

MBA DANCESTARS

THE MEDITATION MANUAL VOLUME 1



~mind body awareness project~

presents

THE MEDITATION MANUAL VOLUME 1

intro--

This is the first edition of The Meditation Manual for the Mind Body Awareness Project. We put this little book together in order to help people learn about meditation. This is for both individuals who want an introduction to meditation, and for those who want to deepen their understanding of what they already know. It's a very simple booklet, and we feel it covers the basics: 'what is meditation?' and 'how to get started'.

We've included two stories of young adults who learned meditation while they were incarcerated. In addition, you'll also find some lyrics from KRS-One's "Ocean Within", a rap song about meditation. We hope this stuff is useful, easy to understand, and a source of inspiration.

We wish to thank the legendary graffiti artist, GIANT, for doing the manual's artwork, and helping us to complete the book, and we want to thank you, the reader, the MBA All-stars. We have much respect for your taking the time to check this out.

Peace-
The Mind Body Awareness Project

Why would I want to meditate?

We all like to feel relaxed and content, but often we feel stressed, anxious and angry. When we think about the past, we can get upset because we might not be happy about some of the things that happened. Thinking about the future can also cause us some anxiety and even anger. For example, thinking about an upcoming court date, or having to see someone we don't like can stress us out. So, what can we do about all this anger and stress. Meditation is an option.

How can meditation help me?

Meditation can bring inner freedom. Because thinking about the past and future can cause us stress and anger, we can use meditation to look at the present moment in order to find freedom from that pressure. This is what meditation can teach us, how to be in the present moment. By doing this we can be free from the stressful thoughts of the past and future. Meditation won't make all of life's difficulties just disappear, but what it can do is help us respond to those difficulties with a greater sense of calm and clarity.

How do you meditate?

Meditation is done by focusing on the present moment. Usually we think about this and that, jumping from one thought to the next, but in meditation, we focus our minds on only one feeling, like the feeling of our breath moving in and out of our nostrils. When we feel our breath moving in and out of our body, we can naturally become more relaxed, alert, free from stress, and even "naturally high".

Will meditation help me sleep?

Yes. By practicing meditation, it can help your mind stop from racing all around. It can also relax your body, through the process of taking slow and even breaths. If you are having trouble sleeping, and would like to try meditation, our suggestion is to try doing 2 or 3 minutes of breath meditation before you go to

doing 2 or 3 minutes of breath meditation before you go to sleep. [If you do this meditation laying down, it is very easy to just take a couple of breathes and then forget you are meditating, so for this reason we suggest doing it sitting up.]

Will meditation help me with my anger?

Yes. By meditating, we can feel relaxed and people don't get to us so easily. Also, if you have been meditating regularly, the next time you get angry, you may be more likely to stop and reflect (even take a breath) before acting on your feelings immediately. This is one of the goals of meditation.

If you are feeling angry, a good meditation to do is to focus on your breath moving in and out of your stomach. This can help to ease the tension. It's a good idea to practice when you are not feeling angry or stressed out, that way it will be easier to do when you are.

Is this a religion?

No. There are many different kinds of meditation, and almost every different religion practices some form of meditation, but the meditation we teach is not from a religion.

Who are you guys?

The Mind Body Awareness Project is a non-profit group dedicated to teaching people skills for mind, body and life. The goal of our organization is to teach young people how to tune into their body and minds in order to relieve stress, manage anger, and help them to reach their full potential.

If you have further questions about meditation or our organization, you can ask your program instructor or email us at info@mbaproject.org.



BREATHING MEDITATION

One method to develop a calm and clear state of mind is to use our breath as a point of focus. How to do this?

* Take a few slow and deep breaths through your nose. Can you feel the air come in and go out as you inhale and exhale? It might feel cool, or warm, or dry – no need to describe it, just see if you can locate the area where you feel your breath. You might find this feeling of the air on this little spot at the top of your upper lip, just below your nostrils. **This feeling of your breath is your point of focus during the meditation.** (If you have a stuffed nose, or can't feel the air in that spot, you might notice your stomach rising and falling as you inhale and exhale. If the movement of your stomach is more obvious than the feeling in your nose, use that as your point of focus.)

* Now that you've located the point of focus where you feel the breath come in and go out, **sit in a comfortable position with a straight back.** Sitting up straight helps to keep the mind sharp. Your position shouldn't be too tight or too loose. Sitting with a straight back may be more comfortable if you use a pillow or blanket to raise your butt off the ground.

* Breathing normally through your nose and sitting with a straight back, allow your eyes to become still. **You can either close your eyes, or keep them half open.** (If your eyes are open, don't forget to blink!) Whether your eyes are opened or closed, the important thing is not to move them around. Still eyes help to still the mind.

* Now that you are sitting with your eyes still, your back straight, and you are breathing normally through your nose, your body is ready for meditation. So, what to do with your mind? You know that spot where you can feel the air coming in and going out? Place your attention on that area. **Follow the feeling of the breath as you inhale and exhale. Each time you get distracted, remind yourself to return your attention to the feeling of the breath.** Whenever you notice yourself thinking different thoughts

("I'm bored", "This is great", etc.) hearing different sounds (people talking, noises, etc.) or feeling different sensations in your body (hot, tense, tingling, etc.), just return your attention to this feeling of your breath. It's totally normal to start thinking about all sorts of things, but when you notice "I'm thinking about this or that, I'm distracted", that is the reminder to just return to the feeling of your breath as it comes in and goes out. Again and again, gently return to the feeling of the breath. When you notice you are distracted and return to this point of focus, you are doing this meditation.

* Whenever you complete a period of meditation, it can be helpful to **make a dedication**. What is a dedication? Just like when an author dedicates a book or a musician dedicates an album, you can dedicate any peace or relaxation that you've had to others, with the wish that they may have some of that feeling in their lives, too.

Summary-

- * **sit in a comfortable position with a straight back**
- * **allow your eyes to become still, either closing your eyes, or keeping them half open.**
- * **Follow the feeling of the breath as you inhale and exhale. Each time you get distracted, remind yourself to return your attention to the feeling of the breath.**



BREATHING MEDITATION *continued*

SOME TIPS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What can I do if it's really difficult to concentrate?

If you are having difficulty focusing, you can silently count your breaths. Inhale, exhale "one". Inhale, exhale "two", and keep going until you count to ten. Counting is just a tool to help you focus-- it's not meant to be a contest to see how high you can count. If you can count to ten without getting distracted, start again.

Whenever I try to meditate, I fall asleep – what should I do?

If you are sleepy, it is really important to make sure your back is straight. In this situation, it may be more helpful to keep your eyes half opened instead of closed. If you notice that you are nodding off, it can also be helpful to take a few strong and deep breaths to help get some energy. If none of these things help, it may be a good idea to try meditating at a different time of day, when you are not as tired.

Sleepiness is one of the two main obstacles in this meditation. The other obstacle is restlessness. If you feel really restless, remember not to push yourself too hard. You are learning how to relax and it's important not to get discouraged by temporary blocks.

How long is a meditation session?

This is up to you, but it is helpful to set aside a specific period of time and stick to it. Short sessions, repeated throughout the day, can be more helpful than one long and difficult stretch of time. For example, two or three minutes after you wake up in the morning and/or before you go to sleep at

night may be a good place to start. **Getting into a daily routine will be more beneficial than trying once in a while** when you are already feeling stressed out. You can gradually add more sessions or lengthen them if you feel comfortable. The more regular times you set aside to try this, the more familiar you will be with the practice of meditation.

USING THE FIVE SENSES FOR MEDITATION

In the breathing meditation, we use our own breath as the point of focus, but in truth, you can use any of the five senses to do meditation. For example, many people use their eyes for meditation. To do 'eye sight meditation', you would pick a point in front of you (like a mark on the wall) and focus all of your attention on that one point. Whenever you get distracted while looking at that point, simply remind yourself to return to the point of focus, just like you did with the breath.



MOVEMENT MEDITATION:

The Sun Salutation

-Movement Meditation-

The key to doing movement meditation is the breath. If you keep it smooth, breathing in and out of your nose, you will be able to maintain the meditation zone even while moving. For the Sun Salutation, try to bring your breath into your stomach. To do this you might have to breathe a little deeper than usual. Each movement should take place during either an inhale or an exhale. If you do the Sun Salutation more than once, try and stretch a little further your next time through. But remember, don't push yourself too hard. The purpose of movement meditation is to calm your mind and enhance your sitting meditation, not to cause an injury. If you want to do a session of movement meditation, it is good if you can do the Sun Salutation at least 3-9 times. *It is ok to do the Sun Salutation if you are pregnant.



Starting at the mountain position, your hands are pressed together in front of your chest. Take one deep breath before starting. This will center you.



1. Inhale
Reach your arms up towards the ceiling. Don't forget to look through your fingertips and really stretch your stomach.



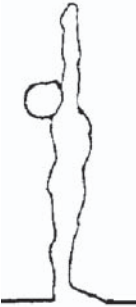
2. Exhale
As you exhale, lean over to touch your feet, or however far you can go. Remember that your eyes should be looking towards your belly button.



3. Inhale
Bring your hands to your feet or shins while looking up. Remember to keep your back straight.



4. Exhale
Relax your neck by looking down towards the floor.

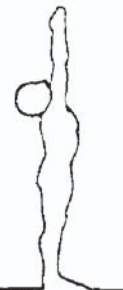
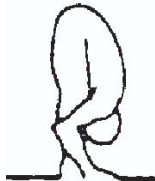
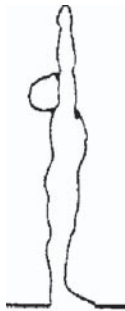


5. Inhale
Lift all the way up, again reaching towards the ceiling and looking through your fingertips.



6. Exhale
Bring your hands back in front of your chest. This completes the cycle. To continue, start again with the first move.

-The Short Version-



-The Long Version-

Starting at the mountain position, your hands are pressed together in front of your chest. Take one deep breath before starting. This will center you.

1. Inhale
Reach your arms up towards the ceiling. Don't forget to look through your fingertips and really stretch your stomach.

2. Exhale
As you exhale, lean over to touch your feet, or however far you can go. Remember that your eyes should be looking towards your belly button.

3. Inhale
Bring your hands to your feet or shins while looking up. Remember to keep your back

4. Exhale
Shoot or walk your legs back like you are going to do a push-up.

5. Inhale
Lift your body up with your arms. This is like a cobra position. Hold this position for 4 complete breaths.

6. Exhale
Bring your hips up. You should have your palms flat, and most of your body weight should be on your arms. Your knees should be bent. Hold this for 5 breaths.

7. Inhale
Walk your legs to where your hands are. You should be looking up towards the ceiling.

8. Exhale
Relax your neck by looking down towards the floor.

9. Inhale
Lift all the way up, again, reaching towards the ceiling and looking through your fingertips.

10. Exhale
Bring your hands back in front of your chest. This completes the cycle. To continue, start again with the first move.

Dharma Punx (an excerpt): a book by MBA co-founder and ex-inmate Noah Levine

I was introduced to meditation in 1988 while incarcerated in Juvenile Hall, this is how it went down.

The years of violence and street life had finally caught up with me. There was nowhere to hide from the life of addiction and crime that I had created.

Waking up in a padded cell, my head bruised and bloody, I screamed with rage at an unknown assailant. The padded walls and cushioned floor trapped me in there with my worst enemy, Myself.

This time in juvenile hall something was different, I could see where I was and it scared me. It was more real and for the first time in my life, I knew that where I was and what I had become was my fault. I was the only one to blame. I had always blamed everyone else: the cops, the system, society, my teachers, my family; everyone but myself. 'I was a victim of my surroundings, product of my environment.' But none of that was working any more.

I was the one stealing, taking drugs and hurting people. I was the one who had broken the window to steal the stereo to get a fix. I was in jail because of my actions not because of any one else.

On the phone with my father, I told him about all the regret and fear I was experiencing. He suggested that some simple meditation techniques might help alleviate some of the pain I was feeling. He explained to me that by "bringing the mind into the present moment, the present experience of being, I may be able to find some freedom from the regret of the past and the fear of the future". He said that much of the pain I was experiencing was due to replaying the events of the past and making up stories about the future. He reminded me that in the present moment I had food to eat, a bed to sleep in and clothes to wear. Although I was still quite uncomfortable from all of the abuse I had put myself through I could see that he was probably right.

My dad had been telling me things like this my whole life but I had never really heard him until that day. He said "The best way to keep the mind in the present moment, in the beginning, is through awareness of breathing". He offered me the simple instruction:

"Bring your awareness to the breath by focusing your attention on the sensation of breathing. Attempt to stay with the sensations of each breath through counting each inhalation and exhalation, trying to count to ten, breathing in, one, breathing out, two. Whenever the mind wanders off to the thoughts of the future or past, gently bring it back to the breath and start over at one. If you can actually stay with the breath all the way to ten then start over again at one."

After talking for a little while about other things, I thanked him for the suggestion about meditation and said I would give it a try.

In my cell that night I tried to do my Dads' dumb breathing meditations. I might as well be dead if I have to do all this fucking bullshit in order to become human again. But I am locked up and there is nothing else to do, so what the fuck, might as well check this shit out. Nothing I have been doing has worked, and there is nowhere else to turn, so I guess this is my best bet.

"Much of the pain I was experiencing was due to replaying the events of the past over and over in my mind."

But still I wondered, what good could this possibly do for me when I am going to spend the rest of my life in prison. I probably had done too much damage to my mind to be able to get any benefits from meditating. After all I had been taking drugs and drinking since I was a kid. Fuck it, I thought, I'll try it. Right there on that hard cement bed with the thin plastic mattress I closed my eyes to attempt to "count my breath".

The meditations did seem to help a little, at least a few seconds here and there, when I was able to focus on my breath I felt better and forget that I was locked up.

10 Years Later-

Going back into the same Juvenile Hall that I had began my meditation practice in so many years earlier was an incredible experience of my life having come full circle. As we walked into the gates of Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall, I was feeling kind of nervous yet very confident. Memories of being handcuffed in the back of cop cars and all the court dates, probation officers and piss tests of my youth flash through my mind.

After leading the group in a fifteen-minute guided mindfulness meditation, on the breath and sensations, we went around the circle again. I asked them to share how they were feeling now and if it was any different than when we had started. The reports varied from, "I feel really relaxed and calm" to "I feel high, like I just smoked a big fat joint". No one claimed to still feel bad about being there and one young lady said, "For the first time since I have been here I felt safe and peaceful, I almost forgot I was even locked up".

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Inside Out:

An Interview with George shortly after his release

George ended up in juvenile hall after spending six years taking speed and crystal [Meth-Amphetamines], "chasing bags" as he puts it. After quitting speed and crystal, he tried to maintain the high by any means possible- alcohol, marijuana, even freon and GHB. George eventually ended up in juvenile hall, after getting arrested for possession of firearms and narcotics. Inside the juvenile hall, he was introduced to basic yoga and meditation techniques, and shortly after his release, we had a chance to interview him.

"The way I used to deal with life was either be angry and start beating people up, or just get high and lose my mind."

Isaiah: How did your experiences in the juvenile hall yoga/meditation program affect you?

George: It gave me time to just center myself. It allowed me to express how I was feeling, and come to terms with what things cause me to do the things I do. It was just a cool experience.

Isaiah: It seems like your life before was a real quest for happiness, and it seems like that hasn't really changed, but this program helped you put into perspective more how to find it.

George: Yeah that is what happened. It's been such a growing experience. This program has helped me, actually not just the program, but the fact that I can meditate about things has helped me to this day, right now. I got so much stuff I got to deal with [now] like probation. I got to pretty much catch up with the last three months of my life, plus however many years I was just fucked up on drugs. And all this just happened at once. I mean I really don't have any tools to deal with life. The way I used to deal with life was either be angry and start beating people up, or just get high and lose my mind. But I'm coming to grasp with my spiritual needs, what I need for myself and my own well being, and many of the things I learned and read really helped me to cope with a lot of the regret and repressed anger I had.

Isaiah: Can you describe how your life has changed since you learned yoga and meditation?

George: When I was thinking about happiness, back in the day, I was like, 'yeah I have my friends, and they'll be there to make me happy.' I was expecting things to make me happy. If I bought this and this and this, or if I had this car, partying at this person's house, and all this stuff, I would be happy. It's kind of just sneaky. You can look at it as if it's going to make you happy, and it might make you happy, but it sneaks up on you and comes back at you. It's like your burning the candle at both ends, living your life

***"At points when I was meditating,
most the time, I even forgot that I
was locked up."***

so quick, for all these moments that you want. And it's like when you don't have these moments, you're just so angry. Like at this point, I'm happy to be able to breathe, I'm happy to be able to come home and just see my mother and see my sister. I'm just happy for this present *moment*, right now. Happy to just be out of my cell, not having to ask people whether I can urinate or not. Right now I can cook myself food if I want, I can eat when I want, drink water when I want. There's just a tremendous amount of freedom because of all the things I am capable of doing at this point in time.

***"Many of the things I learned and
read really helped me to cope with
a lot of that regret and repressed
anger"***

Isaiah: So, what have you learned about meditation?

George: I wish that everybody could just let go of all these little notions, these biased notions of what meditation is all about, and just realize that *meditation is not just a thing that you do*, but actually what's inside of it, what it's capable of. To me the meditation and the practice was just a release, such a profound experience. At points when I was meditating, most the time, I even forgot that I was locked up. I forgot about all the things that were unimportant, and all the things that just made me feel bad in my life. Meditation got me to visualize all that there is to be grateful for.

I guess, in a way it's one of the greatest drugs I ever done. Metaphorically speaking. And not just because of the high, but just the consistency of how I can use it. Like everyday, *whenever something is angering me to the point where I want to revert back to how I used to be, I just sit back, breathe, visualize all the things that are really important, and figure that what I'm angry at is just total bullshit*. Its not even significant compared to the whole broad scheme of things.



KRS-One and Saul Williams

Ocean Within :

(lyrics from the soundtrack *Slam*)

[KRS-One]

Word..

Sonja.. you know you saw her in the movie

And my man Saul, he's like THIS!

[Saul Williams - singing]

There is no ocean like the one, within

Look to the moon rise with the tides, and swim

[repeat 4X]

[KRS-One - speaking while Saul sings]

Uh-huh, yeah, yeah

KRS-One, coming through.. like this

Uh-huh, do it, do it like that, like that

Uh, uh-huh

[Saul Williams - sings first two lines]

Saul the road to Damascus, come follow me

The serpent swallow the moon, but it won't, swallow me

(Yeah, speak the word!)

Intellect is like a major city

Laden with concrete, metal

Advanced modes of transportation

Shining buildings, and fenced in parks

Spirit is the mountain's forest wilderness

and vast countryside that surrounds it

Too many people live in the city

Struggling day to day for mere existence

Most have forgotten how to live off the land

They only experience nature on class trips

and short-term vacations

For those that live in the country

Cities are like amusement parks with high prices

and temporal satisfaction

At the end of the day, they are tired

and ready to go home, and relieve their ringing ears

[Saul Williams - singing]

There is no ocean like the one, within
Look to the moon rise with the tides, and swim
[repeat 2X]

[KRS-One]

Uh-huh, speak the word
Hyper-accelerated meditations talk
The reversal of this word dispersal is thought
There is no difference between thought and talk
like the blackboard chalk and homicide chalk
they both give outlines
One is designed to outline the mind
The other outlines the body after a crime
Could it be that these two chalks are connected;
meaning the body gets outlined when the mind is neglected --
-- or poorly directed
Like the teacher with the chalk
Or is the teacher the beginning of the homicide we talk?
Be selective in your speech
Cause the chalk of the two technical teaching has taught each
Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone
Nearly every daughter, nearly every son
Ignorance reigns supreme for some
They chase the sum, inviting the I-R-S to come
Make the connection, choose your direction
Use your protection when sexin AND hexin
Things come back cause they really never left
If the secret to meditation is found in the breath
then speech is another form of meditateness
Whattya say to this latest rhyme or poem?
Some have been known to quiet the mind through
OHHHHHHHHHHMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

*All lyrics are the property and copyright of their owners.
All lyrics provided for educational purposes only.*



-Dedication-

We would like to dedicate this project to all the young people who find themselves incarcerated at this time. We hope that through learning a bit about meditation, they are able to gain some peace of mind and peace in their mind. We also hope that by learning meditation, and refining our minds, we are able to make things a little better for those we come in contact with every day and for the ones we love.

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