just about any kind of meditation, it's beneficial for you to include loving-kindness as well as conscious relaxation. These will help open you to a softer approach, and to be more accepting of yourself and how things actually are. The operative theme for Pitta might be – relax and ease up.

Conscious relaxation for Pitta

For Pittas, relaxation practice can tone down your drive for perfection. There's nothing inherently wrong with wanting to accomplish or achieve. It's more a matter of balance and of distinguishing between striving for perfection, which is simply wanting to improve on something, and perfectionism, which has a critical, dismissive, judgmental quality, an attitude of "It's never good enough". In music, for example, if there were only frenetic sixteenth notes and no long, calm whole notes and rests that create spaces between notes, we would have no melodies. So quiet, non-striving such as relaxation practice is a good balance for Pitta's strong, determined drive especially when it gets into over-striving and pushing the river.

Loving kindness meditation

This is a well-known meditation in many traditions. In Buddhism, loving-kindness meditation is a 2500-year-old practice in which we repeat words or phrases to evoke a feeling of lovingness towards ourselves and others. As we repeat these words, we imagine the feeling or visualize an image that represents those qualities. It's best to experiment with the words or phrases to discover what works best for you. The words are less important than feeling or experiencing the quality or state of lovingness.

If you have been hard on yourself or self-critical, you will find it difficult to experience kindness or lovingness towards yourself. On the guided meditation, you will hear the suggestion to start with something easier such as peace, calm, soothing, liking myself. Stay with that practice for as long as you need to. There is no rush to get to loving-kindness if you are not ready. If you rush it, it will feel empty or inauthentic. Remember that we want to actually experience lovingness, not just think it or imagine it.

As you progress, you can focus your loving-kindness practice towards another person, either imagining that you feel loving towards the person or imagining that the person is happy or well.

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Recommended meditations for Kapha

As a Kapha, you are already well grounded in your body. Having a slow metabolism, however, you are prone to feeling sluggish or lethargic. So the recommended meditations for Kapha are walking and counting the breath. These are excellent practices that provide much needed stimulation and activity.

Body posture is particularly important for Kaphas. You need a body posture that will help you stay as alert as possible. If you're sitting in a chair, it's best to sit with your back upright. So either sit forward on the seat of your chair without any support or place a cushion at your back that lifts your spine and supports it in an upright position. Or if you can, sit cross-legged on a cushion.

Walking meditation

Walking meditation is found in a number of traditions. It can be done either on its own or before a sitting meditation. The value of walking meditation is in keeping the body engaged while the mind remains focused.

Traditionally, in meditation retreats, which usually last from one day to several weeks, thirty to forty minutes sitting meditations are alternated with walking meditation. This gives the body needed exercise while allowing the practitioner to remain in a meditative state.

It is easier to start walking meditation with a slow pace. If you were to walk at your regular pace, your mind would more easily wander away since you are habituated to that way of walking. When you slow down, it feels unusual which helps to keep your awareness more in the present.

The focus is to maintain attention on the sensation of your body as you walk. Eventually, you can use this to be more aware of yourself in your regular life, when shopping, standing in line or in an elevator, etc.

Counting the breath meditation

The practice of paying attention to the breath is probably the most universal of all meditation practices. There are many variations but essentially, you simply focus on your breathing without changing it in any way.

You may notice that as soon as you bring your attention to your breathing, the inclination will be to change it, to make it fuller or better than you find it. You need to refrain as best as possible from doing this, partly for physiological reasons. Our breathing, which normally operates outside our awareness, is a delicate balancing function. It is programmed to keep certain elements like oxygen at quite specific levels in our body. When we apply our will to override its natural function without enough understanding or awareness, we can create imbalance. One clue that you are tampering is if you feel dizzy or in any way uncomfortable. Another reason not to change your breathing is to practice how to simply be, to be non-striving.

When we are new to meditation, the mind wanders off frequently. One way to help keep the mind focused in breath-focused meditation is to count each breath. Counting to ten is the most common practice. It provides enough stimulation for the mind without too much distraction with counting. If you find your attention has wandered off and you've lost track of which number you were at, then start again at one. Counting the breath is well suited to Kaphas. They need a meditation that keeps the mind active in order to counteract Kapha's tendency toward a dreamy or foggy mind.

If you're curious about why counting to ten, try a larger count to one hundred, for example. Whenever you lose track, start again at one. You will find it much more difficult to do. Now count only to three or four. And compare your experience with counting to ten. The actual number that you count is less important than the practice of maintaining your attention on the sensation of breathing and on being aware of yourself in the present moment.

Recommended meditations for body type combinations

If you are a combination of two body types, try the recommendations below for your combination and see which one feels best to you. Either choose one of the two recommended meditations for a few months and then try the other, or alternate between the two each time you meditate depending on how you feel and what you sense you need on any particular day.

Vata/Pitta: conscious relaxation, body sensing

Pitta/Vata: conscious relaxation, loving kindness

Pitta/Kapha: loving kindness, counting the breath

Kapha/Pitta: walking meditation, conscious relaxation

Vata/Kapha: body sensing, counting the breath

Kapha/Vata: walking meditation, counting the breath

Vata/Pitta/Kapha: You will need to assess which tendencies are predominant in you: whether you are more prone to being anxious, get angry easily or often feel sluggish. Maybe these vary for you. Try all the meditations on the CD and observe how you feel as you do them and how you are afterwards. You may also vary the meditations depending on how you feel on any given day or week. If, for example, you're feeling anxious, then do the Vata meditations: conscious relaxation or body sensing.

In the end, what matters most is that we meditate regularly.

Lying-down-with-legs-up meditation

This is not a meditation in the traditional sense but rather an adapted yoga posture that can be used for meditating. It serves to rejuvenate your body and mind when you're tired, exhausted or stressed, and also serves to train the attention to stay present in the face of such discomfort.

It can be challenging not to fall asleep or wander off in daydreaming with this practice. It's easier to do it in the morning after a good night's sleep. That may seem contrary since you have just gotten out of bed but keep in mind that it's meant to be a meditation. If you continue to fall asleep, simply consider it as a rejuvenating yoga pose and not as meditation. It may be all that you are able to do at this time.

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Summary of body type traits and meditation needs

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Positive traits	<p>enthusiastic, spontaneous,</p> <p>energetic, energy comes in bursts</p> <p>fast paced, talkative</p> <p>good at initiating, quick to learn</p> <p>resilient, flexible, adaptable</p> <p>resourceful, imaginative</p> <p>sensitive, helpful</p>	<p>intense, enterprising, ambitious</p> <p>confident friendly</p> <p>sharp, penetrating intellect</p> <p>good memory, excellent concentration</p> <p>astute perception, attention to details</p> <p>precise, orderly, organized</p>	<p>calm relaxed</p> <p>tolerant forgiving affectionate</p> <p>slow paced in all activities, steady energy</p> <p>strength endurance resistance to disease</p> <p>emotionally tranquil</p> <p>good memory retention</p>
Tendencies when out of balance	<p>anxious, fearful nervous</p> <p>indecisive, scattered, spacey, changeable</p> <p>hyperactive, overly sensitive both physically and mentally</p> <p>high strung, reactive to others and environment</p>	<p>easily irritated, impatient, angry</p> <p>combative, critical, argumentative, opinionated</p> <p>demanding, perfectionistic</p> <p>critical, aggressive, jealous, dominating</p>	<p>lethargic slow to change</p> <p>possessive greedy stubborn</p> <p>prone to depression, melancholy over-sentimentality</p> <p>complacent avoiding conflict feeling insecure</p>

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
Lifestyle needs	<p>sufficient rest and sleep</p> <p>regular habits: e.g. eating consistently at standard mealtimes, getting to bed before 10 pm</p> <p>slowing down and not overdoing: e.g. eating slowly, not on the run</p>	<p>moderate lifestyle</p> <p>avoiding toxins in food, air and water, over-exposure to sun</p> <p>eating raw, cold foods such as salads and fruit</p> <p>avoiding over-working</p>	<p>vigorous physical exercise, including walking after meals</p> <p>eating only when hungry and stopping when less than full</p> <p>getting no more than 8 hours sleep</p>
Meditation needs	<p>relaxation: to ease anxious tendency</p> <p>being more grounded: through more connection to body awareness, body sensation</p> <p>routine time to meditate</p> <p>stillness of the body: gentle restraint of movement when meditating</p>	<p>relaxation: to calm over-striving, to cool the fire</p> <p>loving kindness: to soften critical, demanding tendencies</p> <p>examine expectations of meditation</p> <p>watching for impatience, self-criticism then relaxing the body as a counterbalance</p>	<p>active meditation: to counteract lethargy e.g. walking meditation, an activity for the mind such as counting the breath etc.</p> <p>stay connected to the motivation to meditate - why meditate</p> <p>external prodding: possibly join a meditation group or have a buddy to check in with</p>

	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
What the mind needs in meditation	keeping the mind: calm and focused, especially on direct experience of the present moment, not ideas about it	keeping the mind: receptive, soft and detached rather than sharp and demanding	keeping the mind: alert and enthusiastic, interested and active, mindful to avoid daydreaming or fanciful thoughts
Associated elements	air and ether	fire	earth and water
Functions that each governs	movement balance nervous system	metabolism digestive system	moisture mucous membranes, tissues of the body

PART 7 – OBSTACLES TO SUCCESSFUL MEDITATION

As mentioned in the preface, success in meditation simply means maintaining a regular practice over time. The operative theme here is “over time”. Countless people have tried meditation and have not stayed with it. Even people who go to a regular meditation group do not necessarily have their own home practice.

The beauty and benefit of meditation is having a home practice *permanently*. This is where we really benefit from meditation, where meditation becomes a part of one’s life. I cannot stress this enough. That is why this ebook goes into considerable detail about obstacles, even though this program is essentially for beginners.

If you're humming along in your practice then you need not concern yourself with this part of the ebook. If you're struggling with any aspect of your meditation, then identifying and addressing obstacles and challenges is an essential component of your meditation practice.

This part of the ebook has two sections: in the first, we examine obstacles to meditation in general, those that can apply to anyone. In the second section, we will deal with obstacles specific to each body type. Even with guided meditation, we will more than likely run into difficulty. It is the nature of it.

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General obstacles

Let us distinguish between resistance to starting meditation, challenges we encounter during meditation and finally the problem of falling away from our practice:

- Obstacles in starting
- Obstacles during meditation
- Obstacles in maintaining a regular practice

Obstacles in starting: when you intend to start meditating and never begin

Procrastination

Have you bought the CD and put it aside, intending to get to it later? Then never started? So you got stuck before even starting. Then maybe you became self-critical, accusing yourself of being lazy. Or maybe you justified yourself: "I've got too much to do." or "Other people don't have complicated life circumstances like I do."

Getting stuck before even starting can be a body type tendency. Kapha is particularly prone to this due mostly to lack of motivation. Pitta, on the other hand, can procrastinate due to excessively high standards. It's easier to hold things as a future possibility than experience the pain of not measuring up.

Not enough time, being too busy

This is a challenging obstacle for those of us born in the West. Western culture tends to value and support being busy, productive, efficient. Yet we are living in an age in which quality of life continues to decline considerably. According to research, the rate of depression is ten times more prevalent today than in 1960 and is doubling every ten years. We spend more time working than ever before, eat on the run and get one hour less sleep than fifty years ago. We have less vacation time and our participation in family and community has declined fifty percent.

Clearly, quality of life has suffered in our post modern life of conveniences and luxuries. Studies reveal that many people feel stuck in the life they are living, believing they have no choice in changing their situation. Societal pressure can be so strong that people resign themselves to things as they are without questioning, and if they do question, it is difficult to imagine a solution.

Making changes requires sacrifice or letting go. Families today are smaller than in the past yet live in houses twice as large. Downsizing, cutting out activities, working less are all possible but require a significant shift in attitude and lifestyle.

Who has time? North Americans watch an average of 28 hours of television a week. That is a quarter of our lives watching TV. And heavy TV watching can lead to serious health consequences. Add to that the time spent in front of a computer. If you find yourself too busy to incorporate a ten minute daily meditation into your schedule yet collapse in front of the TV when tired, then it can be helpful to redefine the problem. It is not lack of time but maybe being exhausted or overwhelmed.

The ancient Mayans had a deep and precise understanding of time. Their calendars, which were created thousands of years ago, are able to accurately predict eclipses occurring in our time. One of the Mayan teachings about time is that the more we worry about time and the busier we make ourselves, the less time we have available. The Mayans teach that time is subjective. This may sound superstitious yet think about experiences you have had where time seems to fly and other times where each moment seemed to pass by painfully slow. It seems our modern obsession with being productive and efficient has created a situation in which we have less time.

If you are the parent of small children, finding time to meditate is indeed a challenge. What I suggest is doing the lying down with legs up meditation so that meditation does not feel like just

another chore in an overwhelming long list. If you find yourself choosing TV over this very beneficial meditation, then it is likely that something else, a different block, is operating.

Being too tired or overwhelmed – (excluding medical or health related causes)

If you find yourself perpetually tired, it is likely something is out of balance in your life. This can be from being too busy as discussed above, or from a stressful work situation or family problems.

We are also bombarded by much more stimuli than previously. If you compare, for example, the ads and commercials of past with present, you will see a big difference. There are many more ads and they are much quicker paced with barely enough time for us to digest all these images.

Noise pollution in urban environments has become more severe and widespread than ever before. According to new research, exposure to noise pollution is detrimental to health and well-being. Most people become accustomed to it and don't notice the effect it's having on them.

If being too tired or overwhelmed is what you are experiencing at this time, then it is best to do only the lying-down-with-legs-up meditation for now while assessing what is contributing to you feeling this way.

Obstacles during meditation

When we engage in an introspective activity such as meditation, almost everyone encounters challenges. We begin to witness that we are not who we thought we were. For example, you might have believed you had enough willpower or discipline to meditate successfully and be able to do it well with little practice. Or maybe you anticipated experiencing some benefit right away.

Instead, you saw how your mind was all over the map and that it seemed to have “a mind of its own”. Or maybe you were sitting there practicing the loving kindness meditation and then found yourself feeling intensely angry towards someone or about an unfair situation in your life. Inevitably, you discover the truth about yourself, that you're unable in that moment to do the meditation and become dismayed or discouraged.

In essence, we experience the real truth of who we are presently. This is not at all a bad thing. In fact, it is a most important beginning - to make a real observation about ourselves rather than being submerged in an image or fantasy about ourselves that is inaccurate. The trick here is to recognize it and not let it sweep you away into reactions such as discouragement, defeat, escape or feelings of shame, etc.

Fear

Meditation inevitably puts us in closer contact with our subconscious. Our subconscious records every experience we have had in our life including every emotion, such fear, anger, grief, hurt and so on. When I first started meditating, I remember having moments when I suddenly felt, as I began to experience a deeper inner quiet, a wave of fear would run through me. It seemed that I was actually afraid to become peaceful. It made no rational sense, it was simply something in my subconscious that had irrational associations. Over time, this fear subsided.

It is helpful to know something about what the subconscious is. We need our subconscious in order to survive. It performs essential functions without our conscious participation. For example, every time you take a step, it is done by your subconscious. Without your subconscious, you would have to learn how to walk every time you took a step. It also makes it possible for you to breathe, to speak and to respond to the environment, such as getting out of danger's way.

In some respects, the subconscious is like computer software. It is programmed to respond in a specific way and operates automatically. The trouble arises when, in our early years of childhood, when we are most susceptible to being programmed, we experience painful or negative situations. We learn by imitating our parents and how they responded to us. Our subconscious records everything and, with a child's limited understanding, creates ways to cope with difficulties that are self-defeating, such as becoming dissociated or frozen when fearful.

Being self-critical

People who are hard on themselves have a habit of ruthlessly criticizing themselves when they fail at something or don't follow through. I say ruthless to describe instances where you call yourself names such as lazy, stupid, incompetent or names I will not mention in print. I call it the double

whammy or adding insult to injury. The injury is that you were not able to do what you intended, the insult is you beating yourself up for it.

Comparing yourself to others

Similar to self-criticism, comparing ourselves to others should be one of the seven deadly sins. When we compare ourselves to others, we lose. Period. Regardless of whether we come out being lesser or greater than someone else, we lose. If we come out better, it feeds our egoistic or vain tendencies. If we come out lesser than others, it deflates and injures us. Yet we all do it at some time in some way, usually without being aware of it.

Impatience

When a farmer plants a seed to grow a plant and eventually harvest a crop, at first nothing is visible above ground. The seed is sprouting roots underground. During this delicate beginning, the farmer does not keep uprooting the seed to see if it has started to grow. This would damage the tender roots and delay growth. Likewise, when we get impatient or frustrated with our meditation experience, we are essentially slowing down the very thing we wish for. It is a delicate process requiring tender attention to our inner garden.

Getting sleepy during meditation

Getting sleepy during meditation can stem from two different causes. One is the body being too tired, either from too much stress, being overly busy or from lack of adequate sleep.

The other cause of sleepiness during meditation is subconscious avoidance or resistance. I remember experiencing a period of many months struggling with sleepiness during meditation. No matter what I did or tried, including taking a nap beforehand, I would get drowsy and want to just lie down. As with fear, sleepiness can be a subconscious avoidance. Eventually, my sleepiness passed. Had I given up, I would not have reached the other side. Which brings us back to a fundamental principle in meditation: it is a practice, one in which we develop attention and perseverance, and clear up old habits.

Doubt, not valuing the meditative experience

If your family valued outward accomplishments or constant activity, meditation may be a challenge for you. It asks us to sit quietly, to let go of striving and to just be. So you may find yourself not valuing the meditative experience. In my own upbringing, my mother was constantly on the move. If she was not cooking for our large family, she was out exercising, socializing, shopping. There seemed to be an endless stream of activities and chores. When I began meditating, I felt such a strong internal pressure that I can only describe as “I should be doing something”. After all, I had my own list of things and my meditation consisted of planning in my head what I had to do after I finished my meditation!

I don't feel like it right now

Meditation requires effort. Even though we are “just sitting there”, it requires an internal effort of paying attention. Our organism, which is programmed to avoid pain and move towards pleasure, will do everything it can to make us avoid what it does not want to do. It is much more fun eating a tasty snack, getting lost in a good TV program, film or book, having an online chat with friends, and so on.

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When we fall away: obstacles to maintaining a regular meditation practice

Have you meditated in the past but did not continue? This is a common occurrence and results from a number of reasons. Studying the obstacles to meditation for each body type will help in identifying what specifically happened to you in falling away from your practice. Even if you think you know what happened, it is helpful to examine it closer. There may have been more than one issue operating. Or maybe you fell ill and naturally stop meditating then never returned. You may have underestimated that it takes considerable initiative to begin meditation and therefore to restart.

It actually helps to acknowledge that it may take a while, or maybe even a long time, to return to a regular practice. This may sound negative or counterintuitive. Yet, when we acknowledge the

difficulties, we are being kinder to ourselves. Otherwise we become vulnerable to self-criticism: “I’m lazy”, “I’m no good”, “What is wrong with me that I can’t do a simply ten minute meditation?” etc.

Imagine, instead, that you are a loving mother, seeing her child (the part of you that wishes to meditate but cannot) crying in distress and, being concerned for the child’s welfare, you examine what the child needs. An incompetent parent would admonish the child for being a burden and try to make the child stop crying. A loving, nurturing parent would simply hold and comfort the child. The injured or traumatized part of us needs tenderness. Self-criticism only adds fuel to an already painful fire.

Obstacles in meditation, specific to each body type

Now that you have an idea of your body type, you can use this information to guide you in your meditation practice. In this section, we will only cover the obstacles in meditation and then in the next part, present strategies for success in meditation, both generally and for each body type.

Obstacles in meditation specific to Vata

Vata’s love of activity and movement makes sitting still in meditation a challenge. You will not like being physically still, yet meditation’s stillness is exactly what you need. Because you like expending your energy (as opposed to Kaphas who prefer saving their energy), you often overextend yourself. And you don’t have the stamina and endurance of other types so you can fall prey to being chronically tired.

As a Vata, you also like change and variety and tend to gravitate towards irregular lifestyle, such as eating at unpredictable hours. Meditation, with its prerequisite daily routine is counter to Vata’s tendency, not because you lack discipline but rather because you don’t like routine. These natural inclinations can make your practice variable and inconsistent.

Your love of thinking and having creative ideas can be another challenge. In meditation, you need to maintain a focused mind which goes contrary to your inclination. Too much thinking, which you are prone to, causes you to be out of balance, to become scattered and spacey so meditation’s single minded focus is very beneficial.

So we could say that for Vata types, meditation is just what the doctor ordered, providing much needed balance, stability and grounded-ness.

A Vata client of mine, who bought the CD, went home with it and returned to report a complaint. On the CD, I make a suggestion for Vata to stick to one practice for at least six months. Her reaction? “Six months is a very long time to stay with one thing!” I gently reminded her that each meditation is less than ten minutes. “That’s still a big commitment.” was her response. She also had not done any of the meditations and instead had listened to the whole CD while doing her yoga practice! Just out of interest. Classic Vata behavior.

Click here if you wish to go directly to [Strategies for success for Vata](#).

Obstacles in meditation specific to Pitta

Pitta types are prone to perfectionism. This either prevents you from starting anything at all since deep down, you fear you will never measure up or you over-strive and bring too much intensity into meditation.

Never starting what you intend can be due to sharp self-criticism, which is merciless and rejecting as compared to Kapha’s self-loathing and victimhood. A Pitta client of mine ruthlessly criticized himself for failing to move forward in his career. Yet this harsh attitude contributed greatly to his incapacity. As a Pitta, you may never start something because it is better to keep things as a potential: “One day, when I’ve got myself all together, I will be able to sit and meditate properly.”

Pittas like challenges so this will help you stick with meditation for quite a while, being motivated by the desire to achieve mastery over your mind and yourself. Over time, however, you may get frustrated by the slow “progress”. Meditation is, in some respects, opposite to Pitta’s disposition in that there are no obvious benefits or outstanding attainments after one session of meditation. You will not develop focused concentration in a week or achieve enlightenment in one month. Your biggest challenge will be to stay with your meditation after the reality sets in that you are not as competent as you imagined.

Pittas like efficiency and being productive. You do not like wasting time. Meditation with its non-striving attitude can frustrate a Pitta. You want things to improve and you want to be in

control. If you notice your mind wandering, you immediately want to fix that and you do it with determination and drive. You want to get it right and get it right the very first time.

Click here if you wish to go directly to [Strategies for success for Pitta](#).

Obstacles in meditation specific to Kapha

Kapha's slow metabolism creates tendencies towards complacency, lethargy and even depression. Many pure Kaphas can have overwhelming feelings of heaviness, so getting started with any endeavor, such as a meditation practice, can feel like a formidable task.

How to start? That would be the quintessential question for Kapha, not only in meditation but in your life. Buying the meditation CD and putting it on the shelf to begin your practice at a later time is a characteristic Kapha thing to do. And there it may sit forever collecting dust. As a Kapha, you don't like hearing this. It makes you feel badly about yourself. You are prone to self-depreciating attitudes. This self-flagellation will not get you started however. It will simply bog you down even more.

As a Kapha, you actually have lots of energy and stamina but it feels like you don't. Your energy reserve is prone to being sluggish and slow moving, like molasses. You often need external prodding to maintain your momentum.

Your slow moving energy combined with your gentle, kind, loving tendencies cause you to drift into pleasant reveries and fantasies. You can easily imagine yourself resting next to a quiet on a warm summer day with the soothing sound of birds.

Your mind tends to have the opposite problem to Vata. Whereas Vata's mind is quick and changeable, Kapha's mind is slow and methodical (not unintelligent but rather slow in its process) and needs to be engaged, to be stimulated to action.

Click here if you wish to go directly to [Strategies for success for Kapha](#)

PART 8: STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS IN MEDITATION

At the risk of being repetitive, let me once again stress that success in meditation simply means maintaining a regular practice over time. The strategies we will be covering are of two categories: general strategies that are universal and can apply to everyone, and strategies specific to each of the three main body types of Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

Keep in mind that all the strategies discussed are simply suggestions so you may find yourself drawn to one or two and not at all interested in the others. You may also find that this could change over time.

General Strategies

This section offers strategies that are suitable for everyone. As a therapist, I'm aware that it's actually much more difficult to stop an undesirable habit than to simply, as I like to describe it, "grow something new that eventually displaces the old". Habitual reactions, such as being critical or being prone to anxiety, have a strong influence so we fall into them even though we wish to be different.

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Making a commitment

Making a vow - a written contract with yourself

The dictionary defines the word "vow" as "a solemn promise or assertion, one by which a person binds themselves to an act, service or condition". One strategy for success is to formally make a vow, an example of which is below. I have found that it helps program the unconscious, sends a message to it about the seriousness of your undertaking. If it sounds extraneous to you, all the more for you to give it a try.

Simply read and sign/agree to the vow or contract below. I suggest that you print it out and physically sign it, and maybe even post it for a week or so, or bring it out when you start encountering difficulties. The word Self is in caps to signify that we are making a commitment to the finer part of our nature, called by different names, such as Higher Self, Soul, Higher Spirit, etc. So you might want to consider this a sacred contract.

- If you completely forgot, what happened in that process? Did you become distracted? Do you forget often? Experiment by writing a note to yourself and sticking it up where you will clearly see it, like the bathroom mirror or coffee machine.

- Did you find a compelling, convincing reason to postpone? Reflect on what happened. What seductive reasons did your mind come up with? Or did you have an unexpected obligation arise and you chose that over your meditation?

- Were you too tired or felt like you were not in the right head space? Then plan to do the lying down meditation.

- Other.....

Creating a Vision Board

A vision board is a collection of visual images, photos and symbols mounted on a poster or sheet of paper that represent a person's goals.

Tapping into the power of your subconscious

In constructing a vision board, we are tapping into our subconscious which functions and processes information through symbols and visual images. As well known psychologist Carl Jung once said: "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate." In other words, our subconscious is a powerful force in our life.

A vision board helps us to aim this force, that is, the power of our subconscious, in our desired direction. In a way, the subconscious is like a computer. It has a program that it follows, one that originated in our childhood through imitating our parents and conclusions reached through life experiences.

The deeper subconscious or unconscious is the part of us that dreams at night when we are asleep. Dreams are always strongly visual as well as symbolic and emotion laden.

How to create a vision board to accomplish your meditation goals

Vision boards are most often used to accomplish one or more life goals. Gather visuals such as photos and symbolic representations of why you wish to meditate or what qualities you image you want to experience.

Suggestions:

- Take a photo of yourself in your meditation pose and place it in the center of your poster board.
- Add pictures of what you associate as the positive benefits of meditation. For example, I have photos of the Buddha and other spiritual teachers, a photo of a calm, still lake and a peaceful nature scene, symbolic for me of returning to and living in my true natural state. I also have a photo with a beam of brilliant white light shining down from the heavens. For me, this represents opening to higher inspiration. And so on.
- Post your vision board on a wall where you can see it on a daily basis or at times when you are more relaxed, like in your bedroom. Or you can store it behind a dresser and take it out once a day and just gaze at it softly for a few moments.
- Feel free to experiment.
- Give it time. Rome wasn't built in a day. I have found that a vision board's effect is subtle but over time, a shift happens without putting any intentional effort into it.

If there are other areas of your life that are challenging, that you want to improve, you can add those as well. Then the vision board becomes more of a life goals tool. Depending on your situation, this can either support your goal to meditate or dilute the effect.

Energy psychology

Energy psychology is a ground-breaking new therapy that blends Western psychology techniques with Eastern knowledge of the body's energy systems, or human bio-field as some researchers call it. It is based on the Eastern principle that all living things are animated by a subtle energy force and that each living organism has its own subtle energy field. Combined with Western psychology approaches, it is an effective method to deal with self-defeating habits.

The most popular technique in the field of energy psychology is Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). You can either see a qualified therapist who specializes in EFT or you can study how to do it

on your own as it is a safe, easy-to-learn technique. One book I recommend, because of its relatively easy to understand format, written by two psychologists is: *Instant Emotional Healing* by Peter Lambrou and George Pratt.

As an energy therapist, I use a different approach than EFT, one more suitable to my hands-on energy therapy. As a self-help technique, however, I think EFT is a good choice.

Acknowledging your effort, noticing your progress

Meditation is without doubt a beneficial activity. It is a way of life that we choose, usually because we want a better quality of life or because we are on a spiritual journey or both. But it is not a quick fix or an overnight sensation. Its effects are usually subtle. So we tend not to notice our progress over time. We can fail to notice that something has changed in us, that we are a little more able to hold our attention, feel a little calmer or better able to settle ourselves, or have more clarity of mind.

Personal growth is also not so easy to measure in concrete ways compared to a task such as washing the dishes. The dishes are dirty, you wash them and then you have clean dishes. It is visible and tangible. In my own meditation journey, I used to have this nagging feeling that I still had such a long way to go, that I didn't seem to be "progressing", whatever that was for me then. Yet, when I finally looked back in time, it was obvious that I had much more ability and understanding than in the past.

Strategies for success for each body type

Strategies for Vata in meditation

Dealing with inconsistency

It's essential to dedicate a time and space for your meditation. Although this is a good guideline for all body types, it is exceptionally important for Vata. Ideally it is best to meditate in the morning, when you have more energy, unless you are a night person. As best as you can, stick to the same practice for at least six months.

As a Vata, you are highly sensitive to your environment, so you want to make your space as pleasant and attractive a surrounding as possible, maybe even have fresh flowers, etc. Make sure to eliminate as many sources of distraction as possible, especially noise which Vata is particularly sensitive to. (turn off cell phone, close windows and doors, etc.) Make sure you are warm enough, since you're more susceptible to getting chilled, getting cold hands and feet. If you find yourself bored or uninspired, consider playing some soft, calming music in the background on another device while listening to the guided meditation. Then at some point, try returning to having no music.

Watch out for enticing reasons to postpone your practice. Vata is so good at creative thinking and convincing arguments. Be vigilant of seductive distractions such as suddenly realizing you forgot to water your plants and one is drooping, causing you untold guilt. Or maybe when you are actually sitting down and meditating, you remember all the things you need to get done which you conveniently could not remember any other time. When this happens, remind yourself that you are now meditating and when you are finished, you can sit quietly and write down what needs to be done. You are training yourself to stay focused on the task at hand and not wander off, attempting to do more than one thing at a time.

Be patient with your thinking mind. It will seem at times as if no amount of fortitude on your part will slow it down. Simply continue bringing your attention back, focusing on whatever meditation you are doing.

Remind yourself of the teaching mentioned above: "Even if you have to bring yourself back a thousand times during your meditation, your time will have been well spent."

Strategies for Pitta in meditation

Dealing with perfectionism

Make a list of why you want to meditate, what you expect to gain, improve upon, fix, change or understand, as comprehensive a list as possible. Now imagine that to be successful in meditation, you need to let all that go! It is not that things can't improve or be attained through meditation. It's just that it happens, rather than you "doing" it. And what you attain in meditation might not be what you expected. So you are learning to balance your exquisite abilities to do, with the ability "to be".

As a Pitta, you tend to be confident that you know yourself well. Ask yourself: Do I want to know who I truly am? Do I want to be a more loving, compassionate person? If you answered yes to either of those, then consider making those your goals for meditation, if you must have goals.

When you are meditating, you want to pay close attention to any impatience or frustration that might arise and simply noticing this. And check to see if you are relaxed or tense in your body. When you find yourself struggling with your thinking mind, for example, it will aggravate you that you can't control your mind or inner environment as well as you would like. Instead, make use of your impressive sharp mind and attention to detail by being curious, like a scientist, about your inner workings. If you are feeling impatient, for example, observe this emotion and its effect in your body.

Although Pittas have only moderate physical strength and stamina compared to Kapha, you have strong mental and emotional force and so you are attracted to and will strongly pursue meditation's development of the mind. In your meditation practice, keep reminding yourself that you are growing something that can not be measured, that is non-competitive; a state of simply being who you are, as you are in the moment. You are trying to grow being-ness.

Strategies for Kaphas in meditation

Dealing with lethargy and lack of motivation

The trick for Kapha is to get started. Here are a few suggestions:

- Recall your original wish or goal to meditate. What made you buy this CD in the first place? Take a deep breath and relax your body as best as possible while holding your wish or goal. Notice how relaxing your body and holding your wish helps you feel differently.

- Make a commitment to do one of the meditations, just once, whichever one interests you within the next twenty four hours. Record a specific time in your appointment book. Remind yourself that each of the meditations on the CD are less ten minutes long.

Find an external source for motivation (without judging yourself for needing that). Think about who or what might motivate you to start. In other words, ask for help. Consider finding a buddy to check in with on your meditation progress, someone who will inspire or energize you and that you

can, in turn, offer warm support which you are great at. As a Kapha, you are good at getting others to do things for you, so find a nice enthusiastic Vata to partner with, someone who tends to take the initiative. Their energy will charge you up and your calmness will help Vata settle down. Or find a meditation group to support your home practice. The group's momentum will help with the molasses-like feeling you are prone to.

Use your exquisite capacity for compassion and forgiveness on yourself, not just others. Read inspirational texts or engage in something you are passionate about. Ask yourself, what would fire me up about life, what activities would enliven me?

As a Kapha, your lifestyle can greatly affect your meditation practice. Yet making those changes requires, in itself, the very discipline you struggle with. Physical activity is the best remedy for Kapha's tendency towards lethargy and heaviness yet Kapha likes sedentary ways. But Kapha is also a social type and given that you need external prodding, it is best for you to find ample support to be active and to stay active.

Most importantly, being active needs to be done for its own sake, not to lose weight, be more fit and improve health. None of these benefits will motivate you, not really. Find an activity you enjoy, like dance or hiking in nature. Your natural reluctance to expend your energy makes you question whether the effort is worth it. So keep a sharp eye on this tendency. In actual fact, you have plenty of energy, more so than other types!

Food is another essential area that affects Kapha. A Vata can eat anything and never gain weight. It just doesn't seem fair, does it? Keep in mind that each body type has their struggle. Vata is a virtual space cadet. As a Kapha you have none of that struggle. So in general, stay away from heavy foods like ice cream, sweets, butter, cheese and fried foods. It is best to eat foods that are light and less oily and to avoid snacking between meals.

Make sure to get no more than eight hours sleep per night. Extra sleep will not energize you but will have the opposite effect of increasing the sluggishness in your body.

The operative theme for Kapha might be 'alert and energized'.

PART 9: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When to refrain from meditation

Contraindications for meditation

Physical contraindications: You should refrain from meditating when you are ill, such as having a cold, suffering from a tension headache or injury. In those circumstances, it is best to put your energy into getting better.

Emotional contraindications: The same applies if you are feeling emotionally distraught due to a personal crisis or from an excessively stressful situation. If you suffer from anxiety or depression, meditation will not necessarily help, especially in cases of clinical depression. It is not designed to do so. In those cases, it is best to invest your time and energy in seeking the help of a qualified therapist.

When life circumstances prevent meditation practice

Many times in my life I have stopped meditating completely. I used to give myself a hard time about it, thinking I was a failure. But then I realized it was related to what was going on in my life. I noticed that every time I stopped meditating I was going through a stressful period. I also discovered, in getting to know some long time serious meditators, that they too stopped practicing at different times in their life. It happens and I think it is a natural occurrence.

Being a hands-on energy therapist and able to feel people's energy field, it has become clear to me over the years that when people are stressed, their energy field is depleted. We only have a certain amount of energy available to us at any given time. When we are experiencing a difficult life situation, such as a relationship breakup, family tragedy, a personal crisis like losing your job, or even positive stresses such as moving, getting a new job etc., we are using up much of our energy dealing with those circumstances. That is the reality. In those circumstances, it is not about avoiding or slacking off.

It may seem ironic that it is not possible or too challenging to meditate when we probably need it most. What I have found, however, in quitting and returning to meditation is a renewed appreciation of being in a more meditative state and wondering why I did not do it sooner.

Suggested Reading

There is an abundance of high quality published books on meditation. Just as we are different in our body type, we also differ when it comes to preferences in books. Some prefer books with casual, accessible language, others prefer books who's tone is more formal and academic. There are books aimed at beginners and others that are more suitable for advanced practitioners. If you are looking for which books might be suitable for you, feel free to contact me. I would be happy to help you out as best I can.

About Louise

My spiritual journey began in the mid 1970's. I read a book called *In Search of the Miraculous* by P.D. Ouspensky. I had no idea what I was searching for or that I had any interest in spiritual matters. At the time, I was just looking for a way out of emotional pain and dissatisfaction with my life. A few years later, along with my husband, I joined a Gurdjieff Foundation group. It was, to say the least, a profoundly life altering experience, so much so that after two years in the group, my marriage fell apart, I changed career and moved to another city.

In the process, I also realized that I needed to do therapy, that meditation and spiritual practice were not suitable for healing the deep depression I had suffered since childhood. A number of years passed before I became interested in meditation again. I returned to it by studying, or more accurately, by being trained in Transcendental Meditation or TM which teaches mantra meditation. I managed to practice this for about six months but found it too difficult to stay with.

In the intervening years, I studied a diverse range of spiritual traditions all of which happened quite unexpectedly. In looking back, I feel that somehow I was guided by some unseen force, either from within or otherwise, to all these very different yet complimentary traditions. I was, for example, a member of a psychic development group for seven years. We did a particular kind of meditation that was geared specifically to psychic development. Yet when I found myself, at a later

time, studying Buddhist meditation, particularly one called Vipassana, I found that it was similar in many respects to the psychic meditation I had done.

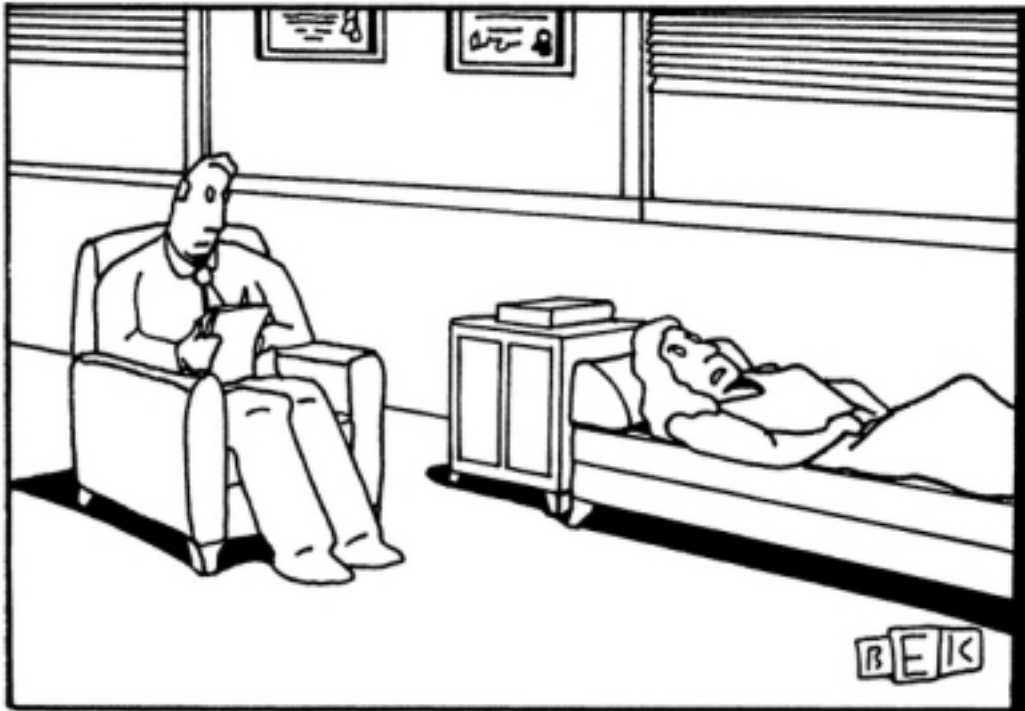
I then was invited to apprentice with a husband and wife who specialized in Native healing approaches and spiritual rituals. They themselves, although Caucasian, were apprenticing with a Native elder, an amazing man that I had the extreme good fortune of meeting and doing a healing ritual with. That experience alone had the transformative effect of years of meditation.

During the whole time all this was happening, I also actively pursued yoga. I became quite dedicated to yoga to the extent that I went to three classes a week, each of two hours long, as well as five day intensives. I eventually made it into the student teacher's class wondering if I could become a yoga teacher. In the end, I realized it was not my calling.

I think it's important for me to mention that I don't consider myself a meditation teacher. In my opinion, a qualified meditation teacher is one who has had a serious consistent practice for many years and has undergone week long intensives in which they participate in hours of meditation. I have deep respect for these teachers and their expertise and have trained and continue to train with them.

I am simply a therapist (in both mind and body disciplines) who has studied and practiced various meditation and spiritual traditions over the past thirty years. As well, I have designed personalized guided meditations for interested clients. So I understand the needs of those who simply wish to incorporate a small to moderate meditation practice into their life.

Essentially, I'm an eclectic and experienced practitioner of inner spiritual arts. My inner practice incorporates meditation as well as yoga and Qi Gong (Chinese subtle energy practice). My interest is self-study and self-awareness for the purpose of connecting to the finer or higher nature that I believe exists in all of us.



"Well, I do have this recurring dream that one day I might see some results."