

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a wide, sandy beach at low tide. The sand is wet and reflects the light from the sky. In the distance, a long, low cliff or headland stretches across the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds, suggesting an overcast day. The overall color palette is muted and natural, with browns, greys, and soft blues.

# The Value Of Meditation

And why *YOU* should be doing it

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# DO YOU NEED A BREAK?

Are you feeling tired, stressed, overworked and underpaid, anxious, uptight, frazzled, overwhelmed, depressed, worried, over-committed, not enough hours in a day, over-sensitive, can't cope, need a massage, need sleep, want some space, need help, want some relief, need a holiday, want some peace and quiet, or just want a break away from the everyday grind?



Many people think that as soon as they have less on their plate, they'll feel better. If they could just find the right vitamin pill, or have that holiday they desperately need then they'll renew their energy levels and everything will work itself out.

Others get sick – some quite seriously – before they give themselves permission to take a break.

The truth is that LIFE IS BUSY for everyone. We all have responsibilities, we all have challenges, we all have ups and downs, and we all have stress. It doesn't go away. We just learn to manage ourselves better – hopefully!

If only everyone knew that as little as 20 minutes of meditation a day can take all these feelings of stress away and replace them with a sense of inner peace and joy usually only associated with a week (or more) of holiday bliss. (Mind you, there are still those who can't even relax on holiday!)

We can stop the inevitable impact of daily stress on our bodies, and give ourselves the mental and emotional break necessary to experience true joy amongst the chaos simply by choosing to meditate regularly.

I have often referred to my own meditation practice as medication as it has proven and powerful physiological and psychological benefits.

The benefits of meditation over medication lie in the fact that medication only masks the symptoms of the impact of stress in our lives, and in some cases can add other stresses. The additional financial costs of medications and the physical drain on the liver and organs are the obvious additional stresses. There are also often side effects of medications, and there's having the take time out to go to the GP for scripts in the first place. All these add to a sense of overload, and the cycle that drives you to seek out medication in the first place.

Meditation, on the other hand, is a valid and powerful way of effectively dealing with the impact of stress, and magically weaves a sense of flow and harmony into the fabric of our daily lives. Many think it is too simple to be of any value in their lives, but anyone who has practiced meditation over an extended period of time knows exactly how powerful and effective it is in the management of stress.

If you don't meditate regularly, I highly recommend you temporarily add to the current demands on your time in order to find the style of meditation that best suits you. Then practice it daily. It **WILL** change the way you look at every area of your life and you **WILL** love the new you that emerges from the stillness.

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# DID YOU KNOW THAT NOT TAKING TIME OUT TO MEDITATE IS ACTUALLY MAKING YOUR LIFE BUSIER?



There is an old Zen saying that goes like this: *You should sit in meditation for 20 minutes a day, unless you are too busy; then you should sit for an hour.*

I love it. Anyone who has practiced meditation for any length of time will know the wisdom in this and while it sounds ridiculous, there is an unexplainable yet undeniable truth that *not* meditating for 20 minutes a day is actually making your life more hectic than you realise.

I can hear you say you're busy and that you've heard it all before. So why waste precious time going through it all again? You've got places to go and people to see and no one else is going to take care of those things for you right? You might have even tried meditation before and feel it did nothing for you, or you might even feel guilty when you see or hear the word meditation because while you don't know why, a part of you knows that you should be doing it.

I know what it is like to be a busy mum. I have raised three children, and while they are mostly independent now, there was a time not so long ago when I was everything to them and my whole world revolved around their needs. It was during this busy time that I most needed to practice meditation and used to call it medication instead of meditation because it truly saved my sanity at times.

What I *did* know about meditation was the way in which it impacted on my mental health. I felt it. As a result of regular meditation, my ability to parent 3 children, to help run a small business, to study, to volunteer, to communicate with others and to keep several balls in the air at once, as they say, was greatly enhanced, and these benefits have to be experienced to be believed.

It's a strange phenomenon, but when you meditate regularly it is like stepping in to a time warp where everything flows smoothly and falls in to place effortlessly, day in and day out; where things get done and you don't know how; where a 10 second buffer suddenly exists between your external world and your internal world so you can respond to circumstances and events rather than react to them. And within the calm there rests a deep sense of joy – a buzzing that bubbles up and over in to everything you say and do.

I had no idea when I started meditating 25 or more years ago just how beneficial it was to my health. I didn't know it helped to balance my body's hormones, kept my blood pressure down, restored my body to the relaxed response after a fight or flight response or that it helped with digestion and the elimination of toxins and waste products from my body.

Buddha was asked: What have you gained from meditation? He said: Nothing, but let me tell you what I have lost: anger, anxiety, depression, insecurity, fear of old age and death.

As a Counsellor, if I could teach just one tool to each of my clients to help them in their lives, I would choose meditation. You don't have to sit cross legged and hold your fingers in any particular place. There are just 4 things you need to do:

1. Find or create a space that you can easily go to every day where you won't be disturbed and where you will be inspired to get in to a still space within (this can be a fun, creative exercise within itself),
2. Show up every day (very important),
3. Sit comfortably with you back straight, then
4. Inhale, exhale and repeat for 20 minutes. If you find your mind straying gently bring your attention back to your breathing.

I encourage you to commit to the process and find out for yourself how powerful it is and in the next chapter I will give you what I believe to be the top 5 meditation styles for beginners to try.

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# MY TOP 5 MEDITATION STYLES FOR BEGINNERS



Having talked about how NOT taking time to meditate daily is actually making your life busier, I wanted to offer you what I believe are the top 5 meditation styles for beginners or anyone who doesn't know where to start their meditation practice.

There are many different styles of meditation and many more reasons why someone might be inclined to try it, so the first thing a beginner has to do when they are looking for the style that best suits them is to get clear about what he or she wants to get out of meditation.

Stress reduction is probably the number one reason people practice meditation, followed closely by pain management and improved mental health. There are more than enough studies that prove the benefits of meditation for each of these outcomes, but then there are those people who meditate to feed their soul and their results are more difficult to measure. For them, meditation is an addictive practice where mind, body and spirit come together in the same space in time and that refuels them at a very deep level. Like a rubber band that has been stretched, once you have experienced the sort of juicy depths of stillness, there is no going back. Visiting this space must become a regular practice or the soul withers.

Following are five different styles of meditation that I would recommend for beginners. Each one has the capacity to adequately meet any of the needs of a new meditator however, one style might fit better with you than another might.

## **#1 Zen Meditation**

Zen is a form of mindfulness and a great way to practice being present in all areas of your life. It can be done anywhere at any time and it doesn't require any special conditions except perhaps that you not be required to participate in conversation of any kind. The outcome of this meditation is not to empty your mind of any thoughts but rather to keep your thoughts in the present.

Simply sit comfortably and either close your eyes or fix your eyes on an object.

Start by becoming aware of your breath entering and leaving your body.

Notice how different parts of your body feel.

Notice the feeling of any breeze or sunlight on your body.

Notice any noises – near or far.

If you become aware that you are thinking about the past or the future simply bring your awareness back to your breathing and to the sounds around you.

Twenty minutes of Zen Meditation daily brings about amazing results.

## **#2 Movement Meditation**

This type of meditation requires a little more preparation including finding the right type and the right amount of music, and the right location where you can move freely without interruption or danger of hurting yourself or anyone else.

Once those details are taken care of you simply close your eyes and move in a freestyle fashion as the music moves you. There is no right or wrong way to do this but the act of marrying the music and the movement to your meditation practice makes it easier to keep you focused in the present moment.

An hour to an hour and a half of this once or twice a week is a great practice and it really is quite enjoyable.

## **#3 Guided Meditation**

Guided Meditation is the most popular and one of the best types of meditations for beginners because it requires little preparation and little thought. You simply show up, put your ear buds in and your mind will be taken on a tour of some sort that will often bring about a relaxed and peaceful experience that you can carry into the rest of your day – or in to your sleep if you meditate at night.

Dr Deepak Chopra does a free 21 Day Meditation Challenge every season and gives you a daily guided meditation to follow each day. It is a great way to get started for beginners.

## #4 Progressive Relaxation Response

The Progressive Relaxation Response is a guided meditation with the deliberate purpose of taking your body from a stressed state (fight or flight) into a relaxed state. I give a free guided progressive relaxation meditation to all my subscribers because I believe it is a great place to start if you are looking for stress reduction, and most of us are stressed and don't know just how much.

It is a simple process of deliberately tensing the muscles one at a time, holding the tension, then releasing the tension and what happens is that we come to a new awareness of what relaxed actually feels like. From there, we can detect tension anywhere in our bodies fairly quickly and that makes it more difficult for stress to build up.

There are so many benefits to practicing the Progressive Relaxation Response on a regular basis. Given that it is commonly thought that up to 90% of all disease begins with stress in one of more parts of the body, it is understandable why practicing this particular meditation is so important.

I recommend clients practice this for 14 days straight and then once or twice a week to maintain the body's newfound relaxed state.

## #5 Breathing, Mantra and Focus Meditations

These all require your full attention in the present moment and as such are considered forms of mindfulness. Practicing one of these on a daily basis has such a wide-reaching positive impact on memory retention and stress relief because you are literally exercising or training your brain to focus, and in doing so you are giving yourself a brief but regular holiday from worrying about the past or the future.

**Breathing Meditation** requires you sit quietly and comfortably with your back straight and simply focus on your breathing for 15 to 20 minutes.

**Mantra Meditation** requires you to focus on a particular word or phrase. An example might be that you repeat the word love or the word peace over and over. In doing so you will find yourself vibrating at the same frequency as the word so repeating the word peace over and over for 15 minutes would certainly put you in to a peaceful state of being.

Ho'oponopono is an ancient Hawaiian mantra used for clearing and resetting the mind body and soul into a loving state. The words are:

I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you.

It's really not hard to repeat this for 15 or 20 minutes a day and it is quite enlightening.

**Focus Meditation** is simply the act of focusing on one thing for the duration of your meditation. It might be a flame, a flower, a photo or anything that will inspire the feeling you are seeking to embody from your meditation.

I highly recommend that you try as many forms of meditation as you feel drawn to. Just like trying new clothes on, some will fit better than others and that is ok. Using a range of styles is a good idea too. Just go with what feels right and practice, practice, practice. Remember that it is a life-changing and life-long habit you are forming.

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I hope you have enjoyed this ebook and that you have gained a better understanding of the value of starting and maintaining a meditation practice in your own life.

If you would like to know more about meditation or the many other services I offer through My Juicy Life please go to [www.myjuicylife.com.au](http://www.myjuicylife.com.au) and take a look around.