

Mind Power Meditation

How To Tap Into Power You Already Have

By Steve Gillman

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Introduction

People meditate to reduce stress, to find peace of mind, to heal themselves and to connect with some ultimate source. Although these reasons may be touched on here in passing, this book is about the use of meditation to increase the power of one's mind. Though this purpose is not commonly part of the "sales pitch" for meditation, you can greatly improve your creativity, the depth of your insights and clarity of thought by regularly meditating.

Chapter 1

A Meditation Story

I walked from my home to the river at the end of the street, and followed the trail up to the pond (actually a reservoir). The leaves on the trees were changing colors, and a cold breeze was blowing. The air smelled like snow was coming, and clouds covered the sky.

At the edge of the pond, in a patch of wild mint, I stopped and looked out over the water. Ducks and geese were gathered towards one side. Hills rose up along the other side. The surface of the pond was rippled by the breeze. I closed my eyes.

Breathing deeply through my nose, I filled my lungs and slowly exhaled several times. Then I allowed my breathing to fall into a more natural pattern. I brought my attention to the breath coming and going through my nostrils. Thoughts and images arose in my mind, but I repeatedly brought my attention back to my breath.

I stood there like this for no more than six or seven minutes, letting the cold air brush against my face as I focused on my breath. Eyes closed, I continued breathing through my nose. When my mind had at last quieted a bit, I opened my eyes and looked again at the pond.

Nothing had changed - or so my mind told me. But it definitely seemed different to my senses. The colors of the trees on the hills were more vibrant, the sounds of the geese clearer, and the wind seemed to dance across the surface of the water instead of just moving it. In fact, the whole scene seemed like something new to me, even though I had seen it many times, including just seven minutes earlier.

I felt at peace, and I enjoyed the feeling of the cold air on my skin. I looked at the pond for a few more minutes before turning and walking the trail

towards home. I noticed a few flowers along the way which had somehow survived into late autumn, and I could smell the white cedar trees before I reached them.

These effects are not easy to explain. Some would call them spiritual, but the label isn't necessary. They are wonderful experiences, but do meditations like this one and others have anything to do with improving your mind or developing more powerful thinking skills? Yes, and for more than one reason.

Chapter 2

Meditation And Mind Power

How does meditation help you have a more powerful mind? It does so in many ways, which can be broadly grouped into the categories of "brain effects" and "thinking effects." The former have to do with altering - improving - the physical structure of the brain as well as the functioning of it. The latter are about better patterns of thought, or getting rid of less effective thinking. They do overlap, but we'll look at them one at a time.

Effects On The Brain

Stress Reduction

One of the primary benefits of meditation is the reduction of stress. That much you probably knew. What is not as commonly known is how stress can directly and indirectly impact your brain.

For example, a recent study at the St. Louis University showed that stress weakens one's memory. Cortisol, a hormone which is normally released into the bloodstream under stress, was given to subjects, and while it was in their systems they had more confusion and memory loss. As the levels returned to normal, memory improved.

Cortisol and other adrenal steroid hormones are released during the stress response, and if the exposure is repeated and for long periods of time, these substances can damage the brain. They block the formation of new neurons in the hippocampus, preventing the storing of new memories. Some recent research suggest that chronic stress can lead indirectly to cell death as well.

This is especially disturbing because the damage may reduce our ability to

creatively solve our problems or even make the changes necessary to reduce the stress which is causing the damage in the first place. In other words, it can become downward spiral of reduced brain function which reduces one's ability to deal with the causes, which then allows for more of the same.

Let's make that as clear as possible: Stress can cause brain damage.

Fortunately meditation can help. West Virginia University researcher Kimberly A. Williams, Ph.D., and her colleagues recently studied the effect of mindfulness training on stress. 62 stressed out volunteers from the community took part in the study. The 35 participants who received the training (the others made up the control group) had an average of a 54% reduction in stress after three months in the program. The control subjects had no measurable decrease.

More news: More than 15,000 people have taken a course in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, or MBSR, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The results there and in studies around the country are showing that mindfulness can reduce pain and anxiety. Other studies are showing that mindfulness meditation can help relieve depression, and even help with weight loss.

The most common form of mindfulness meditation being used is the simple exercise of paying attention. This is based on the Buddhist traditions in which meditators observe the busy thoughts of the mind (our "monkey mind") as well as the physical sensations in the body. Expect to see more studies on this in the near future. I'll have more to say about mindfulness meditations a little later.

Brain Training

Giuseppe Pagnoni, PhD, at Emory University School of Medicine says that meditation is more mental training than relaxation. It is training one's attention and inhibitory control:

"We chose to investigate Zen meditation because, from an experimental point of view, it is a very simple technique, the quintessence of many other meditative variations...We believe that people who have undergone a

rigorous training in Zen meditation might display a functional modification of the neural circuits underlying the performance of attentional control and behavioral switching."

Researchers at the university plan to use fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) to look at the brain. They hope to see which specific areas of the brain are activated during meditation. This is another area where we can expect to see more research results in the near future.

Physical Brain Improvements

Meditating, part physical and part mental activity, changes the structure of the brain. Research shows that it increases the thickness of the cortex in areas involved in sensory processing and attention - the prefrontal cortex and the right anterior insula.

Better Brain Health

As explained above, stress can cause actual brain damage, so reducing that stress is one way meditation makes for better brainpower. Another way that it helps is by delivering more oxygen to the brain. This is because virtually all meditative practices call for deep breathing, and breathing through your nose in particular, which delivers more oxygen.

To demonstrate this to yourself, breath through your mouth as you read this, and then switch to using your nose. You should notice that your abdomen extends more when breathing with your nose. This is because your diaphragm is more involved, drawing air deeper into your lungs. You can also consciously extend both your abdomen and chest to draw more air in. Once you consciously develop these habits of deeper breathing, you will tend to breath this way whenever you need to relax and clear your mind.

Other Documented Effects

Here are some other effects of meditation on the brain, documented in various studies done around the world. You can see how some of these

might contribute to better brain health.

Slower aging (possibly due to higher DHEA levels)

Feelings of vitality and rejuvenation

Less stress (actual lowering of cortisol and lactate levels)

Rest (lower metabolic and heart rate)

Lower blood pressure

Lower cholesterol levels

Higher blood oxygen levels

Effects On Thinking

Although the effects of meditation on the brain itself and on the mind are sometimes difficult to separate, it's a distinction worth making. "Thinking effects" as I call them, are the changes in your thought patterns and ways of seeing things that come from meditative practice. You might consider these as "software" changes versus the brain effects or "hardware" changes already discussed. here is a short list of some of the things you might experience:

1. Seeing more clearly.
2. Thinking more clearly.
3. Thinking more creatively.
4. Ability to create new thought patterns.

1. See More Clearly

I am not saying that your eyesight will improve, although some meditators have reported this (if true, it may due to the lower levels of stress and the toxic byproducts it causes). What I'm referring to here is the ability to see with less bias. More specifically, I mean seeing with less unconscious

interference.

For example, recall that in the true story from Chapter One, I saw things "differently" after meditating by the pond. This is common, and it isn't due to effects on the visual cortex itself, but about the removal of preconceived ideas about what we are looking at. Normally we look without too much attention and largely see what we expect to see.

In other words, the unconscious mind "fills in the blanks" for us. Take away the "rush to see" and the usual "unconscious filter" and you see more directly what is there in front of you. There is a simple exercise that you can use to demonstrate this to yourself. It is one that I learned from a book called "Drawing On The Right Side Of The Brain."

Take a photo of a person and draw what you see. Then, using about the same amount of time, turn the photo upside down and draw what you see. When you are done, compare your drawings (with both right-side up). Chances are good that the second will actually be more accurate.

Why is this? It's because when you look at the photo normally you have definite ideas about what you see, and these affect what you draw. You have an idea about what a nose looks like, for example, and so you draw it a certain way despite what is there in front of you. This is why children (and most adults who do not practice drawing) have such a hard time with the legs of animals. They imagine seeing four complete legs clearly from the side, which of course we rarely do in reality.

When you are forced to look at the photo in an unfamiliar way, you are left drawing what you actually see. You draw the lines and shading and curves as they appear, without an idea of what they should look like. It's difficult to clearly imagine what a face should look like upside down.

Meditation accomplishes the same thing when properly practiced. The quieting of the mind takes away the ideas about how things "should" be. This makes it possible to see them more clearly and accurately.

This goes beyond the things you actually look at with your eyes, by the way. You also "see" situations with less interference from the endless thoughts are normally "explaining" things to you. That "clear seeing" leads us to the

next beneficial effect meditation can have on your mind power.

2. Think More Clearly

Certainly clearer "seeing" seems likely to lead to clearer thinking, and this is another effect that you can easily test by yourself. The next time you are confused about an issue, or just not able to focus on some mental work, stop and meditate. Then start again on the task at hand and notice any differences. It probably wouldn't surprise you to know that quieting the mind improves concentration.

Relaxing and reducing stress seems likely to improve one's ability to think more clearly as well. You can see this in your life or in an imagined scenario. What if you were rushing to the hospital to see a friend that just received head injuries in a car crash. The roads are icy, one of your headlights burns out, the traffic is crazy, and the knob on the radio breaks, leaving a half-tuned station blaring in your ears. As a hundred stressful thoughts rattle through your mind you recall that you were just trying to decide when to quit your job and which type of business to start. Are you ready to make the decision?

Obviously stress isn't conducive to good decision-making or clear thinking, but sometimes we forget this lesson and push our way through problems despite an overloaded mind. The scenario above isn't necessarily more extreme than what's going on inside our busy minds when nothing so obvious is happening externally. Our "monkey minds" may take us on a wild, noisy ride on icy roads with one headlight while we are just sitting there eating breakfast.

One of the benefits of meditation is that it can tame those monkeys, lessening our stress level. Less stress means better decision-making, clearer thinking and better living.

Let's look at some of the recent research.

Mindfulness meditation is a type of practice that has been studied more than most. The idea is to be an observer to your own body and mind, staying in the moment and out of your thoughts as much as possible. You usually pay attention to your breathing above all.

There is a common technique in mindfulness meditation. It is the naming or labeling of mental disturbances. The meditator mentally says, "fear," "anger" "annoyance," or otherwise puts a label on interfering thoughts, emotions and feelings, and then returns attention to breathing.

This idea of labeling has been recently studied by Matthew Lieberman and colleagues at UCLA. They found that naming emotional states calmed down the activity in the corresponding parts of the brain. In the study, fMRI brain scans were done on 30 people, who were asked to look at photos of people's faces, showing various emotional states. Some photos had words below them describing the possible emotional states of the person, such as "angry," "depressed" or "excited." They also had two possible names, male and female.

Participants chose the appropriate emotional label or gender-specific name. If the label chosen was a negative emotion, the activity in the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex region became more active. This area is associated with thinking in words about emotional experiences. The area associated with emotional processing, the amygdala, was calmed.

Interestingly, this change in brain activity was not present when the subjects simply chose the appropriate name for the person in the photo. Also those subjects who were rated as more "mindful" according to a questionnaire they filled out, showed a much greater effect. Their "thinking areas" were much more active, and there was a much greater calming effect in their emotional processing area of the brain after labeling their emotions.

This may partly explain the beneficial effects of mindfulness meditation in reducing stress, and so improving overall health. The research was reported in 2007 in the journal, "Psychological Science."

Now, the following is my own speculation, but if this training of the mind makes it possible to calm our negative emotions, it should also be useful for increasing our ability to think clearly. In other words, it may be yet another way to increase your mind power. After all, being in the midst of negative emotions probably reduces your ability to think clearly in almost any situation.

Negative states may just reduce the efficiency of your thinking when doing a math problem. You might be slower, but you will probably still get to the right solution most of the time. There are fewer ways for thinking errors to occur when dealing with such straight-forward mental actions.

On the other hand, what if the negative emotions are triggered by the thinking itself? For example, what if you are debating a political issue, and your opponent's argument has made you angry? In this case, the outcome of your thinking is more likely to be changed. You are not likely to agree with much he says from that point on, for example, even if you might have under other experiences.

Naming your emotions, then, might be a way to think more clearly in a situation like this. You might take a breath and tell yourself, "anger," and "hurt." Having then calmed these emotions - especially if you practice mindfulness meditation - you can then be more objective and think better. It will be interesting to see what other research is done in this area, and what it will show. For now, though, it is certainly a safe experiment to try. Start naming those negative emotions, and meditate for long-term calming of negativity. A little mindfulness meditation might just be good for that mind power.

3. Think More Creatively

Because meditation can clear your mind of some of the usual negative thoughts, it can open the way for more creative thinking. A mind that no longer indulges in so many thoughts like, "That's stupid," or "That would never work," or "I can't do that," is a mind that is more open to new possibilities.

By the way, this is why no criticism is allowed in brainstorming sessions until after all the ideas have been thrown out there and worked with. Who would want to present crazy new ideas if they were being called ridiculous or otherwise shot down every time? Of what people can do to each other during a brainstorming session, we can easily do to ourselves with our own thoughts.

To apply the use of meditation to thinking more creatively, write down a problem or two that you want a solution for. Then meditate until your mind

has quieted down quite a bit. Afterwards, immediately look at your list and start jotting down any ideas that come to mind. If you know a few creative problem solving techniques this will be even more effective, but the point is to get busy before your mind slips back into its normal thinking patterns (which constitute the famous "box" you just got your thinking out of).

4. Create New Thought Patterns

The process of quieting the mind provides many of the benefits of meditation. But there are also specific meditations that can be used to change the way you think about things. For example, there is the two-thousand-year-old meditation on "loving kindness" in which you evoke feelings of kindness and love by repeating certain phrases, and presumably carry the attitude created into the rest of your life.

There are meditations during which you ask "Who am I" and one by one eliminate the things which are commonly identified with, such as your things, your body parts, your reputation or personality. The hoped for result is less unnecessary attachment to the "created ego" so that you are freer to function from a "higher self." I happen to think this one is a powerful way to learn to think more clearly, objectively, and creatively. Biases based on our ego identifications enter into almost all of our thinking.

Some of these get into areas which would be called "spiritual" by many people, but the label is not necessarily important. For example some might call the experiences they have through meditation a closer "union with God" or being "one with all of existence." But this can also be seen as expanding ones conception of self, allowing a wider range of choices for a more productive outcome. After all, the actual "power" of one's mind is determined not just by the raw computational ability of the brain, but also by the perspectives we have and what we come to recognize as values.

For example, through meditative practices you can learn to stop thinking of your own negative and limiting thoughts as your "self." The designation is arbitrary to begin with. Thoughts, ideas and advice can be said to be "in our heads" once we read them, yet we don't automatically think of them as our "self," so why do we identify so strongly with our own internal dialog? Just because it comes from our brain (or unconscious mind)?

Now, dropping these identifications and choosing to identify with something "higher" may be spiritual, but it is also just plain smart, isn't it? Growing as a human and making wiser choices are more valuable than the incessant demands of the ego and conditioned unconscious mind, aren't they? Doing what you need to do to succeed is more valuable than appeasing negative voices inside you that claim to know what you can't do, right.

The various meditations and "inner work" that go along with some of them are beyond the scope of this book. Three easy meditation techniques to get you started follow in the next chapter, though. Meanwhile, here is a quick summary of the benefits of meditation once again.

A Quick Review of the Benefits of Meditation

Less stress and anxiety - Meditating causes an actual lowering of cortisol and lactate levels, which means less of the foggy thinking and actual brain damage that these can produce.

Reduction in irritability and moodiness - This allows for better concentration when doing mental tasks.

Slower aging - This effect is possibly due to higher DHEA levels produced by meditation, and yes, it includes slower aging of the brain.

Better sleep and rest - A lower metabolic and heart rate as been found to be a short-term and long-term effect of meditation. This allows for a better "refreshing" of brain function.

Lower blood pressure - The lowering of blood pressure prevents damage to the blood vessels in the brain (and of course in the rest of the body too).

Lower cholesterol levels - Some studies show that meditators have lower cholesterol levels, which means there is likely to be less clogging of the arteries that feed blood to the brain.

Higher blood oxygen levels - This is both a short and long-term effect depending on the consistency of your practice. More oxygen almost

certainly helps the brain function better.

Brain improvements - Research shows that regular meditation changes the structure of the brain, increasing the thickness of the cortex in areas involved in sensory processing and attention. This is suspected to improve the performance of attentional control.

Clearer seeing - Remove the distracting thoughts and the interpretations they add to what you see, and you see things more clearly.

Clearer thinking - Clearer seeing leads to clearer thinking, as does the ability to calm the mind and "set aside" interfering thoughts.

More creative thinking - A quieted mind is a more open mind. Add a few good techniques to this and you get greatly improved creativity.

New perspectives - Many meditative practices can lead you to deeper insights and transformative ways of seeing yourself and the world.

Is that enough for you to give it a try? Then read on...

Chapter 3

Three Easy Meditations

Meditating for the first time can be intimidating for some. For that matter, the discipline required for a regular practice can be difficult. That's why this chapter has three examples of easy meditations. The following won't take you much time nor effort, but will give you a taste of the benefits of meditation.

Simple Breath Watching

Those who hesitate to try meditation because they think it has to be difficult should like this one. It's a simple technique that takes only a few minutes. You can do this sitting, laying down, or even standing up. Sitting with legs crossed is the most common way perhaps, because laying down can cause some people to fall asleep. I personally like to do this one standing up outside, usually in front of a mountain, a lake or in some other beautiful setting. In any case, this is a great way to clear your mind, and become a bit more self-aware.

Get comfortable, close your eyes, and tense up your whole body. Then breath deeply through your nose as you release the tension from every muscle. Feel each part relaxing, watching for parts that may escape notice, like a tight jaw. If you still have tension somewhere, tense up that part again, then let it relax.

After a few deep breaths, let your breathing fall into a comfortable pattern, and pay attention to it. Be aware of the air as it passes in and out of your nose. Though your mind may wander off into various thoughts and images again and again, all you have to do is continually bring attention back to your breath.

Is your mind is still too busy? Try naming the distractions as a way of setting them aside. Try, for example, saying in your mind, "itchy leg," "worried about work," or "anger," and then immediately return attention to your breathing.

Do this meditation for five or ten minutes, or for about 60 to 80 breaths. When you open your eyes, you'll feel relaxed, and your mind will feel refreshed. You'll be better prepared for any mental challenges. Why not try it now?

By the way, many more advanced meditation practices are built on simple breath-watching like this. To get more out of it yourself, you can extend the time. You can also experiment with various times of day and body positions to see which work best for you.

Mindfulness Meditation

How much richer would your life be if you could choose to relax, think more clearly, and concentrate more effectively at will? It is possible, and you can start by learning how to put yourself more in the moment with a simple mindfulness meditation. There are many practices that are called "mindfulness" or "mindfulness meditations." The following is an example of one that will take you a minimum of time and effort.

Sit down, relax and breath deeply through your nose. Close your eyes and start paying attention to your breathing, following the breath in and out a few times. Then expand your attention to your mind, to the internal dialog, thoughts, emotions and images going on. Don't get too involved in any of them. Just be an observer.

Bring your attention to your body, one part at a time, noticing any sensations of cold, hot, tight, sore or any other feelings you notice. After a few minutes, start paying attention to the sounds of the room as well, without judging, criticizing or thinking about them. Just listen for a minute.

Now open your eyes and look around you as if you are seeing for the first

time. Let your eyes fall on any object in the room, and examine it for half a minute, without talking about it in your mind. Do this with another object, and then another, all the while maintaining an awareness of your body and breath. Continue this state of mindfulness until you're ready to get up.

When you are sensing your body, your busy mind, your breath, and your surroundings, you're more fully "here and now." A mindfulness meditation like this puts you in a receptive state and removes mental distractions that hinder clear thinking. You'll feel relaxed and more able to focus. Try this meditation before important mental tasks.

Until you know what's going on in your head, there can be all sorts of problems you just can't resolve. Even temporarily uncorrectable problems. It is tough to fix a problem that you don't see, right? This is where mindfulness comes in. Mindfulness practices can improve your mind power and your mental health in general.

Your mind is busy right now, talking about all sorts of things. Maybe it's telling you you're tired of your job, or that you are a victim of circumstance. Maybe it's running through a list of all the things you need to be doing. It might be saying all the wrong things, but how many of these thoughts do you hear? You may just feel a slight anxiety building in you as your day goes on.

I was amazed when I first learned how to do basic mindfulness exercises. I found whole conversations going on just below consciousness. It was interesting to watch, but the most amazing part was that I could now often end feelings of worry or anxiety in mere seconds. All I had to do was watch my mind until I found the cause.

It actually is often that simple. Forgot to write down an appointment, for example, and it may bother you for hours. Then when you tune in and see that it's bothering you, you write it down, and you immediately feel relaxed again. But this goes way beyond the endless "to do" lists that are running through our minds.

When arguments and other anxious thoughts are playing and replaying subconsciously or semi-consciously in your mind and stressing you out, you can't think as clearly. But often just bringing them to consciousness will

make you laugh and dismiss them? Why? Because many of our anxious thoughts and the "arguments" for feeling bad that our minds give us are just plain ridiculous.

Don't underestimate the ability of short term happiness and good thoughts to influence your mental health and the power of your mind over the longer term. Anxieties and stresses resolved now, and regularly, leave you with better health, and you develop good mental habits in the process. Good feelings now can lead to good feelings in the future, and habits are what you need for long term results.

What about big problems? Mindfulness is a way to see them more clearly for what they are. When you get better at tuning into your own subconscious mind, you start to see patterns. For example, I found that my mind was mulling over and worrying about all the possible choices in decisions that weren't made. It was causing me endless stress.

When mindfulness exercises brought this to my attention, I finally recognized how destructive this habit of indecisiveness was. I began to make decisions more quickly, even with less information, just to try a new way. I saw immediately how stress diminishes once a decision is made. I began to change my habits, and I was soon getting more done with less anxiety.

Walking Meditation

Walking meditation provides a great example of how different techniques work better or worse for different people. Some people really enjoy a good walking meditation, while some find it too difficult or even irritating. In any case, it won't hurt you to try it once or twice, to see if you might benefit from it.

Many experienced meditators use walking meditation as a simple way to bring awareness into their lives. It is a mindfulness exercise more than anything.

To do it, you simply walk, focusing your attention on each foot as it touches

the ground. Your mind may wander, which is entirely normal, but you will just keep bringing it back to your feet and legs, and the feeling of your whole body moving. If you find that it is difficult to walk in a normal rhythm while watching yourself so closely, just keep walking anyhow.

It helps if you don't look around. Keep your gaze in front of you, and keep your concentration on the experience of walking. You can include awareness of your breathing in that experience, but stay "tuned in" to your feet touching the ground, and the sensations of your legs moving.

Do this walking meditation for ten minutes or more. Walk in an area where you are not likely to be interrupted. If you can't find a place outdoors, you can walk up and down a long hallway, or back and forth in a room.

Mindfulness exercises or meditations like this will make it clear that nothing is quite as simple as it seems. This is certainly true for walking. Even if you just "go out for a walk," do you ever just walk? If you are like most of us, your mind is somewhere else, absorbed with a dozen thoughts.

By paying attention to the experience of walking itself, you reconnect with your body and the world from which your busy mind is so often drawing you away. This is another powerful way to relax and develop a more powerful ability to think and concentrate. Give it a try.

Brainwave Entrainment?

Want an even easier way to meditate? Simply put a meditation CD that uses brainwave entrainment technology into your player, put on the headphones and hit "play." These products use embedded beats (sometimes called "binaural beats") to alter your brainwaves, and so bring them down to the alpha range (8 to 14 hertz, or cycles per second) or the theta range (4 to 8 hertz).

The science is real, and having tried six or more different meditation CDs, I can tell you that these are powerful tools for meditation (I use them for power-naps too). Sit and listen - it doesn't get any easier than that. I'll have more on this in an upcoming chapter, along with my recommendations for

products worth buying.

Chapter 4

Other Meditation Techniques

This chapter provides a quick summary of some of the many different ways to meditate. You'll find just enough information on each to decide if you want to explore it further. You can research any of these more thoroughly online without too much trouble.

Of all the techniques of meditation, which is the best? Whichever one works best for you, of course. Each one of us is unique, and we each have our own way of doing things. This is no different when it comes to meditation. Try several methods until you find the one that you can be comfortable and consistent with.

Be aware, however, that constant "testing" of various disciplines may get in the way of a consistent and productive meditation practice. You should probably choose one to focus on at some point. Many meditators have found that the most profound benefits come after a long period of regular practice, which may not ever happen if you are busy trying out something new every few months.

Watching Your Breath

The simplest techniques of meditation involve watching your breath, like the short meditation introduced in the last chapter. Usually done with eyes closed, you simply relax and pay attention to your breath for ten minutes or more. Breathe through your nose to get your diaphragm involved and get oxygen all the way to the bottom of your lungs. When distractions arise in your mind, just gently return your attention to your breath, again and again. Breath-watching is part of many other meditations as well.

Using a Mantra

Many techniques of meditation (transcendental meditation, for example) rely on a mantra. Mantras are chosen for you by an experienced master in some traditions, but you can use any word or phrase or sound that works for you, or a more universal one, like the classic Hindu "om mani padme hum." You can also choose to either repeat the mantra aloud or in your head as you sit in meditation. The repetition of the mantra keeps your mind from wandering, and may symbolize the "oneness" of the world.

Object Meditation

Some meditative techniques use an object to focus your attention. A candle flame is common, but any object can potentially be used. You could focus your attention on a flower, for example, and keep returning your attention to that flower as distractions come up.

Walking Meditation

Walking meditation takes advantage of the rhythmic nature of walking. You focus your attention on the walking itself, on each foot as it contacts the ground. When your mind wanders from your feet, legs, or the feeling of walking, you just refocus your attention. As mentioned in the previous chapter, for deeper concentration, you shouldn't look around too much, but keep your gaze in front of you.

Empty Mind

Many forms of Zen meditation involve an awareness without object. In other words, you empty your mind of all thoughts (Don't try to think about

that too much). The techniques for doing this involve sitting still, often in the full lotus position, and letting the mind go silent of its own accord. This can be difficult, particularly since any effort seems to just cause more busyness in the mind.

Mindfulness Meditation

A practice Buddhists call vipassana or insight meditation, mindfulness is the art of becoming deeply aware of the here and now. You focus your mind on what's happening in and around you at this very moment. Mindfulness techniques help you become aware of the noise in your head - all the thoughts and feelings that are taking your energy from moment to moment. You can start by watching your breath, and then move your attention to the thoughts going through your mind, the feelings in your body, and even the sounds and sights around you. The key is to watch without judging or analyzing.

Meditating On An Idea

Some techniques of meditation involve contemplation of an idea or even an imaginary scenario. These include meditations on impermanence, in which you see and focus on the impermanent nature of all things, perhaps starting with your thoughts and feelings as they come and go. The "meditation on the corpse," in Buddhist tradition has you think about a body in the ground, as it slowly rots away and is fed on by worms. These techniques use the imagination to guide you to an understanding that your rationalizing mind might not bring you to.

Guided Meditations

Some people find it easier to get into a meditative state with some help from an outside voice to guide them. These meditations can take a variety of

forms, and can be bought on CDs or as MP3 downloads. They often start with something "Take several deep breaths and let the tension drain from your body..." and then guide you through a meditation that is focused on some specific area of life. You can even create your own script and record it in your own voice.

Daily "Observer" Meditation

Here is a meditative practice that I'll go into a little more detail on. It is meant to show you how you might do a bit more than just relax and clear your mind with meditation.

You may have practiced becoming aware of your thoughts just long enough to dismiss them. This is common in many "regular" and "mindfulness" meditative techniques. However, being an observer to your own mind can be more than just a way to catch and get rid of thoughts. It can be a way to learn about what is going on just below the surface, to see how our thoughts mislead us. Try the following "observer" meditation.

Start by watching for any negative states as you go through your day. Perhaps you suddenly feel angry or irritated. You may or may not have a "reason." Maybe you notice that you resent a certain person, or feel that something is "unfair." Whenever you feel a negative state of any sort arising, take several deep breaths through your nose.

At the same time, take a mental step back to watch the drama going on in your mind. Negative states are normally produced by certain thoughts, and your goal is to become aware of them, and to note that you are free to believe them or not, and even to replace them with better thoughts. A few deep breaths and the purposeful choice to take on the role of an observer makes it possible to see what's there, often just below consciousness.

If you watch carefully, it will become clear that although they seem to be "you," these thoughts are in fact merely "visitors" or "impostors." They are not the "voice of reason." They are not your own internal voice nor trusted advisors. In fact, thoughts which lead to negative states are not useful or beneficial, though they will "tell" you that you need to listen to their advice,

and try to perpetuate themselves. When you see this, they begin to fade away, or to simply ramble on in the background, purposefully ignored.

Don't be confused by the words here. Though we talk about "impostors" or thoughts which "tell" you they are you, this is just a metaphorical way to understand a very real phenomenon. You can use other words to describe it. Some people might describe it as their thoughts "pushing" them, for example. Just watch closely and you'll see the process.

Follow your short period of observation by another deep breath or two and a release of tension from your body. If you still feel the negativity, start watching those thoughts again. See that they are not "yours" any more than a spot of mud on your shoe is. Choose to see beyond any thoughts that are coughed up from the mechanical processes of an unenlightened unconscious mind.

You don't need to set aside time for this, nor do you need to stop what you are doing. This is meant to provide insight into your thinking patterns while you are actually going about your normal routines. Repeat this daily meditation as often as you need to. You will probably find that with time this makes you less influenced by thoughts that are not useful.

Chapter 5

Meditation Tips

To get the full benefits of meditation, your mind needs to quiet down. This is the biggest stumbling block for most. Be aware that your thoughts will most likely never leave you alone. Your "monkey mind" may continue to chatter away no matter what you try. That's okay - don't worry if you don't have "complete" success. You can probably move the mental noise more into the background, though, and reduce the volume, using some of the following tips.

Letting Thoughts Go

When thoughts or feelings arise during meditation, it sometimes helps to name them. It is like writing something down so you can get it off your mind. Say to yourself "Pain in my leg," or "Old argument," or otherwise label whatever is distracting you. Then return your attention to your breath. If this doesn't help, accept that your mind will rattle on. No problem. Just repeatedly bring it back to your breathing anyhow.

Releasing Tension

If the tension in your muscles persists when you are meditating, try tensing up each part of your body. Hold the tension for a few seconds, then let go, perhaps saying to yourself, "relax." Pay attention to the feeling of release. By doing this, you are basically training your body to relax on command. Another technique is to let a little tension drain from your body with each exhalation. You'll notice right away that it is easier to relax when breathing out, than when breathing in.

Length Of Meditation

Try to meditate for at least ten minutes to begin with, and work your way up to twenty minutes. Longer meditations are beneficial, if you have the time, but somewhere between 15 and 20 minutes seems to be useful to most people.

Also, once you have trained your body to relax, and have gotten used to watching your breath, you can take two to three minute meditative breaks during the day, when you need to refresh your mind or relax.

Mini-Meditations

Stop several times daily to do "mini-meditations." Just breath deeply for a minute or two while watching your breath. Have a regular place that reminds you to do this. You can do it whenever you go to get a cup of water at work, for example. This is a great complement to your regular practice, or better than nothing if it is all you do.

Daily Mindfulness Exercises

Do mindfulness exercises throughout the day. Again, this is a great way to boost the effectiveness of your regular meditation sessions. Here are a few examples of things to try.

Slow down and pay attention to what you are doing. Observe yourself as you chew a raisin, for example, or as you straighten your desk. Be very aware of exactly what is going on right then.

During the day, ask yourself "Where do I need to be?" and answer - if it's true - "right here." Ask "What do I need to be doing?" and answer - if it's true

- "Just this." This can be very useful for focusing on the task at hand, and long term it trains you to be more present in the moment.

Anytime during the day, if you feel like complaining, or feel like life is unfair, take a few deep breaths and remind yourself that you have made the choices in your life. In fact, choose again to be right where you are, and see the reasons for your choice clearly. This will help you develop more peace of mind. It is unhealthy to enter the fun house and then complain about the fun.

Location

Try changing locations if you're having trouble. I don't know why, but years ago I had one particular spot overlooking a river near my house where it was always easier to meditate. Find a spot like that.

Time of Day

Meditate at a different time. Some of us just struggle too much with mid-day meditation. Why fight our natural rhythms? Find the best time for you.

Body Positions

You might try changing positions. If you are falling asleep laying down, sit up. If sitting up is too uncomfortable, lay down. There is no absolute best position for all meditators, which becomes especially evident when we consider the physical disabilities that many people have.

Methods

If you have not had good results with mantras, try a simple breath-watching meditation. Experiment a little with the various types of meditation outlined in the previous chapter. Don't change methods continually as an excuse to avoid the discipline of good meditative practice, but be aware that different methods suit different people.

Outside Distractions

While some advanced meditators can perhaps meditate in the midst of a battlefield or shopping mall without trouble, most of us will need to at least start out in quiet places with few distractions. Avoid meditating in a noisy environment, wear comfortable clothes, set the thermostat at the right temperature, and generally reduce the likelihood of any other outside distractions.

Also, you may have to avoid meditating when really hungry or in a lot of pain. Eventually you may be able to meditate in almost any conditions, but why hamper your efforts now?

Ask For Help

Sometimes you may have very specific and seemingly unique problems. This is when it helps to be in contact with others who meditate. Then you can find somebody that has had a similar problem, and ask what he or she did to overcome it.

Avoid Caffeine, Alcohol And Sugar

At least avoid these near meditation time. Caffeine can make your mind run

too fast for comfortable meditation. The "sugar blues" might make you too sluggish physically and mentally. Alcohol dulls your consciousness.

Be Consistent

If you think you'll just meditate when it's convenient, you probably won't. Unless you have a regular time and place for your meditation, it's just too easy to forget or procrastinate. Schedule your sessions.

Use Technology

I've had good results using brain wave entrainment products. You can find more on those in an upcoming chapter. They sure makes meditation easier for me. You can try having certain types of brainwave-altering music playing in the background as well. A list of the particular musical compositions to try can be found in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

Meditation Music

Many people have found that playing music in the background can help with their meditation. Which is the best meditation music? The answer to that varies from person to person. What one will find relaxing another will find annoying.

On the other hand, this is not completely a matter of taste. This has been studied by science, and there are reasons why some classical pieces work better than others. It has to do with the frequency of the beats and the effect they have on your brainwaves. In fact, this discovery forty years ago led to the development of brainwave entrainment products. More on those in a moment.

Since the subject has not been studied thoroughly, we have to be largely guided by the experience of others with various compositions. For example, many people have reported that baroque music causes a relaxation response. As for the science, it has been found that baroque music at 60 beats per minute causes your brain to produce more alpha brainwaves. We'll get into why this is important in a moment. In the meantime, here are some specific compositions that may help you with your meditation.

A. Vivaldi - The Four Seasons

G.F. Handel - Concerto number 1 in F

A. Corelli - Concerto No. 7 in D Minor

Telemann - Double Fantasia in G Major for Harpsichord

J.S. Bach - Prelude from Cello Suite

J.S. Bach - Allemande (Cello Suite 3)

J.S. Bach - Be Thou Near Me

J.S. Bach - Concerto in G Minor for Flute and Strings

Often it's just one passage or movement in a piece that's most useful (probably due to the beat frequency). The movements referred to as "largo" are generally the ones you want.

Some people find that the best meditation music for them is light jazz (Try Dave Koz and Luther Vandross). Others like the eastern music, like that which uses the Indian Sitar (Try "Chants of India" by Ravi Shankar). A CD of Gregorian chants is another meditation tool used by some. Many prefer generic easy listening music with sounds of nature mixed in.

The Best Option?

All of the above can be bought inexpensively. In fact, even the best "sounds of nature" and "easy listening" relaxation CDs are usually under thirty dollars. But if you want a more scientific approach to meditation, you might want to budget a bit more and try true meditation CDs.

These CDs use typically music for the background anyhow, but the addition of "binaural beats" cause your brainwaves to slow down. They are very relaxing. In fact, if you listen while laying down, most of these products will quickly put you to sleep. How do you choose the best of these meditation CDs? My recommendations can be found in the next chapter.

Chapter 7

Brainwave Entrainment

Once science proved that sound can effect our brainwaves, and that baroque compositions in particular seemed to put people into a meditative state, meditators did not limit themselves to looking for the best music. More than one person or company began to purposely create the right sounds to slow those brainwaves. They embedded certain beats into music, and this became the basis for the technology of "brainwave entrainment."

Would you like to listen to a CD, and have it transport you easily and quickly to a meditative state? Do you like the idea of getting all the proven benefits of meditation, without the self discipline and work normally required? I do, and I've tried the new brainwave entrainment products. Guess what? They work!

You've probably read how brain wave frequencies vary according to mental state. Daydreaming and light meditation take place in the "Alpha" range of frequencies, for example. So if you listen to music containing beats at a frequency of 10 Hz it will feel very relaxing, because your brain will begin to follow this frequency and reproduce the rhythm in the music. You will generate more brain waves at a 10 Hz frequency and enter a relaxed Alpha mental state.

States Of Consciousness

Beta (14 - 30 hertz) - Dominant rhythm when awake, alert or anxious, with eyes open.

Alpha (8 - 14 hertz) - Relaxed alertness; normally is induced by closing the eyes and relaxing.

Theta (4 - 8 hertz) - Drowsiness, first stage of sleep; not common in awake adults, but common in daydreaming children.

Delta (below 5 hertz) - Deep sleep.

Meditation can stimulate these states. Sounds can as well. The latter is the principle behind brain wave entrainment technologies. What these products do is embed music or sounds of nature with beats and pulses (sometimes called "binaural beats") that entrain your brain waves to a specific frequency.

It is well established that our brain wave frequencies change with our mental states and vice-versa. It has also been clearly demonstrated that meditators can go into an alpha state at will, and that this has beneficial effects (lowering of stress, blood pressure, etc.). Do the audio recordings accomplish this more easily?

They sure work for me. Studies will prove the effects (some have already), and disprove the wilder claims of some of these products. Given the results I've experienced, however, I won't wait for the research, any more than I would have waited for proof of the existence of vitamin C had I lived 200 years ago - I would have kept eating limes to cure scurvy even before there was "proof" for the cure or why it worked. Sometimes we have to rely on observed effects, the testimony of others, and our own experience.

Though music is often used for the background on these CDs or MP3s, it is the "binaural beats" that cause the effect. Having tried several different products, I can say that they do what they are supposed to do. My meditation CDs slow my brainwaves to the alpha range (8 - 14 hertz) in minutes, putting me into a relaxed meditative state of consciousness. Those that bring brainwaves to the theta range (4 - 8 hertz) either facilitate deep meditation or put me to sleep (don't lay down if you want to avoid this).

Which meditation CD is the best? A better question is which program is best. You can certainly buy a single CD to try out a guided meditation or brainwave entrainment experience. If that's what you are looking for, I'll recommend one in a moment. But a good program will have recordings that each bring you to a different state of consciousness, so you have a lighter

meditation (perhaps to help you generate creative ideas) or a deeper meditation (for relaxation and increased self awareness).

I have tried six or seven meditation CDs or programs over the years. All the ones I've tried have worked to some extent, but there are differences, so here are some more specific things I've noticed about each meditation CD:

Binaural Beats

This company has quality meditation CDs with a decent guarantee. If you've never tried a brain wave entrainment product because of the cost, this is where you can buy one at a time. But keep in mind that you may end up wanting a more complete meditation CD program.

Silva Ultramind Program

I quickly slipped into a relaxed state with the sample audio they let me try, which used a guided meditation and brainwave entrainment. However, I didn't like the fact that they focus too much on the paranormal aspects. I am not convinced that I'm going to start reading minds or picking winning lottery numbers by using their program (yes they do make some wild claims), so I passed on this one.

Holosync Audio Technology

From Centerpointe Research Institute, this was my favorite for years. Both my wife and I loved the results. It was fascinating at first (for myself it was almost hallucinogenic at times), and later was an easy way to meditate or just relax. We both still use their CDs, and my wife found that she was not only less stressed after using them, but became more self-aware. These are powerful CDs, and Centerpointe provides great customer support and service.

They were a bit expensive though, and after the first level they wanted even more for each subsequent one. Continue to the deepest levels of meditation using their CDs, and you'll likely spend a couple thousand dollars in total. But because of the quality of their products and support, I don't want to

discourage anyone from using them. They offer a one year money-back guarantee, and you can usually get a free demo before you buy anything.

Homemade Meditation CDs

A couple years ago we bought software to make our own brainwave entrainment CDs. For myself it was a very tedious process to learn how to make it work (my wife is better at the technical stuff). The result was audio recordings that put me to sleep or into a meditative state, but the sound quality wasn't too good. I don't recommend trying this unless you really like to play with sound recording technology or plan to start selling your own meditation CDs.

My Number One Recommendation?

[The Meditation Program](#)

When I discovered this source I bought the downloadable MP3s to save a little money. I skipped the "Registration Backup Service," which replaces the audio recordings for up to a year if you lose them, and just made copies in my computer and on CDs. They include a link to the Microsoft page that explains how to burn CDs with the Windows Media Player, which was helpful. I needed my wife's help to download and unzip the files initially. If you aren't familiar with zip files and downloading audio recordings, it might be worth paying the extra money to just have the CDs sent to you by mail.

You get all levels with this program - no expensive up-sells later. It comes as six CDs or eight MP3 downloads with eight levels. A few days before writing this I listened to a meditation CD from this program, and as it ended I thought, "There's something wrong - it just started a few minutes ago." But when I looked at the clock I saw that an hour had passed. I felt very relaxed and refreshed. I believe these may be as powerful as my Holosync CDs, and at the moment they are my favorite brainwave entrainment CDs.

You'll find my full review of the program in the next chapter. If you want to get more information on how to buy this program now, use this link:

[Click Here For Details About The Meditation Program](#)

Better Or Worse?

The promoters of this technology often claim it's better than "regular" meditation. On the other hand I have also had a couple meditation "experts" tell me that meditation using brainwave entrainment is not the same, and that regular practices are better. One said "I feel that I am doing something when I sit and practice on my own, but with brainwave entrainment it's more like something is being done to me." He may be right, but I like what's being done to me when I listen to them.

If it is someday discovered that meditation using these technologies is inferior in some way, that's okay. They will still make a great supplement to one's "regular" meditation practice. Furthermore, the ease of using these CDs means that many who otherwise might never meditate because of the difficulty can do so and get the benefits they wouldn't otherwise get. And I've never heard of any harm coming from using them.

Using Brainwave Entrainment

Generally you will have to listen to brainwave entrainment products using stereo headphones. This is because they often use beats that alternate between the left and right speakers to alter your brainwaves. Fortunately even most cheap headphones for CD players and MP3 players are now stereo. Beyond that you need only to turn on the recording, relax and listen.

Some products are designed not only to help you meditate, but also to give you more energy or boost your creativity. In theory a recording could bring your brainwaves down to a level of deep sleep and all the way up to full consciousness many times, on a sort of mental "roller coaster" ride. I haven't seen much scientific evidence for the wilder claims of how this can make

you into a genius or rev up your immune system, etc.

My experience has been that the CDs that are supposed to give me energy or do have other effects don't seem to work as well as the ones that help me relax and go into a meditative state. That may be due to something different in my response (who knows?). But the strictly meditative ones still work as well as when I first tried them years ago.

Often when I use my meditation CDs they put me to sleep. This isn't surprising, since some of them are designed to bring one's brainwaves down to the delta range (below 5 hertz - 5 cycles per second), and I'm usually laying down when I listen. In fact most brainwave entrainment programs advise against laying down.

That's okay though, because these things are tools, and can be used for more than one purpose. I like having a CD that can relax me and put me to sleep when I want. They do wake me back up again too, because most meditation CDs alter the embedded beats to bring your brainwaves back to the beta range (above 14 hertz - normal waking consciousness) at the end of the session. So I effectively get a "power nap" by using them.

Of course, sleep is not the goal normally, and if you want to used these products to meditate it helps to sit while listening, so you won't fall asleep. If you do stay awake during a session, you'll have an experience very similar to "regular" meditation (it seems just the same to me).

Other Ways To Use Meditation CDs

Power Nap Inducer

As mentioned, you can use these recordings to induce a "power nap." They really knock me out fast if I am laying down. The ones with shorter sessions are best for this (I have one that is just ten minutes), because naps have been found to help our minds function better only when they are less than about twenty-five minutes. If your nap is longer than that you'll likely feel mentally groggy for an hour or two.

Creativity Booster

Many meditation CDs are designed for "lighter" sessions, meaning they only bring your brainwaves down to the alpha level (8 to 14 hertz), These are great for listening too while you write or take notes for a project or goal. You will generally have more creative ideas when in this state of consciousness.

I don't have much confidence in the claims made for recordings that are supposed to somehow automatically make a person more creative. It may be true that we're potentially more creative when in certain states, but it seems unlikely that this would be a lasting effect afterwards without some work on our part. So if you want to use them for a creativity boost, I strongly suggest consciously working on a creative project while listening.

Walking Meditation

Here's a simple "walking meditation" you can do using your MP3. Load a good brainwave entrainment audio into your player and take a walk. It should be an uncrowded setting, and preferably along a level trail or sidewalk, so you don't have to concentrate on the terrain. If there is a trail along a river in the area, or a quiet park nearby, these work well. Walk for a couple minutes before turning on the player.

Keep a relaxed pace while listening, and breath through your nose if possible. Things may look different as you get into a deeper state of consciousness, because your meditative state helps you stop or slow a lot of the internal chatter that normally tells you what you are looking at. You effectively see with "new eyes," or without the interference of too much thought. More self awareness is common too. You may notice the workings of your body and the thoughts which typically lay just below consciousness.

Afterwards you'll probably find that you can think more clearly (that's my experience). This might be a good time to work on any important tasks that require your concentration. In any case, this is a great way to use meditation MP3 recordings.

Sitting meditation, power-naps, walking meditation, and creativity boosting - those are some of the ways to use your meditation CDs, but why not experiment with other ways? Don't try to drive while using them, but you can certainly safely try them out in other settings and circumstances.

MP3s Or CDs?

I loved my brainwave entrainment CDs the first time I tried them. I had a few unusual, interesting and pleasant experiences, but they were primarily just a great way to meditate. I even used them for "power naps." But once I bought my first MP3 player and loaded one of the meditation tracks onto it, I realized how limiting the regular CDs were.

Suddenly I could load up on my meditation recordings and walk in the hills near the house. What a great experience! I could sit under a tree and be quickly brought into a meditative state, and when I opened my eyes again everything looked more real - a common experience with deep meditation. I also could stand or walk while listening, so I didn't fall asleep (sometimes a problem - these types of recordings have powerful effects on the brain). Portability is a big advantage.

You can buy downloads for your MP3 that use brainwave entrainment. But if you already have meditation CDs, you can use the basic Windows Media Player on most newer computers to rip those tracks from your discs and then burn them onto your MP3 player. It isn't too complicated. I managed to figure it out, and I have a tough time with computer technology.

Another option is to make your own recordings from scratch. As mentioned, my wife and I tried this with some expensive software we bought for the purpose. We created several meditation recordings which could be put onto CDs or MP3s or listened to on the computer. They worked, but I can't say I recommend this unless you really like playing with the technology. What we produced was definitely lower in quality than the brainwave entrainment products we've bought.

Chapter 8

A Review Of The Meditation Program

What makes the Meditation Program different from other brainwave entrainment products? I can tell you what I found from my own experience. They don't sell you a single CD, but a series, similar to programs like Centerpointe's Holosync Audio Technology. But unlike others, you get all levels at once with this program. There are eight levels on six recordings.

You can get the CDs shipped to you or do as I did and download the MP3 files. I immediately put them on my own CDs and stored the files in two places as well. In this way I saved a bit because they charge less for the downloaded version. Storing them in several places meant I also didn't have to buy their back-up service that replaces lost files.

The first four recordings are about 30 minutes long, with two on each CD. The remaining four are an hour long, and each on their own CD. Here is a breakdown of the brainwave frequencies that they are meant to induce in you, along with the presumed effects:

Levels 1 and 2 - 10.5 to 11 hertz (alpha waves) - Relaxation and stress removal.

Levels 3 and 4 - 8 to 9.5 hertz (theta waves) - Deep relaxation and enhanced learning.

Level 5 - 7 to 8 hertz (theta waves) - Enhanced learning and memory boost.

Level 6 - 5.5 to 7 hertz (theta waves) - More creativity and intuition.

Level 7 - 4 to 5.5 hertz (theta waves) - Deep relaxation and rejuvenation.

Level 8 - 2.5 to 3.5 hertz (theta waves) - Deep sleep and immune boost.

The last two recordings are in frequencies that are normally labeled Delta waves (typo on their part or difference of opinion?). I tend to doubt the specific effects that are claimed for each frequency range, and I don't think the science has developed far enough to say if these claims are true. It seems that most makers of these products make similar claims.

In any case I don't doubt the power of brainwave entrainment, and these audio recordings will certainly relax you, put you into a meditative state or put you to sleep depending on how you use them. I fell asleep quickly when I first tried them, probably because I made the mistake of laying down. As they explain, you really should sit up while listening (unless you want to use them to put you to sleep). You also need to listen with headphones.

When I have stayed awake while listening, it has been a very pleasant experience. I also tend to get very creative ideas while listening, so sometimes I keep a tape recorder or notebook handy to take notes as soon as the session ends.

I like listening when taking a walk (I put the recordings on my MP3 player for this purpose). That's the only time I listen with my eyes open, and though I doubt that I get my brainwaves down past the alpha range (even with the higher-level recordings) the experience is interesting. Things look "more real" (sorry, no other way to explain it), and I also have very creative thoughts during these sessions.

With your purchase you get access to an online user's guide that explains everything you need to know. It has "The Quick Fix Method" outlined if you want to start using the various recordings immediately for specific purposes, plus their "Recommended Listening Program" if you want to get the full effect. The latter covers an eight week plan.

I have used some of Centerpointe's Holosync CDs in the past, and I think

The Meditation Program has CDs that are just as powerful. Both use various backgrounds on the recordings, ranging from music to sounds of nature. I've had more than one person tell me that they really like the support that Centerpointe offers, but not being one to pick up the phone and discuss my experiences, I never used their support. The Meditation Program has online support by email, as well as the online materials that are part of the user's guide.

Having tried about six different brainwave entrainment products, I think this is one of the two best, with Holosync being the other. I can't say for sure which of these two is better, but I can tell you that The Meditation Program is a lot cheaper. You get all eight levels right up front for one price, with nothing to buy later.

Long Term Effects?

It is just great to be able to pop in a CD and instantly relax. But what about more beneficial long term effects?

According to the user's guide, this program can "help you break bad habits, perform at your peak, gain insights into the world around you, feel more alive and more in control of your life than ever before." They also claim that if you follow the Recommended Listening Program, many of the changes will be permanent. Similar things are said by Centerpointe and others.

I am skeptical, and I haven't seen much scientific evidence for such claims. On the other hand, there is no doubt that both my wife and I have greater peace of mind and we deal with problems more effectively since we started using brainwave entrainment products a few years ago. Correlation isn't causation, of course, so I won't speculate too much on this. I do know that I will continue to use The Meditation Program, and I'm very happy that I bought it.

For more information or buy this program now, use this link:

[Click Here For More On The Meditation Program](#)

Chapter 9

The Promise Of Meditation

It's easy to understand why many people use meditation for relaxation. Breathe deep, calm your thoughts, and stress melts away. What's more, this isn't just a matter of feeling better while meditating. It is now known that many if not most illnesses are caused by or made worse by too much stress, so even if it is never more than a relaxation technique, meditation is a very healthy practice to say the least.

Of course, meditation has higher purposes than relaxation. I have covered some of those, such as the way it can be used to think more clearly. But one of the most valuable things you can get from it isn't stress relief or a better brain, but a better understanding of yourself and how your mind works. That self awareness can lead you to a whole new approach to life that is healthier in every way. Let's look at how this can come about.

We'll start with a simple experiment. It will show you how limited your awareness can be at times - most times. Try this simple exercise today or tomorrow if you can. When you're rushing round the house, or busy at work, just stop and go outside for a short and slow walk.

Watch the things and people and animals around you as you walk, but say nothing. Furthermore, withdraw your attention from the thoughts going through your head and put it on the things around you. Just observe. At some point sit quietly on a bench step, tree or on the grass.

You'll probably notice sounds, smells and activity everywhere that you were not aware of before you slowed down and quieted your mind in this way. When you see something, like a bird, for example, don't think "bird" or engage in any internal dialogue about it - just observe. (If it is difficult to avoid the usual mental labeling of things, replace it with the question "what?" each time something new enters your consciousness - but observe

rather than answer.)

Involve all your senses. Feel the bench you sit on or the cold or hot air on your skin. Smell the odors around you. Hear the wind rustling the leaves without any mental commentary, and don't try to think about what any of this means or make it into some new theory. Remain silent and be aware of your surroundings like this for a while before returning to your daily tasks. This simple exercise is a kind of meditation, and once you've done it and become aware of what you normally don't notice, you should think about what is going on inside you that makes you miss so much. Consider the possibilities such a quietly observant state has.

Following this, set aside a time the same day for a short meditation, and apply the same sense of being an "observer" to everything going on inside you. There is a lot of distracting noise and activity in your mind, and when you sit in meditation you start to see that you are constantly full of images, ideas, arguments, memories, dreams, demands and more.

What Will You Learn?

Experiences will vary, and meditation for relaxation is great, but let's look at how you might get something more life-altering from it. For example, you might learn from your quiet observation how much incessant argument and explanation is going on just below the surface of your consciousness. You may see how this internal dialog pushes you this way and that, and how mechanical you are in your reactions - even as you tell yourself you're free and in control.

Becoming aware of this as an observer of your own thoughts, you'll feel less inclined to listen to the bad-advice from your own mind - you'll open yourself up to better ways, whether you call this a "higher self" or just clearer thought.

Moving beyond this identification that we all have with our own thoughts, you can start to act more intuitively and with less conflict and anxiety. Consider how much concentration it took to learn to walk, and yet now it is easy. But if you stopped to think about where to put each step you would

probably fall down. Many areas of life need less thought to stumble over, and more direct action which proceeds from what you see clearly. The intelligence that is beyond words in no way denigrates the power and usefulness of human language and thought, but it is needed for a healthy and balanced life.

When we reach the point where our minds quiet even just a little, we begin to experience a self beyond thoughts and ideas. Normally, when we think of our "self " we bring up a collection of flattering and/or condemnatory images and thoughts and memories and more - but we are not what we think we are. "Self" is something beyond all that, and though we can say such a thing intellectually, even then we are often experiencing a thought-self that is very limited by its own creations.

The reality of existence outside of our thoughts is something else entirely, and seeing it helps us detach from the "created self" that encourages us to suffer so much mentally. We're typically asleep and under the spell of a mind that seeks to perpetuate itself without regard to our needs. That metaphorical understanding helps explain how after a lifetime of our own "lower self " misleading us, we still listen to its advice daily. It helps us see why we do bad things even though we "know better," because though on some level we do know better, we aren't always thinking or acting from that higher level of self.

We have the potential to wake up and see reality more directly through meditative practices. Ideally, "right action" then proceeds from what is seen clearly, and thought becomes a tool subservient to our true interests, rather than having a life of its own at our expense. In other words, meditation for relaxation might be a nice start, but consider these higher purposes it can serve as well.

My Recommendation:

(For Meditation CDs And MP3 Recordings)

[The Meditation Program](#)

Mind Power Meditation

How To Tap Into Power You Already Have

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(the end)