

MEDITATIONS - VEGAN RECIPES - INTERVIEWS - LOVE - HAPPINESS - WISDOM - THE UNIVERSE

MEDITATION

115
POWERFUL
WOMEN IN
MEDITATION

INCLUDING:
LAURA HOF
TARA BRACH
SISTER JENNA
DR. SARA LAZAR
PEMA CHÖDRÖN
JAMIE ANDERSON
SHARON SALZBERG

AMMA

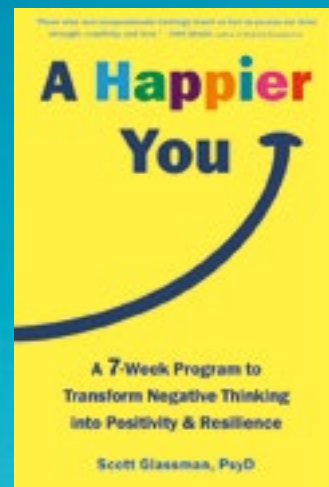
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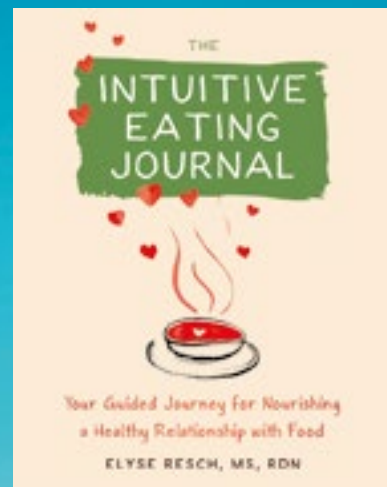


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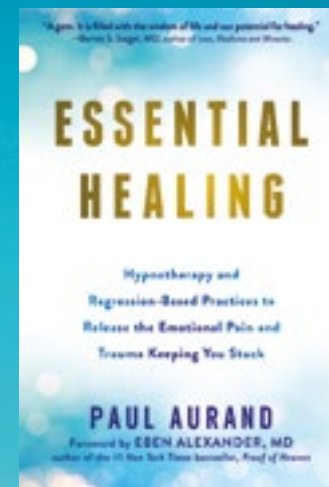
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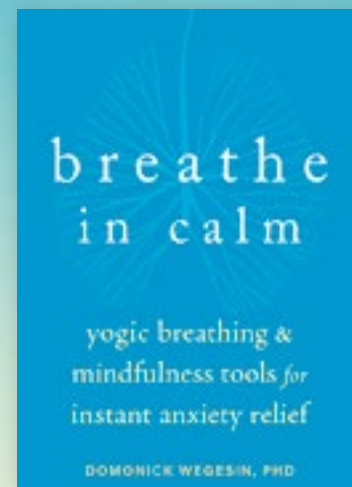
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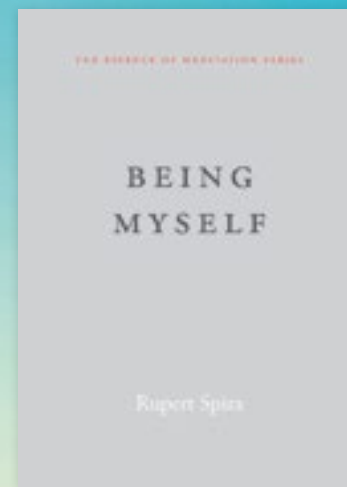
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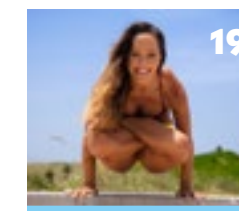


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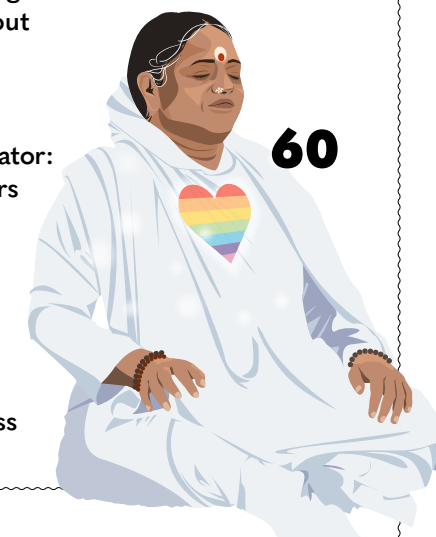


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Contact Us

If you have questions, comments, suggestions, or just want to connect, DM us on Insta or Facebook, or email us at hello@meditationmag.com

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MEDITATION

ISSUE 05: FALL/WINTER 2021
POWERFUL WOMEN IN MEDITATION



ON THE COVERS
For this issue, we wanted to show the wide variety of *Powerful Women In Meditation*, from supermodels & athletes to activists & gurus.

Four collectible covers
Clockwise from top-left: **Jasmine Sanders** photo by German Etcheverry. **Jamie Anderson** photo by Karissa Jones. **Tara Brach** photo by Jonathan Foust. **Amma** photo courtesy of Mata Amritanandamayi Math.

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LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

By Jovanna Benavente & Kevin Ellerton

Our first child, Amelia Sky, was born on March 31st, 2021. This issue is filled with some of the most amazing, badass, and powerful women in the meditation world. But, like millions of other tiny humans, Baby Sky is just beginning her journey. Whether she grows up to be powerful, a woman, a meditator, or none of the above, we'll love her no matter what. This issue is for you, Sky.

The *Powerful Women In Meditation* Issue is dedicated to women everywhere, but especially women in the meditation community. Our first six covers featured four men: Trevor Hall, Wim Hof, Deepak Chopra, and Sadhguru. Four of the most noteworthy people in the meditation community, no doubt, but four men no less. We reached out to some of our favorite female meditators, and they came through with flying colors.

This issue contains not only the “guru” types who happen to identify as females, but also powerful female voices of meditation, powerful women who are noteworthy in their fields who use meditation to cope with the stresses of fame, and powerful women who have risen to the tops of their fields through the presence, focus, intensity, confidence, and discipline which are so powerfully cultivated through the ancient, life-altering, power-intensifying practice of meditation.

When I was a little girl, I would sneak my brother’s basketball into my room, put it under my shirt, and imagine what it would be like to be pregnant.

I had always imagined a beautiful, transformative, all natural birth, with my husband by my side as I made my journey from maiden to mother.

But you know that saying... “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.”

Throughout the labor, my breath was my portal to peace. I didn’t want to listen to the birthing playlist I’d prepared, and I couldn’t stand to watch or listen to TV.

I wanted as few distractions as possible. I felt that I needed to be fully present with the sensations in my body.

At first, by focusing on my breath, I was able to meet each contraction with equanimity, as the intense sensations crashed over my entire body like tumultuous waves, allowing me barely a moment’s respite between each one.

But nearly 24 hours after being admitted, I was still only 1.5 centimeter dilated (out of 10). The baby was stressed out, and her heart rate was dropping with every contraction.

When the doctors decided to put fluids

BACK INTO my uterus — a procedure which turned out to be extremely painful — I finally broke down crying and asked for an epidural.

As the anesthesiologist walked in, he asked, “It says on your chart that you’re allergic to lidocaine. Didn’t your doctors tell you that you’re not eligible for an epidural?”

No...

No they didn’t.

The on call doctor walked in hurriedly, shocked by the fact that my OB had never explained this to me.

She gave me two options: I could continue to labor (without food or pain meds) for what could be another 24+ hours as they ramped up the pitocin (a drug used to induce the baby to come out) and risk my baby’s safety, or have a c-section right away, alone and unconscious, under general anesthesia, without my husband by my side.

I will never forget the heartbroken look on the stoic anesthesiologist’s face, when my voice broke as I realized that choosing the c-section meant I would not only be alone, but that I would also miss my daughter’s first moments of life.

After allowing myself a few moments to feel my feelings, I went into a deep state of reflection. I knew that I needed to choose the c-section.

Within minutes, I was rushed into the operating room. I cried profusely as I said goodbye to Kevin, and before I knew it, I was lying naked on a cold metal operating table.

Stevie Wonder was playing on a speaker in the background. The medical team was joking around with each other as they shaved me and prepared their equipment. I laid shivering, with my back feeling like it was breaking under the pressure of my enormous belly. I felt more alone than I’ve ever felt, surrounded by strangers who were simply experiencing another day on the job... while I was trying to keep myself from falling apart.

I don’t know if I’ve ever felt more grateful for my meditation practice than I was at that moment. As my surgical team moved around me, and I was on the



verge of a panic attack, I anchored myself, observing my breath as I slipped into the darkness.

Before I knew it, I woke up from my deep sleep and there she was. There they were. Kevin was holding our daughter as my teeth chattered and my body shook violently from the anesthesia.

All of a sudden, there was only love. Consuming me. The past 24 hours didn’t matter anymore. HOW she was born didn’t matter, only that she was safe and we were finally together.

As soon as I stopped shaking, Kevin put our new baby in my arms, and all I could think, after ten months of pregnancy, 24 hours of labor, and having my body cut open was:

“My baby is finally here with me.”

Naively, I had never imagined that I would have a c-section as a healthy 27 year old, let alone miss my child’s first breaths. I allowed doctors to knock me unconscious and cut me open. Somehow in the moment, I truly thought that made me weak. But now I can recognize the strength and courage it took to make that decision.

As I write this, I’m watching my 3 month

old daughter napping on our bed, and my heart feels so full. Her birth was nothing like I’d planned, but I’m glad I reacted with mindfulness and equanimity to circumstances that were out of my control.

After Amelia Sky was born, I noticed that my mind quickly went back to its old habits, drifting into past and future, thinking about things that are outside of the Here & Now.

It quickly regressed from “my baby is finally here with me” to “I need to do this, I need to remember that, oh no I forgot to...”

But when I look into my daughter’s sparkling eyes, I know that the only thing in her mind is “My Mommy is here with me!”

So my mindfulness practice at this point is to be fully HERE with my daughter... to be the mommy that she needs me to be.

More than anything that I need to do for myself or for other people, baby Sky needs her mommy to be here with her.

Life is short, and none of us will be around forever. May we all have the perspective, inclination and wisdom, to be fully here with the ones that we love. →



As I sit here now, writing this on my iPhone, my baby daughter coos and caws, punching wildly at a yellow plastic Big Bird hanging above her play mat.

She's three months old, still figuring out how to use her arms and legs.

Half of my mind is focused on writing these words, while the other half flits, semi-consciously, between six simultaneous messaging conversations with subscribers, freelancers, and employees who are all urgently demanding my attention.

Every time I look up from my phone and see my daughter's joyful smiles, it feels as if I'm seeing her from a thousand miles away, obscured by the veil of thoughts that covers my eyes, clouds my vision, and separates me from my beloved Sky.

Even though my eyes look in her direction, I'm not really seeing her.

Instead of focusing on her smiling face, my eyes are focusing on the thoughts, floating before me, somewhere in the space between us. It is barely as an afterthought that the vague, unfocused shape of my baby daughter appears, hazy and blurred, beyond the dense gray fog.

Every so often I think to myself, "Why am I doing this?!? I should get down on the floor and Be Here Now and enjoy this moment with my beautiful baby!" And yet... here I am, writing these words.

I've found it hard to strike that "perfect" balance between family and work, between presence and production, between building a global magazine company... and being here with my baby daughter, to experience these precious first moments of her life, and, perhaps even more importantly, for her to feel that her daddy is here with her, in this scary and exciting new world.

The most important priority in my life right now is to savor these moments of being with my daughter as she first begins to experience the world. I know that these moments will never, ever come again, and that her heart is warmed by my presence and attention just as much as my heart is warmed by hers.

I also know that 50 years from now, in

the year 2071, I'll be reading this Letter, remembering this moment, wishing I could give anything to spend just one more moment with my baby Sky. And in 100 years, she'll be floating in her space hospital, surrounded by her own children, looking down upon the pale blue Earth and wishing she could be with her daddy... even for just one more moment.

But to be a good father, to provide for my family, to make the world a better place and be a contributing member of society, I know that I need to sacrifice some of our time together on the altar of creation and productivity.

For as long as we can remember, humans have had to work for food, shelter, stability and security. I know that this is a natural part of life, and that I'm experiencing the same sort of struggles that my ancestors have experienced for

millennia.

Therefore I am committed to balancing love & work as gracefully and enjoyably as I possibly can. Here are three meditative practices that have been helping me maintain a happy balance:

1. Being fully present with Baby and Work in their own times

When I'm in work-mode and baby-mode at the same time, I'm not fully present with either. When I look at Sky through the veil of thoughts, I'm not really seeing her. Instead I'm seeing all the work problems that I'm dealing with, and the baby almost feels like a distraction, stirring up anxiety & resentment instead of joy & love. I can force my mind into baby-mode for a moment or two, but it is a constant struggle to ward off the distracting thoughts.

That's why I've carved out my mornings to take care of Sky, fully in baby-mode, while Jovanna gets some much-needed sleep. I call this my "Mindfulness of Baby" time: a time to meditate, be present with my daughter & enjoy being alive. And I've carved out my afternoons to be fully present and focused on work-mode.

This system works well, but not perfectly. Sometimes work fires burn down my baby time, and baby's needs scream into my work space. Which is why I also need to practice:

2. Practicing Mindfulness of Distraction in the chaos moments

Presence comes naturally when you're in a "flow" state, totally zoned into one experience at a time... whether it's playing with a baby, building a company, dancing to music, or falling into a lover's eyes.

Practicing presence in moments of chaos, distraction & scatterbrain is another dance entirely.

Many new meditators assume that "multitasking" and "scatterbrain" are antithetical to "presence" and "mindfulness." I prefer to view those "chaos moments" as just another type of "situation" in which to practice presence. Sure, it's great to do one thing at a time and have a single-pointed mind. But for all the other moments, I find it a much more useful and empowering mindset to practice Mindfulness of Distraction.

Practicing Mindfulness of Distraction requires equanimity. This moment is not "bad," it's just another beautiful, challenging opportunity to practice presence and equanimity and enjoy being alive!

If you can be present with chaos, distraction & scatterbrain — if you can experience messy situations as cohesive, Unified experiences of being alive, a beautiful human animal, a whirlwind of matter and energy that is just as awe-inspiring a part of The Universe as the roaring nuclear infernos of the Sun and the Stars — then you can be present in (and actually enjoy) any moment of your life. Which brings me to...

Is anyone here?

She's so sweet and present. I should write my Letter From The Editor about how my thoughts distract me from being present with her and how she deserves better, how it's sad to let her down in that way, and how I should be here with her instead of thinking about the...

Omg I was supposed to upload Ogelby's article last week... he's gonna be so annoyed at me for being so late... this baby is taking up all of my time, but I don't want to complain... why won't she let me put her down? ... Oh no I totally forgot to edit Izzy's article too... hopefully she'll fall asleep soon...

Mai mommy is here with me

3. Realizing that human struggles are a beautiful part of the play of the Universe

Humans often think of ourselves as separate from the rest of the Universe, but we are just as much "The Universe" as any planet, nebula or galaxy.

So when I encounter distracting situations, I go into my inner body, and shift my perspective from feeling like a "separate human" (who is experiencing difficulties), to feeling (through the actual, physical body sensations) my actual, physical experience of Being The Universe.

When I shift my perspective in this way, all the little "problems" lose their edge. They even become kind of amusing, as the play of the Universe majestically unfolds.

And instead of getting stressed out about balancing love & work & everything

else in life, I can enthusiastically enjoy the game.

I hope this magazine can provide you with meditations, practices, and mindsets that help you through the struggles in your own life, in the way that they have helped me in mine.

While this letter happens to be about my own personal experience with my baby daughter, you can use these same meditative practices and insights in any relationship— be it spending time with an elderly parent, a friend or a new romantic partner —and indeed any life situation that happens to arise.

For now, since this is the Powerful Women in Meditation issue, I'll leave it to the ladies to carry it the rest of the way. I'll see you in the next one :-)

Until next time. May you be well 💕

115

Powerful Women Who Meditate

These are 115 of the most powerful female meditators in the world.

They have risen to the tops of their fields by dint of exceptional intelligence, hard work, talent... and yes, sometimes beauty, privilege and luck as well.

These women are as different as can be — I believe there's a joke here somewhere, about Amma, Lady Gaga, and Kendall Jenner walking into a bar — but somehow, after scouring the internets and compiling our giant list, we sat back and sized up the terrain. It's hard not to get the feeling that there is some subtle pattern at play here, some deep connection that these exceptional women all share.

Maybe it's a personality thing, maybe it's an intelligence thing, maybe it's an ambition thing, it's hard to say for sure. But the one thing that we know for sure that all these women have in common is a meditation practice.

Extrapolate from that as you will.

PLEASE NOTE:

Just because someone is included in this list does not mean we agree with everything they do and say.

The women on this list have made meditation central to their lives to varying degrees. Some may hold meditation as the core of everything they do, while for others, meditation may be more peripheral.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive, ordered, or "ranked" list. We know there are many more powerful women in meditation and we would love to hear about the ones that inspire you! Tag @meditationmag on Instagram to let us know!

There are many articles on the internet (incorrectly) listing famous people who meditate. We did our best to fact check this list, but if we made a mistake and listed someone who does not meditate, please feel free to let us know and we will publish a correction in the next issue!

Gurus, Teachers & Activists

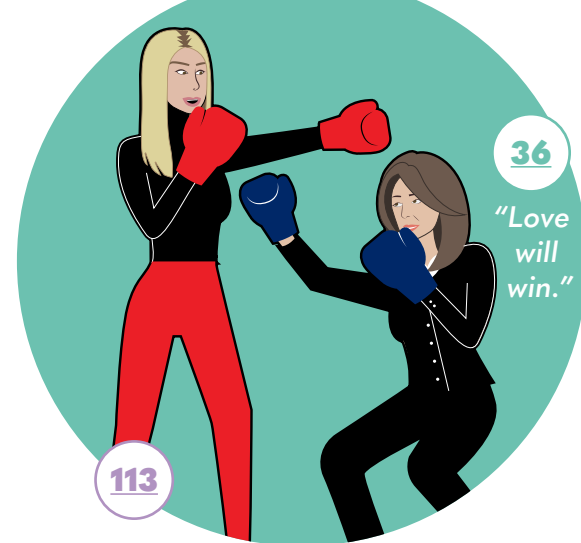
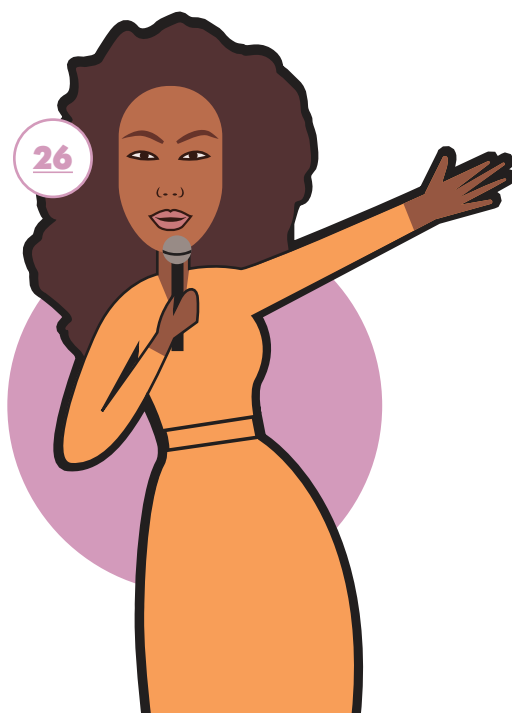
1. Amma
2. Pema Chodron
3. Gangaji
4. Tara Brach
5. Sharon Salzberg
6. Rachel Brathen
7. Meka Leach
8. Shelly Tygielski
9. Laura Hof
10. Dianne Bondy
11. Jessamyn
12. Shinge Roshi
13. Kino MacGregor
14. Adriene Mishler
15. Mother Meera
16. Pat Rockman
17. Janice Marturano
18. Dr. Vandana Shiva
19. BK Shivani

Athletes

20. Michelle Waterson
21. Jamie Anderson
22. Brie Bella
23. Nikki Bella
24. Rose Numejantas
25. Chelsea Keefer

Media & Influencers

26. Oprah Winfrey
27. Ariana Huffington
28. Ellen DeGeneres
29. Radhi Shetty
30. Tabitha Brown
31. Ayesha Curry
32. Maria Menounos
33. Sister Jenna



Politicians

34. Michelle Obama
35. Tulsi Gabbard
36. Marianne Williamson
37. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Musicians

38. Lady Gaga
39. Madonna
40. Beyoncé
41. Alicia Keys
42. Sheryl Crow
43. Katy Perry
44. Camila Cabello
45. Selena Gomez
46. Demi Lovatto
47. Ellie Goulding
48. Tina Turner
49. Jah9
50. Paula Abdul
51. Willow Smith
52. Jewel
53. Kelly Rowland
54. Jhené Aiko

Models

55. Kendall Jenner
56. Giselle Bündchen
57. Jasmine Sanders
58. Miranda Kerr
59. Elle Macpherson

“You can't do a meditation on death and stay in a situation that's not authentic.”

Actresses

60. Susan Sarandon
61. Cameron Diaz
62. Michelle Rodriguez
63. Jennifer Aniston
64. Jennifer Lopez
65. Jessica Alba
66. Kristen Bell
67. Heather Graham
68. Kate Hudson
69. Goldie Hawn
70. Miley Cyrus
71. Eva Longoria
72. Lena Dunham
73. Emma Watson
74. Olivia Newton-John
75. Susan Sarandon
76. Liv Tyler
77. Eva Mendez
78. Cameron Diaz
79. Julia Roberts

80. Rosario Dawson
81. Priyanka Chopra
82. Kerry Washington
83. Michelle Yeoh
84. Emilia Clarke
85. Mayim Bialik
86. Natalie Dormer
87. Megan Fox
88. Emma Stone
89. Hilary Swank
90. Angelina Jolie
91. Kate Bosworth
92. Naomi Watts
93. Sofia Vergara
94. Gwyneth Paltrow

Scientists & Academics

95. Dr. Sarah Lazar
96. Dr. Amishi Jha
97. Dr. Brene Brown
98. Dr. Ellen Langer
99. Dr. Shauna Shapiro

Comediennes

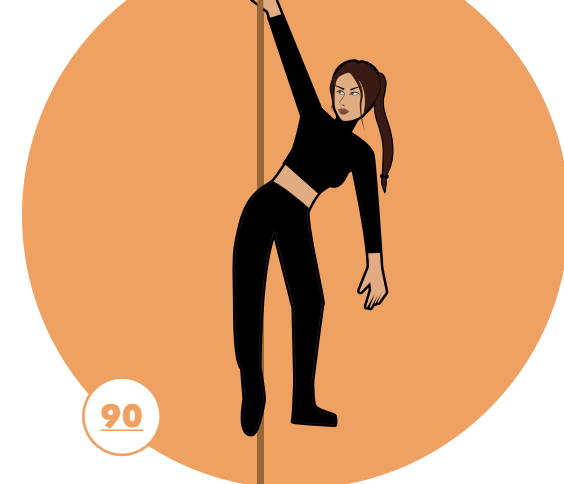
100. Lilly Singh
101. Amy Schumer

Chefs

102. Deliciously Ella
103. Sahara Rose
104. Sadia Badii

Authors

105. Elizabeth Gilbert
106. Jen Pastiloff
107. Glennon Doyle
108. Abraham (Esther) Hicks
109. Marie Kondo

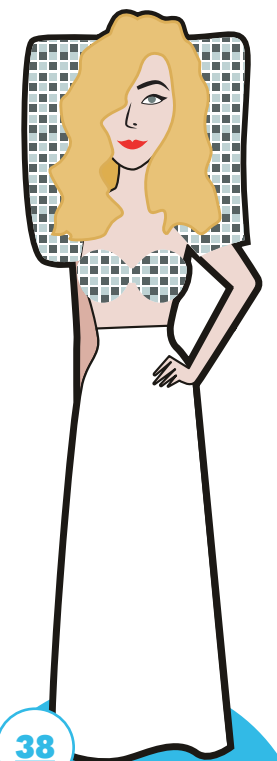


Artists

110. Tori Pope
111. Brandi Young

Executives, Royalty & Philanthropists

112. Melinda Gates
113. Ivanka Trump
114. Meghan Markle
115. Padmasree Warrior



“You will never find what you are looking for in love, if you don't love yourself.”

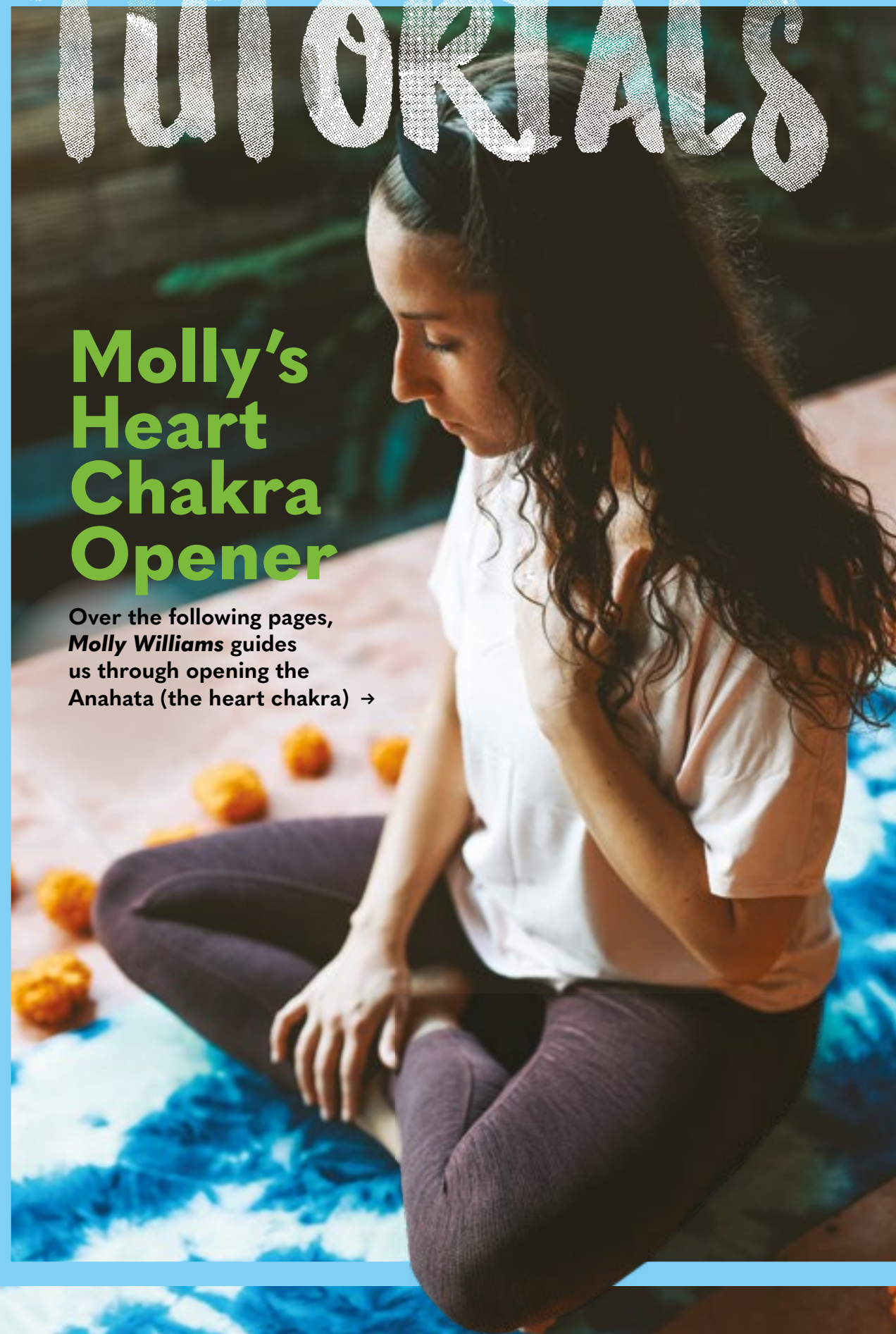
"WHEN,
BY THE FLOOD OF YOUR TEARS
THE INNER AND THE OUTER
HAVE FUSED INTO ONE,
YOU WILL FIND HER
WHOM YOU SOUGHT
WITH SUCH ANGUISH,
NEARER THAN THE NEAREST,
THE VERY BREATH OF LIFE,
THE VERY CORE
OF EVERY HEART."
Anandamayī Ma



TUTORIALS

Molly's Heart Chakra Opener

Over the following pages,
Molly Williams guides
us through opening the
Anahata (the heart chakra) →



Through this practice, we are going to focus on opening the Anahata (the heart chakra), and creating space in the center of the chest.

Allow the eyes to close, and the hands to gently come to the chest.

As the hands rest, witness your experience of being alive in this moment, and feel the rise and fall of the breath.

Give yourself permission to notice this space, and any sensations or thoughts that may begin to surface.

Take a moment to pause here in this area of the heart chakra, and to reflect.

The heart chakra is the fourth chakra, and it's associated with feelings of love, empathy, acceptance, and compassion. When a block is present in the heart chakra, it may manifest as feelings of isolation, jealousy, defensiveness, and a fear of intimacy. As you continue to take inventory of the heart chakra, begin to notice any sensations of blockage, or feelings of being closed off.

When you are ready, release the hands, and rest the palms toward the sky. Allow the body to begin to melt into this meditation practice.

Start to visualize a green light forming in the chest, and as you breathe in, allow the light to grow stronger.

With the breath out, allow any negativity, doubts, fears, and anxieties to exit the body and be released. Imagine the light expanding, and becoming more detailed with every breath in.

As you continue to hold the green light

in this heart chakra area, start to think about someone, or something, you love or feel deeply connected to. This could be a love for yourself, a pet, a family member or friend. Allow a sense of deep love and compassion to surface as you bring this person or thing to mind. Start to allow accompanying thoughts, sensations, and feelings to come to mind. How does this loving connection feel to you? Through this heart chakra space, allow a sense of opening, as love begins to pour out of you. Hold this person or thing in the mind as you say, "Love is within, and all around me." Visualize the heart chakra opening and clearing as the mantra is spoken.

As you continue to focus on opening the heart chakra, create space in the heart area, and allow the green light to start to spread throughout the body.

Through your visualization this green light expands into the surrounding areas, carrying with it a sense of love (and maybe forgiveness). We often say things within ourselves that we wouldn't say to our least favorite person on the planet. In this space, allow yourself to forgive, and to find a sense of compassion for all that you are, and all that you have. As you focus on forgiveness, and continue to let the light expand, say once again, "Love is within, and all around me."

Once the light has spread throughout the entire body, pause for a moment to be held in this space of love.

Take inventory of how you feel, and continue to let go of any sensation of being blocked or holding back.

Placing the hands on the heart once again, and with a sense of kindness and respect,

say: "Love is within, and all around me."

Allow this heart chakra space to feel open, available, and clear.

Take a few expansive breaths into this area, and continue to find a sense of balance within.

Through this practice you have opened and cleared the heart chakra, allowing you to realign to a place of love.

Release the hands when you are ready, and carry this practice with you into your day.

Continuing to remind yourself of the love you have within, and the love that is all around us.

Thank you for this practice. ●

About Molly

Molly Williams lives in Upstate New York with her husband and Bernese Mountain Dog named Stella. She enjoys traveling the world, buying way too many books, and propagating houseplants. During the pandemic Molly was battling a serious infection, and decided to dive deeper into her meditation practice while she navigated the uncertainty. It was in this challenging chapter that Molly created a daily meditation podcast called Molly's Mornings, to promote healing, mental health awareness, and hope. Molly's Mornings is now played by thousands of listeners from around the world, and continues to shed a light on the importance of taking time for ourselves.



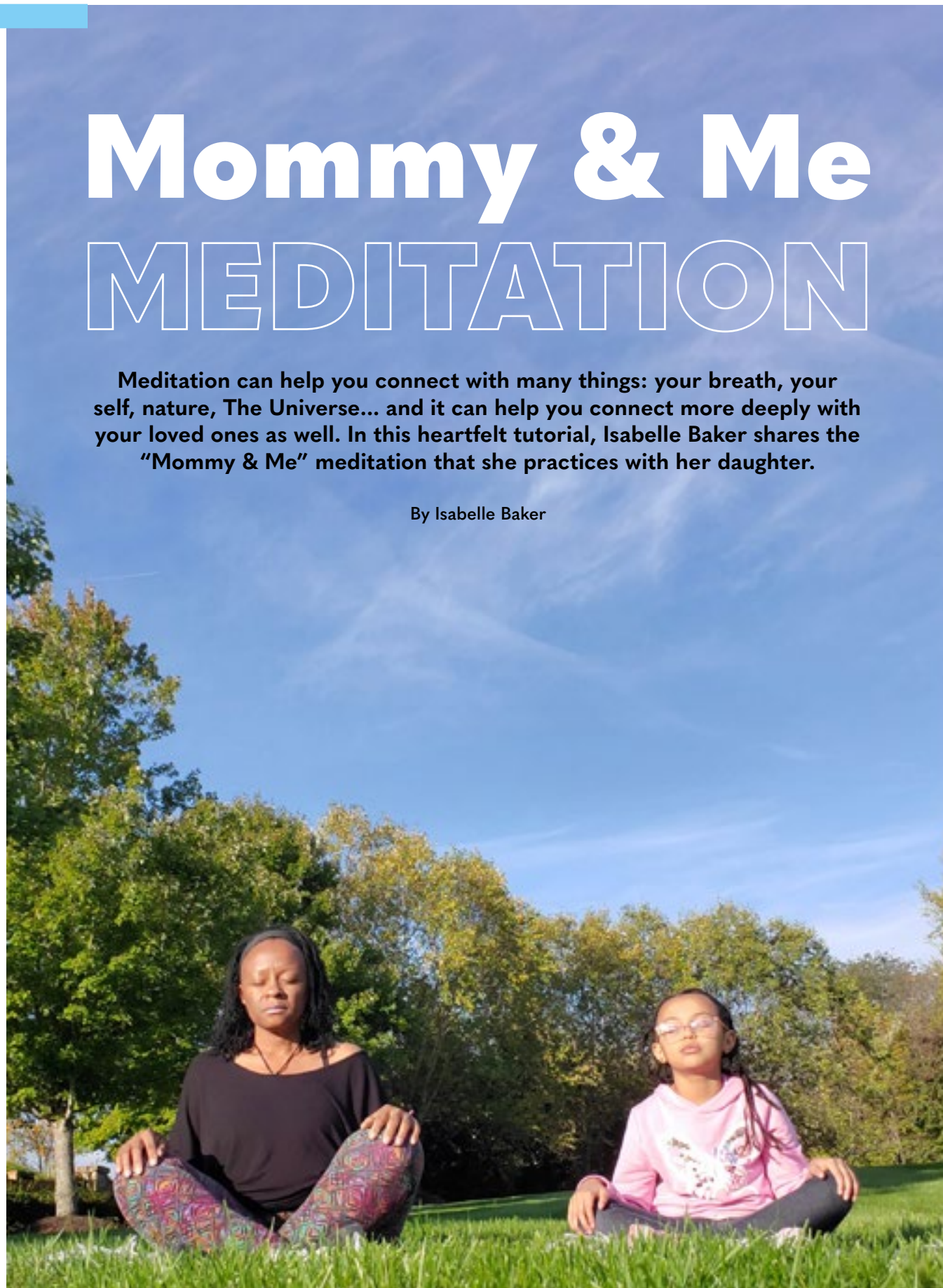
YOU CAN FIND MOLLY'S MORNINGS ON SPOTIFY, OR SIMPLY SCAN THE QR CODE



Mommy & Me MEDITATION

Meditation can help you connect with many things: your breath, your self, nature, The Universe... and it can help you connect more deeply with your loved ones as well. In this heartfelt tutorial, Isabelle Baker shares the “Mommy & Me” meditation that she practices with her daughter.

By Isabelle Baker



Practicing mindfulness meditation with a child can be such a joy! Watching a child’s eyes light up while venturing on a mindful walk or even participating in a mindful eating exercise warms my heart.

Mindfulness meditation is a powerful way for children to identify and regulate emotions.

For children, “paying attention in a special way” creates a new awareness of surroundings, emotions, and sensations. Some children may be curious, while others may be more reserved, or not interested in participating at all (and that is okay). Remember, practicing mindfulness looks different for everyone.

Practicing mindfulness meditation with a child can create a wonderful bond. During the beginning of the pandemic, I began a “Mommy and Me” Meditation practice. My goal was to stay connected with my seven-year-old daughter during a monumental shift in both of our lives. It became an amazing way for us as mother and daughter to remain grounded during times of change. Today, we would like to share our practice with you! Below are a few tips to help as you begin your journey...

Simple Sits

1. Find a meditation space that works for you. It could be sitting in a chair with something to support your back with your feet on the floor, criss-cross applesauce, or even lying down. It could be outdoors and connecting with nature, or in the comfort of your own home. Whatever is best for you.
2. Feel free to enjoy a Mommy and Me Meditation with or without music. Using soundscapes or the assistance of a trained meditation guide is another option to consider when beginning a new personal meditation practice. There are many tutorials available via video or app that can be helpful. My daughter and I tried many different techniques until we found

what was best for us. Remember, this is a personal journey, so be sure it is a good fit for you.

3. Next, as you begin to settle into a comfortable space, feel free to close your eyes or keep your eyes open. If your child doesn’t want to close their eyes, no worries. It is perfectly fine to practice mindfulness with your eyes open. Children may also open their eyes throughout their meditation practice and that’s perfectly okay. We want our children to feel safe and comfortable while meditating.

4. Now that we are all settled, let’s begin with taking a few deep breaths. Continue to breathe in and out while noticing the breath. Slowly begin to settle into your normal breathing pattern. A great way to help your child focus on the breath is to use a feather or a light object that can move freely. Place the object at half arms length and encourage the child to blow on the object. Now they are able to see and experience the breath. As you bring the mindfulness meditation to an end, allow

children to slowly come out of meditation by inviting them to wiggle their fingers and feet.

5. Always remember that mindfulness looks different for everyone. Children may not sit completely still and that’s okay. When you notice a child beginning to stray, gently remind them that it’s okay to get distracted and to return to the breath. Repeat the breathing exercise as many times as you like. My daughter and I practice as often as needed.

Mindfulness meditation is great for both children and adults, helping to bring awareness to the present moment without judgement. Finding the time to incorporate a consistent meditation practice into your daily regimen, just for yourself or with your children, can be life changing.

My goal is to reach every child possible, sharing the gift of mindfulness and hoping they share it with a friend. ●

Check out our Mommy and Me Meditation on IG TV @Izzi_Meditates!

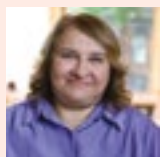


PHOTOGRAPHS: ISABELLE & DAUGHTER: ISABELLE BAKER, SKY: ANASTASIYA VRAGOVA, CLOUD: VIKAYATSKINA FROM FREEPIK

10 Minute Loving Kindness Meditation

Read our full interview with Sharon on page 78

Loving Kindness Meditation can help you open your heart to yourself, to loved ones, and even to not-so-loved ones. In Forrest Neal's interview with Sharon Salzberg, Sharon opened with this beautiful meditation:



Sharon Salzberg

I would invite everybody to sit comfortably. You can close your eyes, or not. However you feel most at ease.

Just see if you can settle your energy, your attention, into your body.

The way I like to do loving kindness practice is the silent repetition of certain phrases.

The phrases are like gift-giving. They're offering, to ourselves and to others. Instead of, for example, obsessing about our faults one more time, we actually kind of change channels, and wish ourselves well.

And with others, instead of taking them for granted or looking through them and objectifying them, we take a moment to look at them and wish them well through the phrases.

It's not a practice where you have to try to conjure up or manufacture a special feeling. The power of the practice is actually from gathering all of our attention behind one phrase at a time.

So I'll guide you through just one example of that.

Classically, the first recipient [of our loving-kindness gifts] is ourselves. So you might use repeat phrases, like: "May I be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease."

"Live with ease" means that the things of day-to-day life, like livelihood and family, might not be such a struggle. May I live with ease. May I be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

And people often ask me, just because of the grammatical construction, "Who am I asking?" We're not asking anybody anything. We're gift-giving. We're offering. It's like you hand someone a birthday card and say, "May you have a great year!" It's a sense of blessing: May I be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

And if you find your attention wandering, which it commonly does, to the past, to the future, to judgment, to speculation... when you notice that you're no longer with the phrases, see if you can gently let go. It's what one of my teachers once called "exercising the 'letting go' muscle". See if you can gently let go. And without judgment or rancor, simply return your attention to the repetition of the phrases. So we let go, and we begin again.

Now, see if you can call to mind someone that we call a benefactor. That's someone who's helped you. Maybe they've helped you directly, they've helped pick you up when you've fallen down, or maybe they've inspired you from afar. This is like a symbol, a representation of the force of love for you. Could be an adult, could be a child, could be a pet. It's someone who, when you think of them, you smile. So, if there's someone like that in your life, bring them here. You can get an image of them, or say their name to yourself,

get a feeling for their presence, and offer the phrases of loving kindness to them. Even if the words don't seem quite right, it doesn't matter. Because they're like the vehicle for the heart's energy. So they're serving us. "May you be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease."

Maybe there's someone you know, who's having a difficult time right now. Bring them here and offer the phrases of loving kindness to them. May you be safe. Be happy. Be healthy. Live with ease.

Now let's have a gathering. Just whoever comes to mind. Friends, family, colleagues, those doing well, those not doing so well. We'll offer loving kindness to the collective, to the group. May you be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

And then all beings everywhere. All people, all creatures, all those in existence, near and far, known and unknown. May all beings be safe, be happy, be healthy, live with ease.

And when you feel ready, you can open your eyes, or lift your gaze, and we'll end the meditation. ●



A Mindful Moment With Tara Brach

Mindfulness Meditation can help you stay centered and present in the Here & Now. It can help you find deep peace by observing and accepting reality as it is. In Kevin's interview with Tara Brach, Tara opened with this beautiful meditation:

Wherever you are, try to make yourself as comfortable as possible.

Even though you might be sitting upright, try your best to relax and be at ease in mind and body.

Either close your eyes or allow your gaze to be downcast, and let's start together, just coming together with the breath.

It's so beautiful just to take a really long, deep breath.

Now count to five as you slowly breathe in and fill the chest and lungs.

And then, on the out breath, count to five and release... just let go...

Once again, take in a long deep breath...

And with the outbreath, slowly breathe out so you can actually feel the release of the air through the nostrils. Just let go...

And one more time, inhaling deeply...

Followed by a slow out breath... a smooth, even, release... letting go, letting go. Then, as the breath resumes its natural rhythm, simply observe it. Feel it... noticing that there's a bit more of a sense of being collected and present, even after just a few slow breaths.

Now, gently and mindfully, scan your whole body, and see if you can sense any tension or tightness present - any part that you feel really wants to let go a little bit more.

It can be really helpful to bring your awareness to the shoulders. It might be helpful to imagine the melting of ice to water and then the evaporation of water to a vapor. And, once again... letting go...

Let your hands rest gently, and allow the hands to release and soften. See if you can notice a tingling, or a vibrating sensation there.

Let the chest remain open and the abdominal area relaxed, and let the next breath be received as the belly softens.

This breath and the next... again and again...

Feel the breath, the aliveness deep in the torso, and be aware that the whole body is a field of sensation. Feel the breath as a stream in that field. And open your awareness also to the sounds around you, so that you are listening and feeling this whole moment.. relaxed... awake.. at home in the present.

And, as a way of closing this short meditation, you might listen deeply in order

to sense the state of your heart right now, whatever mood or emotion is present.

And in this moment, kindness can be offered inwardly by way of a wish or blessing, or perhaps a simple message, as a way of reminding ourselves of what really matters.

And now, sensing the heart's pace, as we send our wishes, prayers and blessings to all beings.

Finally, take a few full, deep breaths and open your eyes.

Namaste! Blessings! Thank you! ●



Read our full interview with Tara on page 52





Read our full
interview
with Meka
on page 74

Meditating with Meka

Guided Visualization meditations can take you on a journey. In Kevin's insta-live with Meka Leach (a 12-year-old meditation teaching prodigy), Meka guided listeners through this unique & creative meditation:



Get really comfortable, in a seated position.

Try to keep your back really straight.

When you're ready, you're gonna close your eyes and breathe in.. and breathe out.. become aware of your breath.

Feel: is your breath deep? Is it short? Is it long? Or is it shallow? Find out where your breath is at.

Now breathe, here in this moment, and feel your body relaxing.

Feel your hands, as if they're slowly melting.
Feel your fingers, almost like they're falling asleep.
Feel your face melt, feel your mouth relaxing, your jaw...
Feel your higher body.

Letting go of any worries or any doubts that you have right now.

And just breathe here.

Feel yourself releasing any negative energy down into the earth, and feel the earth filling you back up with love and light energy.

Feel your whole entire body coming at peace.
And now just breathe here for one minute. One or two breaths. And we're gonna breathe here in this relaxed energy.

Now, after your body is completely relaxed, imagine yourself on the beach, standing with your feet in the warm sand.

Feel your feet in the warm sand, and then feel yourself being very hot outside, with the sun warming up your skin.

Feel... it's very hot! And feel yourself at peace here.

And when you look up to the sky, it's all blue, there are no clouds. And smile here for a minute. Just give a big smile, feel yourself loving this air at the beach. You can hear the waves in the distance.

Now, let's start to imagine, next time you look up to the sky, you see three seagulls flying above you. Imagine these three seagulls calling out your name. They say: "Follow me!" So then follow these three seagulls and see yourself walking down the beach, following these three seagulls that are guiding you forward.

Now imagine that one slowly starts to fly away. Then the other one slowly starts to disappear. And then the next time you look back up, they are all gone.

Imagine you're standing in this warm sand, this hot heat, and you can't see any seagulls. You try to find them, to follow them back, but you don't see them anymore.

Now imagine, next time you look down at the sand, you see a silver seashell. Imagine you see this silver seashell in the sand and you pick up the seashell. And imagine that this is not only just a silver seashell, it also has other colors. Colors that are sacred and special to you. Your favorite colors are in the seashell.

And feel this seashell sending you love and amazing good energy. Feel the seashell sending you out this amazing energy. And imagine that you slowly start to send this sea shell back out love and light. Hold this seashell close to your heart, and feel it beating with your heart.

Feel this seashell sending you love, as you send it love back too.

Now take a few breaths, just to breathe with this seashell.

Now start to imagine that you're slowly drifting

off the beach, and you're moving into your happy place, wherever that may be. If it's real or if it's fake, imagine yourself drifting off to your happy place.

Feel yourself drifting off into your happy place with the seashell. And just breathe here in your happy place, with this seashell sending you love. And say in your head:

**I am safe.
I am loved.
I am enough.
I am powerful.**

Now just breathe here in your happy place with your seashell. And breathe here.

And when you're ready, slowly start to drift out of your happy place.

Slowly start to send love out to every person that is reading this or doing this meditation. Not only yourself, but send out love to everybody, and feel yourself receiving love from everybody.

Give a big smile to send out all this beautiful love.

When you're done, you can stop sending out this energy, and feel yourself still receiving a little bit of it.

When you're ready, slowly start to wiggle your fingers, circle out your wrists, bring some life back into your body. Rub your hands together. Feel the heat in between your hands. And cup your hands over your eyes. Then open your eyes into the darkness (inside your cupped hands) and then the light (by removing your hands from your eyes).

You can release your hands, and if you haven't already, you can open your eyes. ●

Featured Yoga Posture

UTPLUTHIH

Literally translated as “sprung-up,” Utpluthih uses the power of the charged inner body to spring upward both physically and energetically. It is a true test of mental and spiritual endurance, and most students find it overwhelming. But with regular practice and good technique, anyone can perform it and receive its benefits.

By Featured Yogi:
Kino MacGregor

About Kino

Kino is the founder of Omstars and the co-founder of Miami Life Center. She is an author of a bunch of books and she loves to be in the sun and drink coconuts. If you want to learn more from Kino, check out www.Omstars.com and follow her on all socials @kinoyoga.

How to practice Utpluthih in 10 steps



1. Sit in your favorite lotus style meditation posture. It's easiest to lift up when you're in full lotus, but cross legged is ok too.
2. Place your hands on the floor or on blocks in front of your pelvis and about mid-thigh.
3. Spread your fingers gently apart and consciously build a strong foundation with your shoulders.
4. Engage your deltoids, latissimus dorsi muscles, seratus anterior muscles, and rhomboids while you prepare to lift your body off the ground.

5. Close your hip joints, draw the lower ribs towards the center, engage your abdomen in strongly, and activate your pelvic floor to lift your knees into your chest.

6. Inhale as you lean forward into the solid foundation of your arms and fire up the interior spaces of your pelvis to lift your body off the floor.

7. Use every muscle you have to do this lift, because each part of the body is responsible for lifting itself.

8. Press strongly into your arms, engage your legs, draw your abdomen farther in, squeeze your rib cage, press into your fingertips, and activate your transverse abdominal muscles.

9. Make your breath long, slow, steady, and deep. Ignore temptation to quicken or shorten your breath.

10. Stay in this lift for 10 breaths or more, even if you have to come down and raise back up again.

Benefits of Utpluthih

Utpluthih is a static strength building pose that helps build a deep connection to the bandhas. Since this asana is typically held for longer than five breaths, regular practice also strengthens mental endurance.



TIPS & TRICKS

Do not think about lifting up. Instead lean forward and allow the “up” to happen.

Don't get frustrated. It takes time, maybe a few months or even years of practice.

Don't kick the legs. Just press firmly down and work your core strength.



CAUTIONS

If you cannot raise your pelvis off the ground or have a wrist or shoulder injury, simply raise your knees into your chest and hold for a few breaths.

If you cannot do full lotus pose, don't force it. Try with a simple cross legged position.



My Uninspiring Juice Cleanse Story

For many people, a juice fast can be a thoroughly blissful experience. For Jovanna... not so much.

By Jovanna Benavente

It was Day 3 of our Juice Cleanse, and I did not give a single f*ck.

Kevin kept telling me I was falling behind on my juices, so I told him how I felt.

“I don’t give a f*ck. Like, I don’t think you understand. I don’t give a f*ck.”

Kevin’s insistence on drinking juices during our juice fast was getting on my nerves.

Each morning we began our day with probiotic ginger shots. Each morning I grimaced, while Kevin squealed with delight.

Returning to a state of disciplined and mindful eating was proving harder than I’d anticipated.

If Kevin weren’t so disciplined, constantly reminding me that this juice cleanse was my idea, I would definitely be eating pizza right now.

Ironically, I was the one who had organized this whole juice fast. I had been looking forward to it, and he had been dreading it.

During my pandemic pregnancy, I’d often felt sorry for myself, and gobbled up sugar and carbohydrates in massive quantities.

One day, when I was eight months pregnant, I was drinking a Suja juice... just because I happen to love green juice, and ain’t nobody got the energy to clean the four million parts of a juicer in their third trimester. Well, maybe you did, but I definitely didn’t.

As I was drinking my green juice, I thought of a (seemingly) brilliant idea. We should do a 3-day Suja juice fast this summer!

And maybe they’ll even send me all the juices for free if I write about it in the magazine

“It’ll be refreshing,” I thought. It’ll be a perfect detox from my oreos and potato chips pregnancy, and I won’t have to worry about cooking for a few days.



It was the perfect plan. What could go wrong?

Note to self (and perhaps to you, dear reader): green juice is delicious, but drinking eight of them per day while only supplementing with raw fruits and veggies is hard AF (especially when you’re breastfeeding and crave pasta and cookies).

While those three days felt like an eternity, and I’m pretty sure I won’t

be doing another juice cleanse anytime soon, the experience helped me realize that I was a slave to my senses.

I realized that my relationship with food during pregnancy was a toxic one. I allowed myself to overindulge in whatever I was craving, because food was the only “drug” that I could use to soothe my anxiety during pregnancy. Eating was my way of distracting myself from my feelings and my fears.

It was a challenging (and looonnnnggg) three days, but also extremely enlightening. It truly served as a reset button for me, and my relationship with food has vastly improved since completing my juice cleanse. I have returned to a state of balance, seeing food as not only a source of pleasure, but of nutrition; a way to fuel my body so that I can feel healthy and strong.

As a new mom, I genuinely enjoy the convenience and delicious taste of all the Suja juices, but going forward I’ll just stick to drinking them when I actually feel like it.

P.S. Kevin wanted me to tell you that he really enjoyed his juice fast and that he was super energetic and productive and he wants to do it again

Disclosure: Suja sent us the juices for free in exchange for our honest editorial coverage. Thank you Suja!

RECIPES

HOT FOR FOOD’s Delicious Plant Based Recipes

Intro by Jovanna Benavente

Hot For Food is one of the first plant-based instagram pages that I ever followed. Lauren’s plant based creations are innovative, unique, and diverse.

Whether you’re craving a delicious dessert, a Buddha bowl, a salad filled with fresh veggies, or a childhood classic that you were SURE couldn’t be made vegan AND delicious, Lauren has a recipe that will blow your mind.

A true pioneer of the plant-based revolution, we are stoked to share her plant-based creations with our MedMag Fam. →



Buffalo Chicken Mac n' Cheese

Ingredients

- 1 cup dried soy curls
- 1/2 cup buffalo-style hot sauce
- 3 tablespoons melted vegan butter
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh dill
- 2 teaspoons vegan chicken-flavored bouillon base or 1 cube
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon granulated garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped chives, divided
- 1 batch One-Pot Mac n' Cheese (see right)
- 1/2 cup finely diced carrot
- (about 1 small carrot)
- 1/2 cup finely diced celery (about 1 stalk)
- 1 batch Jalapeño Ranch (see right)

Method

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a baking sheet with a Silpat mat or parchment paper.

Put the dried soy curls in a bowl and pour water over them until covered. Let the soy curls hydrate and expand for about 10 minutes. Before draining the soy curls, reserve 2 teaspoons of the soaking liquid. Drain the soy curls in a fine-mesh sieve, squeezing out excess water.

In the same bowl, combine the reserved soaking liquid, hot sauce, melted vegan butter, apple cider vinegar, dill, bouillon base, onion powder, garlic powder, chili powder, sea salt, black pepper, and tablespoons of the chives. Reserve half the sauce for serving. Add the drained soy curls to the remaining sauce and toss with a spatula to coat evenly.

Transfer the soy curls to the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, flipping halfway through, until golden and browned in spots.

Fold half of the carrot and celery into the prepared mac n' cheese, reserving the rest for garnish.

Top each serving with the baked buffalo soy curls, the remaining buffalo sauce, and the jalapeño ranch, and garnish with the remaining carrot, celery, and chives.

One-Pot Mac n' Cheese

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup unsweetened nondairy milk
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- Pinch cayenne pepper (optional)
- 1 2/3 cups elbow macaroni
- 3/4 cup vegan Cheddar shreds
- 1 tablespoon vegan butter
- ground black pepper, to taste

Method

In a pot over medium-high heat, add the water and nondairy milk and bring to a low simmer, 5 to 6 minutes, whisking occasionally to prevent burning. The mixture will get foamy.

Turn the heat down slightly to keep the liquid at a low simmer. Whisk in the nutritional yeast, apple cider vinegar, tomato paste, Dijon, sea salt, and cayenne, until well combined. Add the macaroni and stir. Cook the mixture over a low simmer, uncovered, for 7 to 8 minutes, until al dente. (Double-check your pasta's package directions because the cook time will vary depending on the brand and what the pasta is made from.) Stir the mixture constantly to prevent sticking.

When the pasta is done, the sauce will look a little thin. Take the pot off the heat and stir in the vegan Cheddar shreds, vegan butter, and black pepper. Cover the pot for 1 to 2 minutes and then stir with a wooden spoon until the sauce thickens up and the cheese is completely melted.

Serve with extra ground black pepper, if desired, or level up your mac n' cheese with one of the variations that follow. To reheat leftovers, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of nondairy milk and heat over medium-low until warmed through.

Jalapeno Ranch

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup vegan mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons pickled jalapeños in brine (about 10 slices including brine)
- 1 tablespoon lime juice (about half a lime)
- 1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon coarsely chopped chives
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt

Method

In a high-powered blender or small food processor combine the vegan mayonnaise, pickled jalapeños, lime juice, dill, chives, onion powder, black pepper, and sea salt and blend until very smooth.

Alternatively, you can finely chop the jalapeños and herbs and combine the ingredients in a bowl or jar.

Store in the fridge for up to 10 days.



Passion Fruit Slice

Ingredients

No-Bake Graham Crust

- 9 sheets (18 squares) vegan graham crackers
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/3 cup melted vegan butter

Passion Fruit Curd

- 1/2 cup water
- 1 tablespoon agar flakes or 1 teaspoon agar powder
- 1 1/4 cups canned coconut cream (some liquid is fine)
- 1 cup passion fruit, including seeds (7 or 8 passion fruits)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar

Toppings

- Store-bought coconut whipped topping
- Mint leaves, for garnish

Method

To make the crust, in a food processor, pulse the graham crackers and sea salt into a fine crumb. Add the melted butter and pulse again until it comes together and looks like wet sand. Press evenly into a 9 1/2-inch fluted pie pan. You will have enough to go at least three-quarters of the way up the sides of the pan. Refrigerate the crust while you make the rest of the recipe.

To make the curd, in a small saucepan over medium-low heat, whisk together the water and agar. Simmer for 5 to 6 minutes, until dissolved. You shouldn't see any flecks of agar in the liquid if using flakes, and the liquid will have reduced and thickened slightly.

At the same time, in a large saucepan over medium heat, whisk together the coconut cream, passion fruit, and sugar constantly for 2 to 3 minutes, until it just starts to bubble and is warmed through. Add the dissolved agar to this and whisk until well combined, about another 2 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a heat-safe glass bowl. Whisk it constantly to cool it down and prevent it from setting too much. It cannot be added to your chilled crust until it's tepid in temperature. Constantly stirring will help cool it quicker and prevent the agar from setting.

Once the mixture has cooled to about room temperature and with no steam present, pour it into the crust and refrigerate for at least 3 hours, until chilled and set.

To serve, top with a pile of the coconut whipped topping and garnish with the mint leaves. This is best eaten on the day it's made. I would consume it within 2 days max, otherwise the crust gets a little soggy.

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Empower yourself
— with an —
Armor
of **Calm Energy**
and **Core Inner**
Strength

Lost and forgotten for generations, the rare, ancient secrets of the **OJAYA** "Armor" technique are now yours — with our 100% online Course. Learn this ultra-serene meditation with sublime videos from the Earthborn Rainforest.



QUIETLY hidden and closely-guarded for centuries, the **OJAYA** "Armor" technique is a supremely rare and powerful meditation that protects your mind and emotions with a calm "armor" of **core inner strength**. As you meditate, its soothing resonance **attacks stress**, clears out brain fog, and recharges your vital energies in

just 10-20 minutes — the perfect antidote to the fatigue and frenzy of today's fast-paced world.

Sukaishi David shares the teachings with you step by step on exquisite course videos from the Earthborn Rainforest. But to qualify to learn the ancient **OJAYA** technique, you must first watch the **FREE OJAYA Foundation Lessons**. Enjoy!

Begin the adventure **FREE** at:
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The not-for-profit School of OJAYA Deep Meditation in the Earthborn Rainforest / US Tel. 641-472-3300



PHOTOGRAPH: TRACE HUDSON FROM PEXELS

50 Hippie Havens

The world has been locked down for what feels like a lifetime. The travel bug is the new pandemic. Meditators, hippies, and other spiritual types gravitate toward new horizons, making the wanderlust very real. We were fortunate to have spent several years traveling the world, interviewing gurus for our Spirit Quest series, before settling down and starting Meditation Magazine. Here are some of our favorite hippie havens, meditation meccas, and spiritual travel destinations around the world... and some that we too are yearning to explore!

1. Machu Picchu

Peru (pictured previous page)

2. Mt Kailash

Tibet

3. Mount Fuji

Japan

4. Uluru

Australia

5 Rishikesh, India

Nestled at the base of the Indian Himalayas, with the infamous Ganges River running through it, Rishikesh is an unforgettable stop. From experiencing the Ganga Aarti (ritual of offering prayer to the Ganges river), to shopping on Lakshman Jula, to seeing monkeys trying to steal from tourists everywhere you look, this city vibrates with the magic of its natural wonders.

PHOTOS OF JOVANNA BENAVENTE BY KEVIN ELLERTON



6

Boulder, CO, USA

This beautiful mountain town at the base of the Rocky Mountains is just 30 miles NW of the more chaotic and sprawling city of Denver. Naropa University, founded by Chögyam Trungpa, sits near UC Boulder in the city's vibrant center.

From gorgeous hiking trails to great shopping on Pearl Street, Boulder has something for hippies and yuppies alike.



This photo: Jovanna Benavente takes in the views on a road above Boulder in 2014. Below: Jovanna looks out over the Ganges in Rishikesh in 2017. Photos by Kevin Ellerton.

7. Delphi

Greece

8. Mount Sinai

Egypt

9. Wild Coast

South Africa

10. Borobudur

Indonesia

11. Valley of a Thousand Temples

Burma

12. Chiang Mai

Thailand

13. Lake Atitlan

Guatemala

14

Ubud, Bali

Bali has long been known as one of the world's most famous (and infamous) spiritual travel destinations, frequented by hippies and meditators, digital nomads, surfers, instagrammers & youtubers alike. The surfers & influencers stick to the beach towns, while the hippies and meditators tend to go inland. Ubud, a city of jungles and dreadlocks and vegans and monkeys, is the hippie epicenter of the Island.

PHOTOGRAPH: KEVIN ELLERTON, AT HUBUD COWORKING SPACE, 2019, UBUD, BALI



PHOTOGRAPH: KELLY JACK FROM PEXELS

15 Angkor Wat, Cambodia

Originally dedicated to the Hindu god Vishnu, Angkor Wat became a Buddhist temple by the end of the 12th century. As you roam the grounds you will see nature overwhelming the ancient monuments; vines and trees growing around buildings, bats that have created caves in the ceilings, and monkeys that are determined to steal whatever food or possessions you may have dropped! Keep in mind that modesty of dress is required to enter, and if you are not covering your shoulders or your knees, you will need to buy clothes from the local vendors before you enter.

Pro tip: hire a tuk tuk driver for the day! For \$20-\$30, you can support a local and actually have a chance at seeing all the monuments that are spread across the 400 acre site (bonus, you will probably prevent yourself from having a heat stroke).

16. Ometepe
Nicaragua

17. Sedona
Arizona, USA

18. La Paz
Bolivia

19. Kyoto
Japan

20. Burlington
Vermont

21. Krabi
Thailand

22. Don Det
Laos

23. Greenwich Village
NYC

24. Jodhpur
India

25. Amazon Rainforest
South America

26. Mount Kilimanjaro
Tanzania

27. Ibiza
Spain

28. Chefchaouen
Morocco

29. Banff & Jasper National Parks
Canada

30
Namche Bazaar, Nepal

Namche Bazaar is a Himalayan haven on the path to the Everest Base Camp. From doctors to treat your altitude sickness and coffee shops serving real lattes (without yak milk), this modern little town surrounded by epic mountains is a magical reprieve for the trekkers in need of a rest.



Jovanna looks up at the Himalayas on an outcropping above Namche Bazaar in 2017.

PHOTOGRAPH: OZIEL GÓMEZ FROM PEXELS



31
The Pyramids of Giza, Egypt

Built as tombs for ancient Pharaohs, the Pyramids still stand, thousands of years later, as a testament to the intelligence, ingenuity, and determination of ancient civilizations.



32
Stonehenge, UK

An ancient and mysterious megalith, Stonehenge is believed to be a center for power and energy. While you're in the area check out Glastonbury, a haven where witches and pagans rejoice. Drink from the Chalice Well & climb to the top of the Tor to experience the energetic power of the place.

PHOTOGRAPH: TOMAŠ MALÍK FROM PEXELS



33 Sahara Desert, Africa

Rolling sand dunes. Big open sky. In the vast desert landscapes, you may find some peace and silence. A great place to meditate... just remember to bring lots of water and protection from the blazing sun!

34. Eugene
Oregon

35. Devil's Tower
Wyoming, USA

36. Istanbul
Turkey

37. Yosemite
California

38. Tulum
Mexico

39. Haleakala National Park
Hawaii, USA

40. Camino De Santiago
Spain

41 Pokhara, Nepal

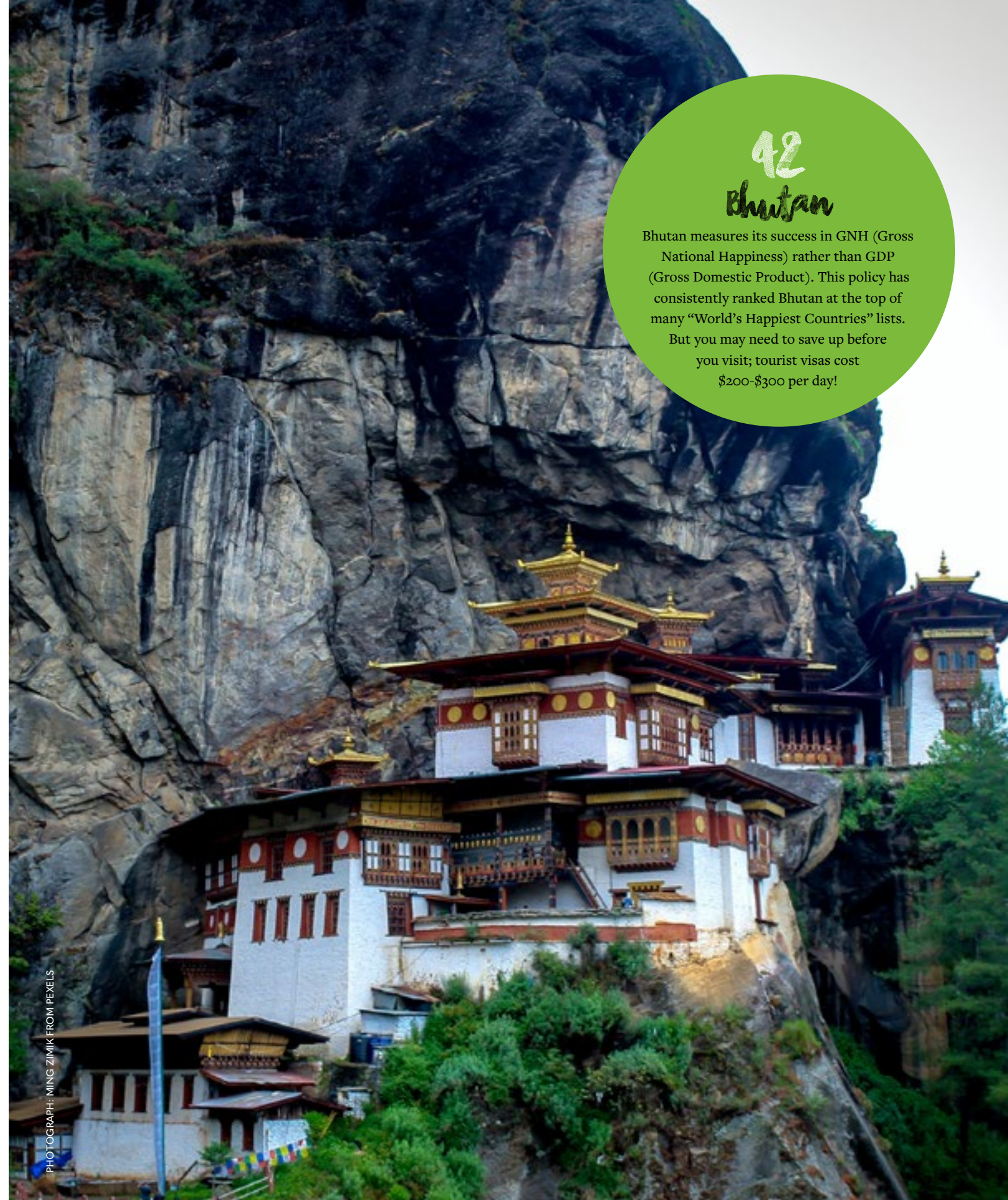
Many westerners think of Nepal as a rugged, wild country filled with mountains, monks, and ancient temples. And it is! But Pokhara is a spot of comfort in the midst of the adventure. As the second largest city in Nepal, Pokhara holds its own against Kathmandu, with a beautiful Lakeside district filled with vegan restaurants overlooking Lake Phewa.



PHOTO: JOVANNA ON LAKE PHEWA, BY KEVIN ELLERTON

42 Bhutan

Bhutan measures its success in GNH (Gross National Happiness) rather than GDP (Gross Domestic Product). This policy has consistently ranked Bhutan at the top of many "World's Happiest Countries" lists. But you may need to save up before you visit; tourist visas cost \$200-\$300 per day!



PHOTOGRAPH: MING ZHANG FROM PEXELS

43 The Grand Canyon, USA

One of the seven natural wonders of the world, the Grand Canyon is awe-inspiring in its magnitude. Whether you look out from the top or journey down into the canyon itself, this vast space of earth and rock will take your breath away. A great place to remind yourself of the grand scale of our Mother Earth.

44 Kerala, India

At the southern tip of India, running along the Arabian Sea, the state of Kerala is as beautiful as it is enchanting. The people are spiritual, friendly, and happy. The scents of Dahl Makhani & Garlic Naan waft through the streets of Trivandrum, with nearly every restaurant offering a delicious “veg” menu.

Visit the beautiful Ashrams and spiritual centers, and don’t forget to book a jungle cruise on the backwaters of Kochi!



PHOTOGRAPH: KERALA BACKWATER, BY KEVIN ELLERTON

45. Asheville
North Carolina

46. San Marcos
Texas

47. Port Barton
Palawan, Philippines

48. Amsterdam
Netherlands

49. Negrille
Jamaica

50. Spirits Bay
New Zealand

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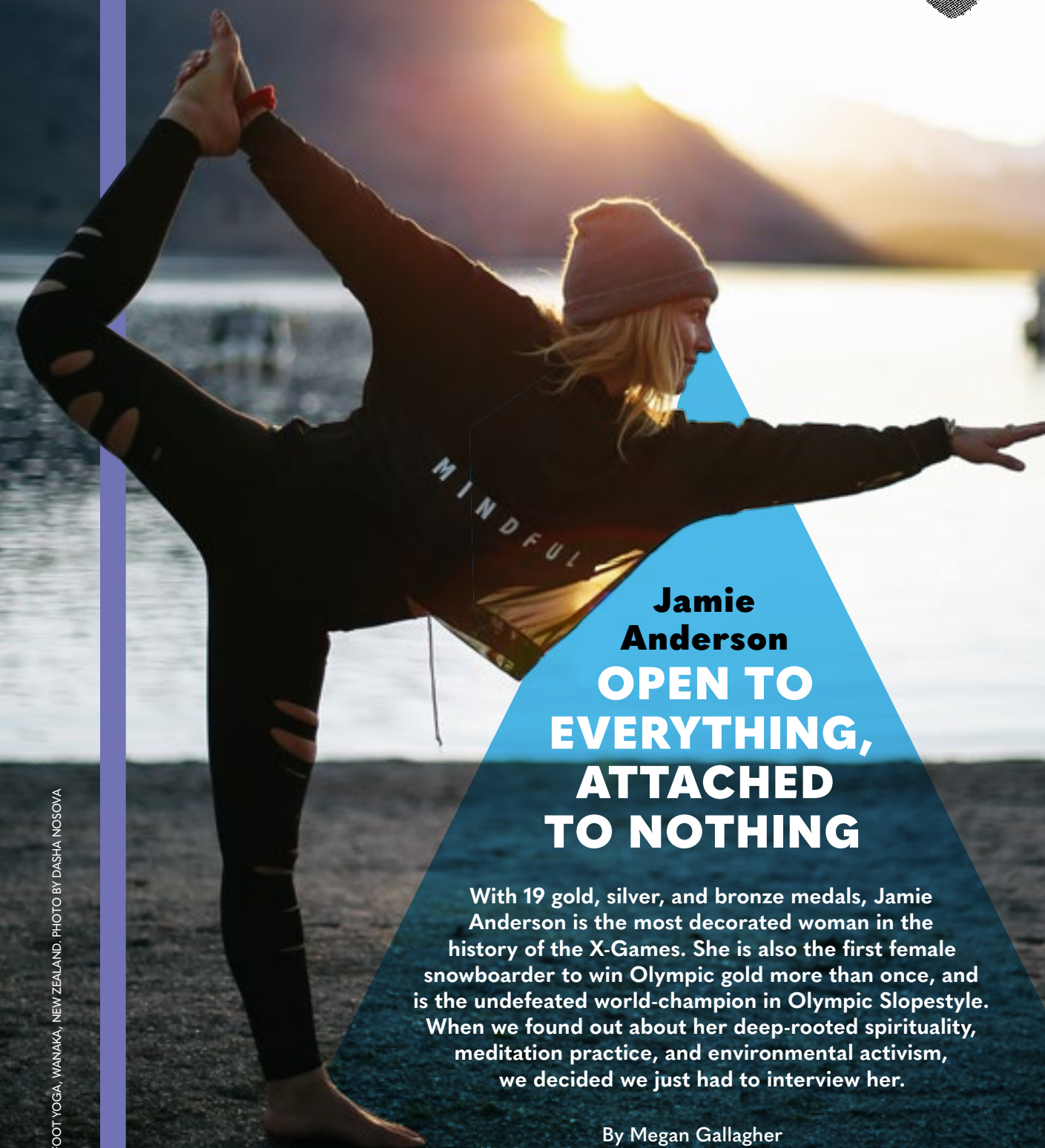
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INTERVIEWS



Jamie Anderson OPEN TO EVERYTHING, ATTACHED TO NOTHING

With 19 gold, silver, and bronze medals, Jamie Anderson is the most decorated woman in the history of the X-Games. She is also the first female snowboarder to win Olympic gold more than once, and is the undefeated world-champion in Olympic Slopestyle. When we found out about her deep-rooted spirituality, meditation practice, and environmental activism, we decided we just had to interview her.

By Megan Gallagher

JAMIE, BAREFOOT YOGA, WANAKA, NEW ZEALAND. PHOTO BY DASHA NOSOVA



In 2014, a new snowboarding event was added to the Winter Olympics. It was all about flips and tricks and half pipes and spins, and they called it “slopestyle.”

As it was a new event, there was wide speculation about who the winners would be. But after a series of beautifully executed jumps, grabs, flips and tricks, the answer was clear. A 24 year old American snowboarder named Jamie Anderson had reached for the sky and grabbed the gold.

For people in the snowboarding community, this wasn’t much of a surprise. Jaime had already proven herself to be one of the world’s best snowboarders.

After receiving a hand-me-down snowboard as a nine-year-old, Jamie quickly took to the mountains. Just a few years later, at the age of fifteen, Jamie won bronze in slopestyle in the Winter X-Games, making her the youngest medalist in the history of the competition. She won the gold the following year... and the year after that... and six more gold medals after that (most recently at this year’s Winter X-Games in 2021).

Aside from her eight X-Games gold medals, she also won five silver and four bronze, making her the most decorated woman in the history of the X-Games, and holds more gold medals in slopestyle

than Shaun White and Mark McMorris.

So when she won the gold in the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the snowboarding world was not surprised. And when she won the gold again at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics, she became the first female snowboarder to win more than one Olympic gold medal. Jamie Anderson is recognized as the reigning world champion in womens’ slopestyle, and no human has ever beaten her in slopestyle at the Olympics.

In 2020, Jamie was named Rider of The Year, at the first-ever Snowboarder Awards in Copper Mountain, Colorado.

When we heard that Jamie was into meditation and environmentalism, we knew we needed to interview her. In classic pandemic zoom-interview style, Kevin and Megan (in Miami and Nashville) enjoyed a deep and fascinating conversation with Jamie (in California) about meditation, snowboarding, and the beauty of nature.

Kevin: As a meditator who snowboards and meditates in cold weather climates, I feel like the Wim Hof method would be amazing for you...

Jamie: I haven’t really practiced the Wim Hof method specifically. I of course know of him and I’m a fan... I haven’t

done much cold water swimming, but I’m down with cold dips!

I think cold water is really amazing and healing. I watched that Octopus Teacher movie, and it inspired me about being able to swim in cold water, and just adapt to what is!

Kevin: What about pranayama breathing? Do you do any breathwork meditation?

Jamie: Yes! It really energizes my body. I find when I’m really cold on the mountain, I’ll do certain breath exercises, like Breath of Fire, belly breathing, to create heat. Especially if I’m at a contest -- I remember in Pyongyang, it was so frikken cold! It’s a really windy place. It was really extra hard at that Olympics to stay grounded and centered and focused, with a lot of physical moving parts. And emotionally, it’s a roller coaster.

I remember before competing, there was a lot of turbulence about trying to postpone it or cancel it. And with the cold weather, I went out before I competed, and I was doing the Breath of Fire at first, and then to calm my nervous system and clear my mind, I was doing the alternate nostril breathing. I would do that for as long as I could.

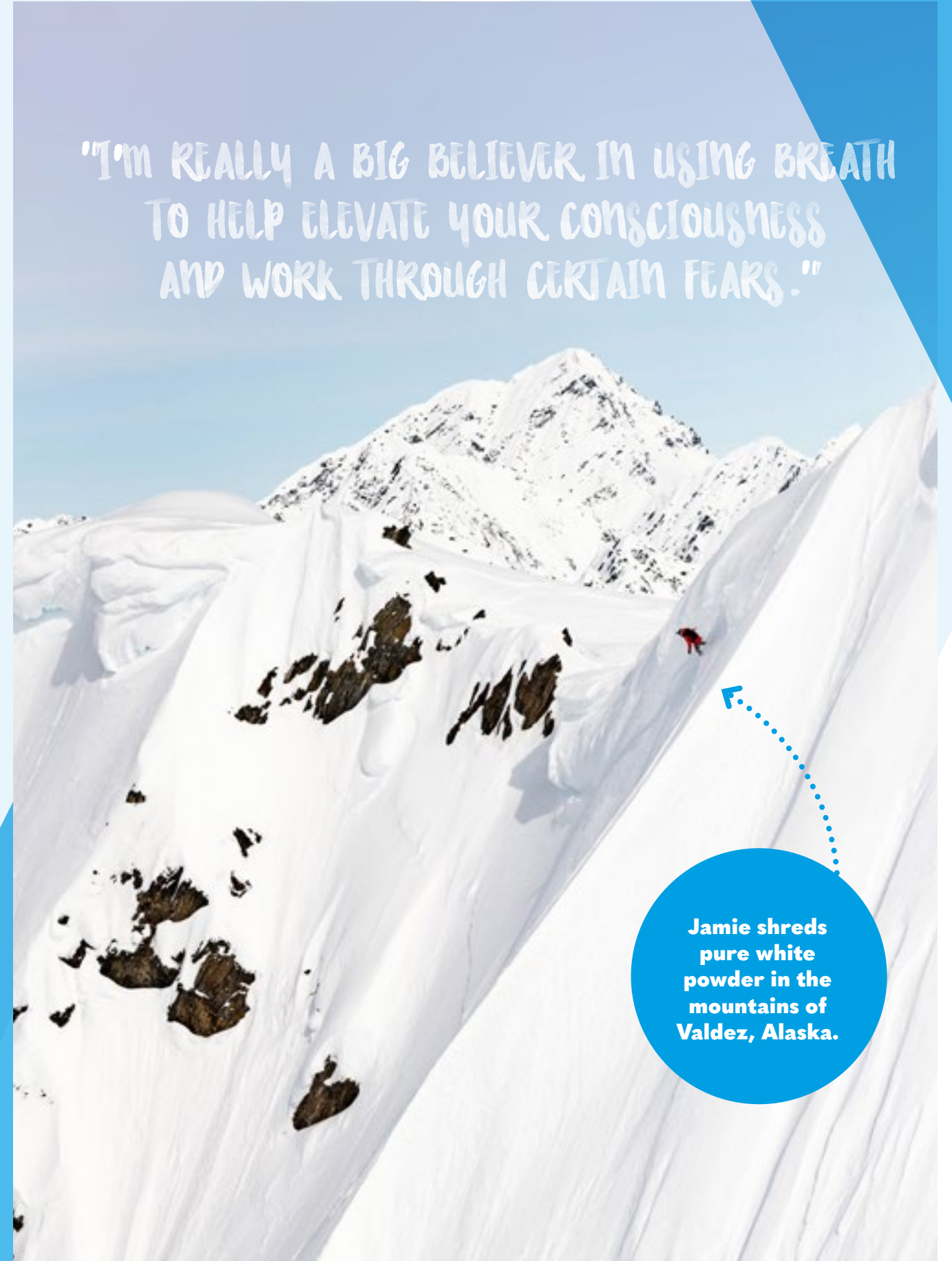
I’m really a big believer in using breath to help elevate your consciousness and help work through certain fears, and even illness and emotional distress in your body. I think breath is amazing, and I want to learn more. I’m just a beginner in that realm, but I’m always soaking up other knowledge.

Kevin: Do you use any other meditation techniques, aside from pranayama?

Jamie: Yes, I like affirmation breathing sometimes!

Usually in the morning before I meditate, I like to listen to some Sanskrit or some mantras to just kind of get the vibes going. I also practice just breathing in gratitude and breathing out distress.

I also want to learn more about deep belly breathing, where you kind of lock off and really inhale... I know that type of breathing can be super healing for all →



"I'M REALLY A BIG BELIEVER IN USING BREATH TO HELP ELEVATE YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS AND WORK THROUGH CERTAIN FEARS."

Jamie shreds pure white powder in the mountains of Valdez, Alaska.

Jamie's medal count



PHOTOS BY KARISSA JONES (PREVIOUS PAGE), TIM ZIMMERMAN (RIGHT), KARI ROWE (BOTTOM RIGHT)



"I try to keep my overall life feeling good, in flow..."

your organs, and can help with back pain. I follow Alana Blanchard and she's into some of those breathing exercises and I think they're really healing.

That's definitely another controlled one... but I think I like those, because I have a busy mind and it can help me get into meditation, when I'm focusing on something rather than nothing.

Kevin: You mentioned that meditation helped with the stress before the Pyongyang Olympics. But do you ever meditate right before a run, to get into the zone while you're snowboarding?

Jamie: Not typically. I try to keep my overall life kind of feeling good, in flow.

I feel like when I'm really in my flow-state and just cruising through life, meditation and being mindful is just a way of being.

So I remember very clearly the day of the contest, just being in really good spirits, psychologically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally... I was just really chill. I was like, "I'm gonna kick ass, I'm gonna have fun..." I had my music with me, my little Beats speaker. I was just in good spirits.

And I think that when you can live in good spirits, be present when you're doing the dishes, or brushing your teeth, or all those little things in life, then you can kind of just carry through.

And I think having that mindfulness and, like, years of practice... having all that leading up to the Olympics and those stressful big events, has been a power. Like tapping into something deep within, so I can cruise through life blissfully.

Megan: I love that you said that. The art of being present is so powerful.

Jamie: Totally! They call it the present moment because it really is a gift. You gotta roll through each moment.

Especially now with there being so much uncertainty in our world. And especially me, and the snowboard world. All my friends are global. We're usually all on the road together, but we're all from different places around the planet. So it's been a lot for our community to adjust to being more grounded [during the pandemic], and connecting virtually.

Kevin: How long ago did you start meditating?

Jamie: I had a really bad snowboard accident when I was seventeen, and I ruptured my spleen really badly. I spent quite a bit of time in the ICU, and it was a really traumatic experience for me.

From that experience, I really took a deep appreciation to my overall health and well being.

My mom had raised us really healthy and holistically, but to have a really gnarly accident like that to an organ was really, really scary. So it just kind of woke me up, to take good care of my body, and treat my body like it's a temple.

And around that time, I got into yoga. That's what really sparked the fire, of how amazing it is to be able to learn to control our emotions and our mind and even our life through manifestation and prayer work and meditation, and all these great tools that we all have access to.

So it's been about ten years that I've been practicing being more mindful. →



"Be like
water:
powerful,
graceful,
and
effortless."

JAMIE PLAYING IN THE SNOW IN WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA. PHOTO BY ANASTASIA CHOWLACK

Kevin: What has your path been like since then?

Jamie: I was definitely still a little bit crazy in my early twenties... partying and getting kicked out of bars for dancing on tables and stuff. Back in the day, the snowboarding world was just a crazy party mecca. The meditation kind of balanced it out.

It's a bit of a crazy sport, and there's so much beauty up there. But it can be distracting at those events, and you aren't always super grounded. Sometimes being at those events can be super stressful. So I think that's when yoga, and having some of those other tools, breathing exercises, music, a little dancing... can be really helpful.

We're all gonna have stuff that happens in life, and obstacles, whether you're an athlete, or any career path you're in. But learning to have tools to overcome it holistically and naturally, even if it's things like writing therapy, or connecting with like-minded friends, or spending time in the forest and just walking... there are a lot of great tools that you can learn that will help you enjoy life more.

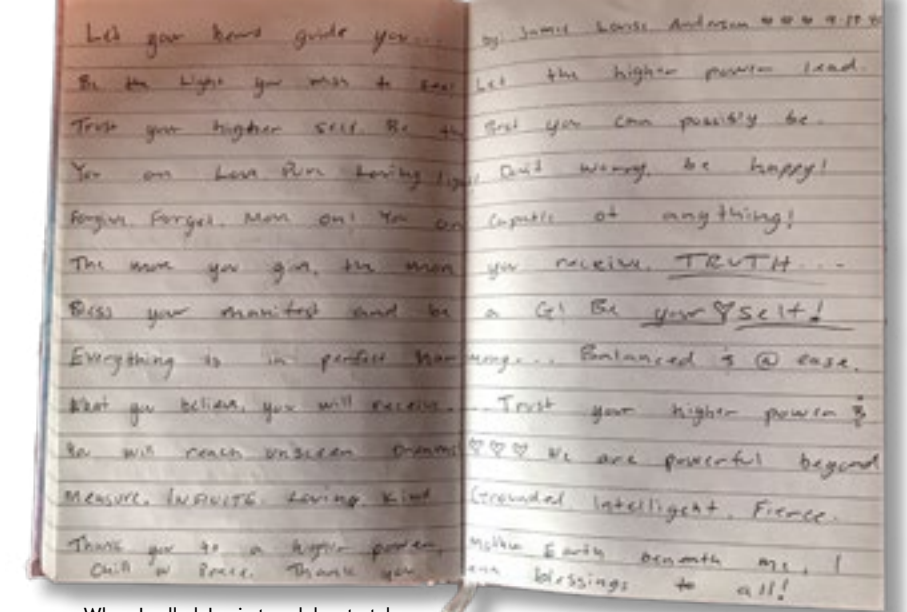
Kevin: For me, meditation can actually make partying more fun!

Jamie: Totally. I think it's just having a free spirit and a happy spirit. I don't think anyone wants to be weighed down. I think we all just want to reach our full potential and be our best self.

That's what I'm trying to do all the time... growing, learning, not staying at one stagnant thing, but trying to have -- what did my mom used to say? -- "Having a heart open to anything, and a mind attached to nothing," so you can just be open to the world.

Kevin: I feel like snowboarding is kind of like a meditation in itself. Especially when you're up in the mountains, and it's so beautiful...

Jamie: Yes! You have the fresh air, it's absolutely amazing and healing, and just feels really good. That's why I fell in love



When I called Jamie to ask her to take some cool photos for the cover, she was driving back from a gathering near Vancouver island,

where she was protesting old-growth logging. She wrote this poem on the ferry, crossing back toward Vancouver Island.

with snowboarding, when I was eight or nine. I just love playing on the mountain.

Kevin: One of the things that inspires me the most, is just sitting on top of a mountain and looking out at a range, or lying out at night and looking up at the stars... it gives me this realization that I'm just a tiny human in a giant universe. Do you ever feel that when you're up in the mountains?

Jamie: Oh yeah. Totally. I think that's why I love the mountains, and why the mountains have such a magnetic pull. You feel so little, but you feel so good.

I remember being in the Alaskan mountain range, and it's like an ocean of mountains. You just look all around you, and it's just the most beautiful mountains I've ever seen. And just white, everywhere. I remember being like "Holyyyy... this is like... I can't even talk..."

The mountains are magic. Just being where the air is clean, and you can see the stars, and you can get out and enjoy the simple pleasures that nature has to offer.

When we were kids, we would sleep outside on our trampoline, and we would just be mesmerized by the stars. And now, I still spend quite a bit of time outside at night. I always wonder...

The Universe is so much more vast than we're even aware of.

Kevin: Some people, like Tim Ferris & Joe Rogan, tend to use meditation to

sharpen their minds, to be competitive and performant, Type-A and goal oriented. And then there are others who use meditation as more of a gentle thing, for relaxation and happiness. Which of those aspects of meditation appeals more to you?

Jamie: That's a tough question. When I'm in a really good practice and have a regular yoga practice every day, I feel like that mindfulness is really there... the more peaceful and relaxation side of it.

But when I'm getting into contest mode, and maybe doing more strength training or visualization work or journaling, I think I might use the other side.

I've never even heard of that, but that sounds great! I do think I use my meditation & mindfulness practice to perform better too, and visualize myself being the freaking best or doing the best that I can.

It's not just in my snowboarding world but in my overall life.

Kevin: Any closing thoughts, words of wisdom for our readers?

Jamie: Be like water: powerful, graceful and effortless.

I wanna leave that with you guys tonight.

Sometimes I try to imagine that when I'm going down the mountain: be like water, take the path of least resistance, and be powerful but graceful, and also beautiful. ●

Radical Interview With Tara Brach



You can also
find Tara's guided
meditation here
in this magazine,
on page 17

Tara Brach, the founder of the Insight Meditation Community of Washington, D.C., is one of the most popular mindfulness teachers in the United States. Her books, including *Radical Acceptance*, *True Refuge*, *Radical Compassion*, and *Trusting The Gold* have impacted the lives and hearts of millions of readers around the world. When we decided to focus this Meditation Magazine issue on *Powerful Women in Meditation*, we knew that we needed to interview Tara.

Kevin: I've heard that you started your spiritual exploration in a Hindu ashram, and then gravitated toward more Buddhist-style mindfulness meditations. I've kind of gone the opposite direction - I started in the Buddhist/mindfulness traditions and moved more toward pranayama (breathwork). Why do you think you gravitated toward Buddhism & mindfulness rather than Yoga & pranayama?

Tara: I spent a good 10 years in an ashram, and did a lot of pranayama, with a more concentrative kind of meditation, where we were focused on a mantra, or the breath. And it did wonderful things! It shifts your biochemistry and mood, and allows you to access the concentrative practices, where the mind gets quite still and focused.

What I was missing, though, was a way to just be open to reality in the present moment.

What happens with concentrative practices is that... for instance, imagine that your mind is like a pond with a lot of weeds. You use concentration as a way of sweeping aside the weeds, so that you can see clearly to the bottom of the pond. But as soon as you stop making the concentrated effort to sweep the weeds aside, they're back again, covering the pond.

However, what mindfulness does, in a profound way, is to cut through to the present moment so that you can really see just what's here and now, and be at peace with it, as it is.

So, rather than trying to control the emotional "weather," as it were, it really becomes a big enough sky so that the weather can move right through us. So mindfulness was critical for really →

PHOTOS BY JONATHAN FOUST



Tara is one of the most popular mindfulness teachers in the USA.

coming to peace with myself.

I struggled with what I call the “trance of unworthiness,” which I now know is pervasive -- in fact, I wrote Radical Acceptance because so many people are caught in the feeling that “something is wrong with me, I’m failing.” And what I found was: concentration [and concentrative meditations] could help me feel better! I’d get into a more relaxed, peaceful place. But it was actually mindfulness that helped me let go of the limiting beliefs and open to goodness - the moment to moment awareness - and to love, our true essence. So mindfulness was more profoundly healing for me.

I still do both. I do pranayama at times, I use concentrative practice at times, and I use mindfulness. So I actually weave them together.

Kevin: How did you originally get started on the path of meditation?

Tara: As a child, I wasn’t meditating. My first glimmers of spirituality really came from nature, and actually still do. Nature is really my religion in some ways. But, in terms of formal practice...

I was a social activist when I was in college, and was on my way to law school. On the weekends, I’d be at rallies and meetings. And then I started to take yoga, to work on my health, and to really help me with the “trance of unworthiness” as it were, to help me connect with myself.

I started noticing that, while doing this political stuff, there was a lot of anger energy, and making others into the enemy, and pumping fists... and it just had that kind of harshness. Then I would land up at my meditation and yoga class and I’d come out feeling so good!

I remember one spring night... the fruit trees were wafting their scent. I stood still under a tree after class, and realized that my body and mind were in the same place at the same time. And I felt so at home.

I realized: this is the consciousness we need in order to change our world!

If we’re talking about creating a world with more peace and love and justice, it’s not coming out of anger and hatred. It’s not going to come if we continue to turn others into enemies.

So I decided that I wanted to really do a deep dive into the practices and teachings that free our hearts, and that will allow us to be truly loving and awake in the world.

So, with that in mind, I moved into an ashram.

I stayed there for a decade, and really put in a lot of very disciplined practice.

We would get up at 3:30am. It was intensive. It helped me in many ways, but it did not really cut through that sense that “something’s wrong with me.” There was still a sense that I was trying to achieve something, or get somewhere, or purify something.

And I remember that I had this idea, that it would take me about eight years to become enlightened. So I was working really hard, and I went to different teachers, and I’d say, “What else can I do?” And they’d look at me and say, “Just relax!”

Clearly, I was striving, but it wasn’t until I left the ashram and started practicing the Buddhist mindfulness tradition that I clearly observed that striving. And so I started learning how to trust more, and trust who I was.

The title of my most recent book is Trusting the Gold, because what I’ve seen over the decades is that the real sign of freedom and awakening - and the real gift - is that we trust who we are. That we trust that, regardless of all the conditioning to be aggressive or addictive or defensive, our true essence is really that awareness... that love.

My path has been an ever-awakening of that realization, and I have spent the last few decades in the Buddhist tradition, teaching and writing about this.

I have become much more activist again, in terms of the causes that are dear to my heart, but it’s not so much from a place of anger and hatred, but more because I care.

I feel like the inner path that we’re talking about - how we wake up our hearts and minds - cannot be separated from how we live in this world. If we believe everything is connected, then we need to be able to sense that the suffering in this world is part of our suffering and, therefore, we need to be part of the healing.

Kevin: It seems like your path at the Ashram wasn’t getting you to where you needed to be, but the mindfulness practice was more helpful to you. But you also mentioned that there were teachers at the ashram who told you to “Just relax.” Do you think that if you had followed their advice, then the Ashram path might have worked for you as well?

Tara: Well, those who told me to just relax actually weren’t in the ashram.

I would meet with different spiritual teachers.

The culture of the ashram community was very much oriented around, if you can imagine, a ladder of spirituality. It was like climbing a ladder to transcend impurities.

Whereas what I learned in the Buddhist practice was much more of a turning around, to just embrace this messy world and all of its imperfection.

So there was a cultural feel that was quite different.

But I think striving and trying to self improve actually gets into the shadow side of every path.

I don’t think it’s: “Well, The Buddhists are more into acceptance and The Hindus are more into striving.” I think that it’s personality driven.

It’s our society. We’re in a society where we always have to expand the economy, and we always have to do more, do bigger, make more money. It’s very much a cultural bent to “be more,” and it’s a very rare moment for any of us that we can say: “Enough.” That just this moment is enough. That who I am is enough. We’re very driven!

So I think it’s a real mix. But what I can say is that the concentrative practices in pranayam are designed to change your state, and mindfulness is designed to help you become aware of what’s here.

And that fundamental difference is the world for many of us who truly want to learn to just be anchored in the present. So that felt significant to me.

Kevin: Do you think that a female-run ashram or monastery, or bringing more female energy into those places, can bring more of that compassionate energy?

Tara: It feels like probably the most crucial direction we can go: a world where the feminine archetype is cultivated, is given its place.

It’s not as much about a woman or a man, because there are women that have their hearts shut down, and men who can be totally compassionate.

The reason I’ve emphasized, in my own practice and teaching, the centrality of compassion -- which means that we know how to be in tender relationship with our inner life and with each other -- is because it’s the single most powerful

element I’ve seen for all of us on the healing path.

And we all have wounded hearts. I don’t know anyone that hasn’t felt, in some way, lonely, or betrayed by others, or rejected, or hurt, or feeling “Something is wrong with me.” So if we want to be free, we have to be able to address that layer of our being. And the only healing for that layer is compassion.

I sometimes call it spiritual re-parenting, because we need to have:

1. **The mindfulness that sees what’s going on... that sees: “Okay, I’m caught in the voice of the harsh critic which has completely oppressed me,” and**
2. **We need to be able to regard it with compassion.**

Because what a child needs most - a child that’s hurting - is a parent to be able to be aware of what’s happening, and to be able to comfort them.

And so, I feel like a really important part of the whole meditative process is that we bring that seeing and loving to our inner life.

I often put my hand on my heart, and I’ll send a message to myself. I’ll even say, “It’s okay sweetheart, I’m here, I’m not leaving.”

For people that can do that, I have found that they are profoundly more open to others, and are able to accompany, and attune, when another person is having a hard time, and actually offer that kind of presence that really makes a difference.

I love the question you’re asking, because that is the feminist archetype. That’s what Amma is: a space of tender heart. And because her vibration and realizations are so strong, anybody around her can feel that, and it helps to calm the armoring that we all habitually have around our hearts.

I feel like the feminine archetype is what is needed right now to re-balance and heal our planet. ●

TO WATCH THE REST OF THIS INTERVIEW, SIMPLY POINT YOUR PHONE CAMERA TO SCAN THE QR CODE!





PHOTOS BY BK SANTOSH (THIS PAGE AND CUTOUT ON NEXT SPREAD)

SISTER JENNA & THE BRAHMA KUMARIS

Sister Jenna is the host of the international radio show *America Meditating*, the founder of the Meditation Museum in Washington DC, and a leader in the Brahma Kumaris meditation movement. We spoke with her about women in meditation, and her role in the Brahma Kumaris.

By Kevin Ellerton

In Pakistan in the 1930s, a man named Lekhraj Khubchand Kirpalani had a spiritual awakening.

Lekhraj (who came to be known as Brahma Baba) realized that women should not be oppressed, but rather empowered & elevated — and that women, and female energy, would be the key to saving our species.

Brahma Baba started spreading the good word, but he wanted to step aside and let women lead. He appointed eight women, who came to be known as the Dadis (or the “Grandmothers”), to build a worldwide

spiritual organization called the Brahma Kumaris (or “Daughters of Brahma”).

Today, the Brahma Kumaris have thousands of meditation centers and hundreds of thousands of members around the world. 80% of its members, and the majority of its leaders, are women.

I first met Sister Jenna as a guest on her international radio show, *America Meditating*. I knew that she was the founder of the Meditation Museum in Washington DC, but I didn’t know much about her aside from that.

During the interview, I was struck by her eloquence, poise, grace, and presence.

After doing some more research into her background, I found out that Sister Jenna is one of the leaders in the Brahma Kumaris in the United States, has worked with Oprah and Marianne Williamson, and has implemented many wonderful programs in meditation.

When we decided to focus this issue on *Powerful Women in Meditation*, I knew that I needed to talk with Sister Jenna about her story, and ask her more about the Brahma Kumaris.

Kevin: I’ve heard that you used to run nightclubs in Miami! How did you end up becoming “Sister Jenna?”

Sister Jenna: You know, when I was much younger on my spiritual journey, there was just this notion like, “Oh my gosh, she’s like a saint, she’s like an angel!”

After about ten years, I started to openly share -- I didn’t think it was a secret, but I started to share -- “Did you all know I used to own two of the most well known night clubs in South Florida? And I had luxury cars, and I was dating...” and everyone’s eyes would pop out like “What?! What happened to you?”

My story shows that spirituality and spiritual empowerment can be for anyone. You don’t have to be born into it in order to be it.

I think my awakening originally happened in my teens, but it went really deep in my early 20’s. And here I am, almost 30 years later!

Kevin: What was your journey like?

Sister Jenna: My mother was orphaned at seven years old.

After hearing all the traumas she went through, from the age of seven... being placed in orphanages, and bumping into men that didn’t have good intentions for little girls, and having to survive that trauma...

Growing up with a mother like that, and an Indian father, I had the fortune of looking at the world from two perspectives. And so I somehow always found myself in the middle of everything.

So I don’t know if that was part of my spiritual development, but with my Dad being Hindu and my Mother being Roman Catholic, my interpretation of God varied when compared to a person who’s fundamentally Catholic or Muslim or Jewish... or Hindu even. And so I always felt that differentiation while growing into who I am today.

I was having spiritual and mystical experiences when I was younger, but the one that really got me was when I was in my 20s.

I’m kind of going up an escalator in this trance-like experience. At the top of the escalator is God as a form of radiant light,

this vibrational light. And it’s just calling me. And at the bottom of the escalator are my friends, drinking and smoking, saying “Come on, Jenn, come on!” And I wake up from that trance experience with a feeling like, “What do I choose?”

So, obviously I chose the light. And then I went to Mount Abu, the headquarters for the Brahma Kumaris, for the first time. I was 24.

I sat in this room of about two thousand people. I’m on the floor.

And the “trance messenger” -- her name was Dadi Gulzar, she passed away this year... a very, very pure woman, who was one of the original members of the Brahma Kumaris -- her specialty was going into trance and being able to communicate and allow the energy of the Supreme and of Brahma Baba, the founder, to just basically give guidance and directions.

So I’m sitting in this room and I’m sensing intuitively, “This is going to be big for me.” And in my mind I’m thinking, “I’m going to meet God today, I just know it!” But everything I had previously done that was against my peace and purity was coming up in my mind, just flipping through really fast. And my heart’s beating fast, and my mind is telling me, “You can’t! You’re not worthy! Leave the room!”

And as I’m getting up to leave, the energy of that light entered through Dadi Gulzar. It just sat me right down, and there was just this wave of like, “Oooooohhh.” Just really peaceful waves of this energy that just filled the room, and it just filled me.

And all this time, I’d thought I had everything!

All of a sudden, that moment cracked the mirror that I had been looking at for twenty-something years, and directed me to another mirror that started my journey of looking at myself from inside out.

It was very profound, Kevin! To this day... it’s been so long, but as I tell you the story, it’s like it was yesterday.

Kevin: The trance experience, when you were going up the escalator -- was that a dream, or a vision or something? How was it so powerful that it made you leave your life in Miami and go to India, to Mount Abu?

Sister Jenna: It wasn’t a dream! I was actually physically awake.

And it wasn’t a daydream either.

I was being pulled into an altered, mystical experience against my wish.

And I think the reason why that experience was coming over me, is that it was an answer to a deep soul call that I must have been having for many lifetimes -- but also perhaps from my present life -- where I kept asking questions about the meaning of life, the purpose of our existence: who is God, why are we here?

And when those questions reach a kind of pivotal point of energy in our consciousness, I believe it becomes a way to open up mystical experiences like the one I just related.

Kevin: What is your role within the Brahma Kumaris right now?

Sister Jenna: I direct the Brahma Kumaris in the Washington Metropolitan area.

That requires important conversations, and working with people with great influence, to support their spiritual development as they conduct affairs in the world, in order to make very important global decisions. So it’s been a wonderful journey for me.

But what I love more than anything else is just to be a friend with everyone in the Brahma Kumaris organization, and not necessarily focus so much on my title, my position, my influence, my lack of influence... whatever it might be. I just want to be a friend with everyone.

Kevin: I’ve read about the history of the Brahma Kumaris, and it is fascinating. What’s your take on it?

Sister Jenna: I’ve traveled back to the 1930’s at a conscious level, and thought about what it must have been like for Brahma Baba to have been questioning his own journey. He wasn’t thinking about a movement, or an organization, or being someone that millions of people would turn to for their spiritual development. I don’t think he was thinking like that at all.

Just imagine - an awakening happens, and an anointment happens, and →

light starts to pulsate through your consciousness, and it can't be hidden through the joy and spark in your eyes. And your whole aura starts to radiate this energy of purity and peace. People in your family and community are recognizing this, and asking, "What's wrong with you... are you in love or something? What happened?"

And he's wondering, "What are they talking about? I just felt God's light." And he felt that energy of God's light so much, that he just moved with that energy. And people in the community could see that. They were like "Who is this man? I want what he has!"

And three hundred people moved into his house. Can you believe it? The majority of them were women, young men, fathers, brothers and children. And they learned: Who am I? I'm a soul. And then they started to go deep into, "Well, how do we connect with God? Is God really a deity? Is God Christian, is God Jewish, is God Islamic? My latest quote has been: "Don't go squeezing God into a religion, he's much bigger than that!"

So I think what Brahma Baba offered us was... how to develop a relationship with the divine that doesn't restrict your ability to receive the vibrations, the purity and love that comes from God.

So, on his journey, Brahma Baba would look into the lives of these young women and mothers -- who, in those days, were third-class citizens and were so mistreated -- and he said: "But, that's our future! Mothers should be saluted!"

And then he basically says, "Look, this is your world. I can see that you, the woman, will be the future of a world that is a golden age, that we can walk in." So he handed over the entire movement to eight women. We just recently lost three of them. They were all in their 90's, so we're losing a lot of them now, but we still have one more left!

And to these elder sisters, Brahma Baba said, "Show us the way! Show us the way to grow in love with God, and to nurture our relationship with God, and to be of service to humanity. Show us the way!" And these sisters, who we call Dadis, have done that.

So from one little center in Pakistan, when the India/Pakistan split happened, they moved to Mount Abu in India. And that is where the community grew from -- from that one center to nine thousand branches in 120 countries.

Just because of those eight little ladies. They never went to high school, they never went to college, but they went to God, and they went to purity, and they went to peace. And, as a result, they nurtured the hearts of all races, all religions, all cultures, by guiding souls to a connection with the divine.

Kevin: It's amazing that Brahma Baba was so ahead of his time, to focus so much on empowering women. You might even call him a feminist. And he did all this within the male-dominated culture of 1930s Pakistan, with the surrounding community pushing back against him and

protesting outside the ashram...

Sister Jenna: That's just how clean and clear Brahma Baba was. He just saw that the future would be a future of empowered women. And he always used to say, "Put women together, and the world will come together."

I think when you try to visualize what it must have been like -- where a man looked at a woman with such respect and honor, not looking at her body or wanting to use her just for his own personal needs, but, instead, to raise her up in the form of becoming like a deity to the world -- just imagine what everyone else felt. Either that he's insane, something is wrong with him, let's get rid of him, defame him, say the worst things that you could possibly say about him. But that was the outside community. Not one person inside the ashram had anything bad to say about what it was like living with him at that time.

Brahma Baba always had full faith that the supreme energy, the supreme soul, was going to work through those women and bring the world into a golden age.

So you know how we all come with our own part to play? That was Brahma Baba's part. He had to awaken society to a consciousness that valued women. And even though he encountered so many obstacles, he was unwavering, because he knew the message that he got from the supreme, from above, was that the souls in female bodies would be the future in bringing healing and vibrancy to humanity.

PHOTOS BY MEDITATION MUSEUM STAFF (RIGHT) AND OPRAH WINFREY STAFF (BELOW LEFT)

And that's exactly what those eight sisters believed, and it transcended throughout the whole organization, to empower not only the women in the organization, but also the men. The men who study with the Brahma Kumaris also believe that, by practicing purity, peace, love and being in service to humanity, the world will be a better place.

And there's a partnership between the small percentage of men in the Brahma Kumaris, with, yes, the larger percentage of women in the Brahma Kumaris. And there's a reverence which the men hold for the women, and there's a respect which the women hold for the men. And what you will witness, if you ever get a chance to spend time within the walls of the Brahma Kumaris, is this great balance, and this sense of vision, that everything they think, say and do is towards a golden age of humanity, where there won't be greed, and there won't be violence and there won't be racism and there won't be fear -- rather, they will be filled with vibrations, and the qualities of truth and wisdom and love... which will usher in a world that has no sorrow.

Kevin: Why do you think that there is still so much divisiveness in this world - racism, sexism, classism, etc?

Sister Jenna: I'll tell you a story...

You go to the Ritz Carlton with some friends, and you're planning to spend the weekend there.

You pass by the guy that opens the door, you go to the concierge, and you just say "Hello." You check in, and the bellboy puts the bag on the trolley to make it easy for you to get to your room in the penthouse.

You're approaching your door, and you see Beyonce, Barack and Michelle Obama walking out, and all of a sudden, you're up! You're like, "Oh my God, this is Barack, Michelle, Beyonce! We're staying here with Beyonce, Barack and Michelle?" And then everyone's excited, everyone's saying "Hello" and being respectful. And they tip the little bellboy like he's nothing.

So, did you have the same vibration

and feeling for the man that opened the door for you? The same degree of love and adoration? Was there the same vibration for the concierge, for the bellboy? Why did you put so much importance on Barack, Beyonce and Michelle? It's because we're so attached to labels that we don't see each other, soul to soul!

So that's why you've got the caste system, that's why you've got racism, that's why you've got illiteracy and poverty the world over. It's because people don't give everyone a chance! People are always trying to move towards whoever has the power, whoever has the most likes, the most followers.... whoever is in power and has control, and totally disregarding the "other" people who actually matter just as much.

So what Brahma Baba was teaching and what he has taught in the Brahma Kumaris: See everyone as souls, because you too are a soul!

And what that warrants is a sense of respect, love, kindness and generosity. So, if we can develop that way of being in the world, there will be an end to poverty,

there'll be an end to violence, there'll be no more incarceration.

So the most important teaching in the Raj Yoga: Consider yourself a soul, and remember God, the supreme soul, and perform actions that are kind and generous. And then the world will become a golden age and... that's it! It just seems so simple to me! Doesn't it seem simple to you too?

Kevin: Can you lead us in a meditation?

Sister Jenna: Ask yourself: What if I'm immortal, eternal, imperishable, pure, peaceful, and loving? How would I feel?

Sometimes just raising that question alone to one's self can start you off on a journey of hope, light, freedom, creativity, and beauty.

TO WATCH THE FULL INTERVIEW, SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE CAMERA!



"What if I'm immortal, eternal, imperishable, pure, peaceful & loving? How would I feel?"



Sister Jenna talks to Kevin about working with Oprah

Kevin: I saw that you had the opportunity to work with Oprah at one point... how did that come about and what were you doing together?

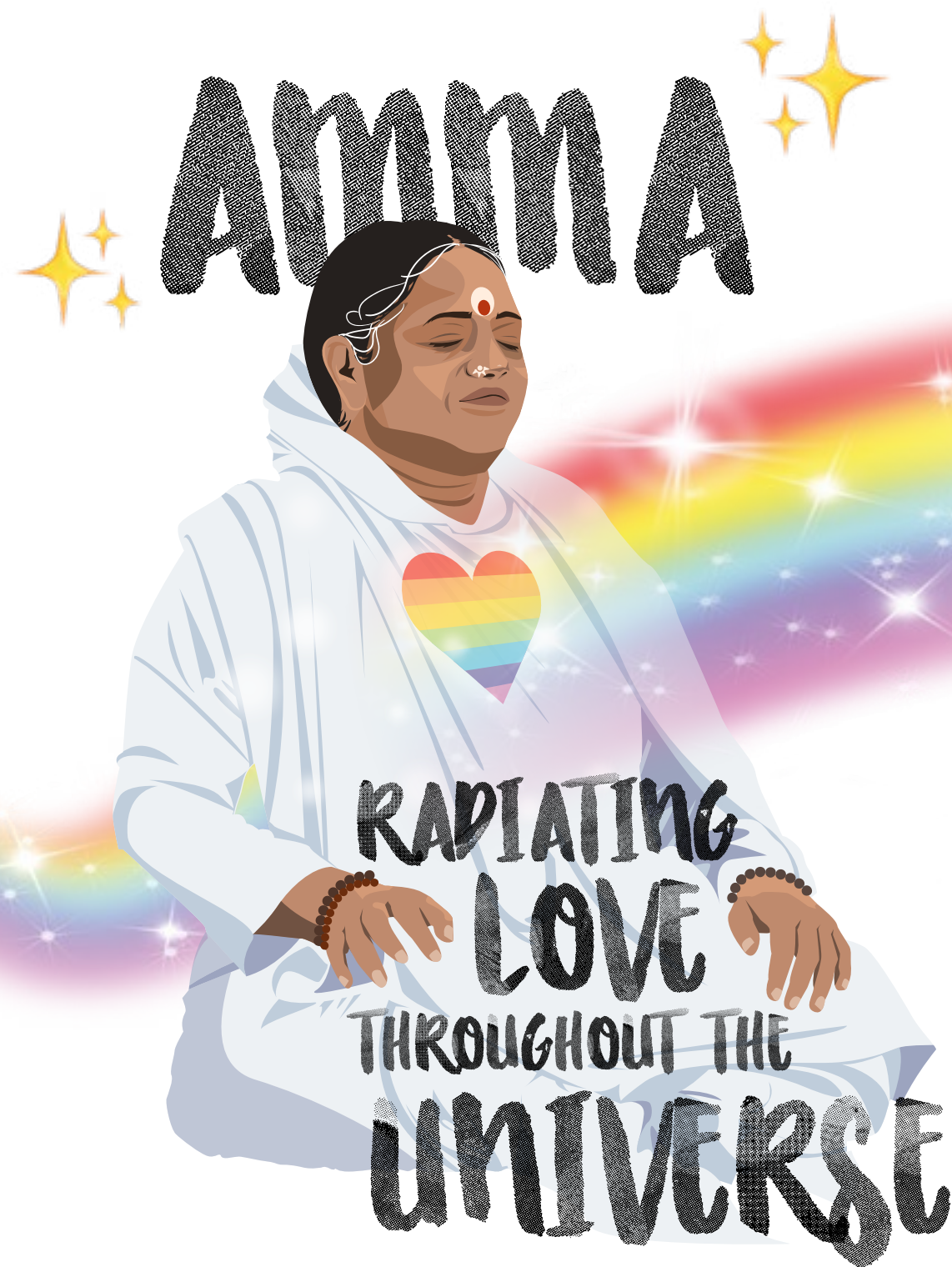
Sister Jenna: For the release of Oprah's Belief series, we put together ways in which we were going to assist in making this narrative

-- of looking at all faiths, and seeing what they all held fundamentally -- reach as far and wide as it could. I had a wonderful experience learning about new things.

Everything that you might envision or think about Oprah Winfrey... she's that and even more when you meet her. And I think that speaks so loud

and clear, that you can be a billionaire, but still be "real." Whether on a phone call, or at her house, my takeaway from those discussions is that there's hope... there's hope that people can be spiritual and wealthy, as well as being good at heart and strong in spirit!

I admire the way she shows up in the world.



From 2015-2018 we traveled the world, interviewing gurus about meditation and enlightenment. The most heart-opening place we visited was Amma's ashram in Southern India. Here's the story... and some beautiful words from Amma about love, compassion, and the global pandemic.

The bus ride from Trivandrum had been, for lack of a better word, chaos.

Swerving through traffic, honking loudly every few seconds, all through the night, our jet lagged bodies tried to rest and mend our frazzled nerves.

We were not surprised by the chaotic bus ride; we had come to expect such things since the moment we'd landed in southern India.

Stepping out of the airport we'd been mobbed by taxi drivers. Trivandrum had been a densely packed mess of people, taxis and rickshaws. Everything was fast, loud, dusty and chaotic. We were feeling overwhelmed, and starting to worry that we were not going to enjoy our four-month adventure through India and Nepal.

So we were pleasantly surprised when we stepped out of the bus in the small town of Karunagappally. It was actually... kind of calm. In the small dusty bus station, it was quiet enough to hear ourselves think, to hear the sound of the wind and the birds, to appreciate our surroundings, the sky above, the people around us, the feelings inside.

And there were only a handful of rickshaw drivers waiting at the station, offering us beautiful greetings like "Om Namah Shivaya"... a welcome change from the bus stations of Trivandrum, where drivers yelled and pushed past each other to get us into their rickshaws.

There was something in the air in Karunagappally that told me we were in the right place, and that our path to Amma's Ashram was a blessed one.

The red dirt road from Karunagappally to Amritapuri was quiet and peaceful, even as we bounced up and down in our ornately patterned faux leather seats.

The rickshaw rattled along, kicking up clouds of dust in its wake, as Karin, the German hitchhiker we'd picked up in the bus station, enthused excitedly about Amma's ashram.

"It's an oasis amid the chaos."

I didn't doubt it for a second. I had been feeling it since we'd arrived in Karunagappally. I was blown away by the dramatic contrast from the energy of the surrounding regions.

As we pulled up to the gates of Amma's ashram, I could feel peace and love emanating from inside, like

heat radiating from a crackling fireplace on a snowy winter's night.

In an instant, I felt my heart open in a way that I had never experienced before. My mind was blown. I felt tears sprouting from my eyes and running down my cheeks.

Until that moment, I had always raised a skeptical eyebrow when spiritual people applied physics concepts, like energy, vibration and radiation, to "non-physical" phenomena like emotions, peace, love, and states of consciousness. But in that moment, it was as clear as the sunlight streaming down from the bright morning sky.

As I peered through the gates of the ashram, I saw smiling happy people, walking around with consciousness and intention, in an eclectic mix of Aladdin Pants, western clothes, and flowing white saris and dhotis.

There was a young woman talking to an old man in the middle of the courtyard; their faces were engaged and filled with enthusiasm for their conversation. There was a line of people at the welcome counters, waiting to be checked into or checked out of their rooms... but rather than bored or grumpy, they looked peaceful and happy standing there in the glorious morning light, surrounded by other happily conscious people. The people in white robes working behind the admissions counters wore bright smiles and spoke in patient and compassionate tones.

The distant sound of sitar music gave the scene a spiritual and uniquely Indian vibe — I thought I heard a cheerful chant of "Om Namah Shivaya" echoing from the hall across the courtyard — and the smell of fresh baked bread delighted my nostrils.

The energy of the place was infectious, and I instantly caught the contagion. The tension that I had built up over the past few days melted away in a moment, replaced by a relaxed smile, a zest for life and a heart full of love.

I felt like there were physical waves of peace & love emanating from the ashram, rippling outward, passing through my body, radiating all the way to Karunagappally... and, more distantly... into the rest of the world and the Universe as a whole!

And at the center of it all: Amma, The Hugging Saint, sitting for 20+ hours per day, literally →

ILLUSTRATION BY ROSSINA MENDEZ

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CAMERA AT THIS QR
CODE TO WATCH OUR
DOCUMENTARY VIDEOS
AT AMMA'S ASHRAM!



embracing the millions of people who flock to her every day from the four corners of the Earth, generating powerful waves of love that roll out into the Oceans of consciousness that float, like an ethereal atmosphere, atop the surface of our planet.

I knew right away that this single moment of heart-opening realization would change my life forever. And this was before we even walked through the gates.

I could go on and on about Amma — how she started spreading love as a nine year old girl in a tiny fishing village, hugging people who were hungry, sick and struggling... how surrounding villagers recognized her beautiful heart from a young age, and began flocking to her as a saint... how this little girl's love has manifested, through the decades, as a thriving ashram-metropolis, filled with thousands of devotees, apartment complexes, restaurants and cafes, Amrita University (focused on STEM and engineering, considered one of the top universities in India and ranked 81st in the world in Time Higher Education's Impact Ratings), and the Amrita Institute of Medical



Sciences & Research Center, a massive state-of-the art hospital doing cutting-edge research in oncology and other areas... how she has led her devotees to channel millions of dollars in aid and hundreds of thousands of volunteer-hours for disaster victims all over the world... but that beautiful piece of history would fill an entire book.

If you want to learn more about Amma -- including how she has hugged 40+ million people (shattering all hugging-related world records), provided free medical care to more than five million people, built more than 47,000 homes for the homeless, provides financial aid to more than 100,000 people unable to care for themselves, not to mention her orphanages, soup kitchens, self-help groups and environmental projects -- check out Amma's official website at amritapuri.org, and the beautiful documentary videos we made while we were at the ashram as well!

More recently, we had the opportunity to interview Amma via email, about spreading peace & love during a global pandemic:

How would you comfort someone who is suffering from Covid, or who has lost a loved one in the pandemic?

Amma: Indeed, this is a distressful period for the entire world. It is deeply saddening to see so many people becoming sick and dying every day. More than four million people have died already from this virus, and we don't know how many more will perish. We should all pray for the peace and upliftment of the departed souls, as well as for the peace and wellbeing of their loved ones. We should also pray for the millions who are still struggling with the disease and suffering from its economic impact. Such selfless prayers never go to waste. For me, inside, there is always a prayer for everyone—for the entire creation: lokah samasta sukhino bhavantu ["May all beings in the whole world be happy"]. All over the world, for so many years now, this has been the prayer I've been leading millions of people in, as part of their spiritual practices.

Eventually death is inevitable for everyone, but the agonizing pain that surrounds us is heartbreaking. But never lose self-confidence. Never feel down and depressed. Instead, let us try to arise and awaken. This is a time to love, serve and be compassionate to others through our actions and words. This is an opportunity to intensify our spiritual practices and



Above: Amma leads the way in humanitarian work. Photo courtesy of Mata Amritanandamayi Math.
Right: Amritapuri in the mists of dawn. Photo by Kevin Ellerton.

pray with our whole heart.

When someone loses a loved one, talking to them about Vedanta and spiritual philosophy are rarely helpful or appropriate. Instead, it is the time to simply be there for them—to extend to them our concern and compassion. In many places in the world, we still cannot interact physically. We cannot even give them our shoulder to cry on. But we can be in touch with them through the phone and give them comfort. Do whatever you can to show them love.

Spirituality teaches us that death is not a complete annihilation. It is only like putting a period at the end of a sentence. Just as we continue writing, life continues. Understanding this will give us inner strength and self-confidence.

How has the pandemic impacted life at the Ashram?

Amma: At the instructions of the Government, we had to close the doors to visitors in March of last year. But there are more than 3,500 residents in the Ashram. They have taken this time to focus on their spiritual practices and scriptural study. Following social distancing and wearing masks, we have the morning chanting and meditation. Each evening, we have meditation, spiritual talks and bhajans [singing devotional songs], as well as the White Flowers of Peace Prayer to alleviate the pain and suffering of those in the world.

At the same time, many ashram

residents have turned their attention to doing what they can to help fight the pandemic. Those who teach at our university [Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham] have always aimed their research at developments that can help the sick and poor. When the pandemic started, all the various departments started working to see what they could do to assist those working on the frontlines. They have made low-cost nanofiber M96 masks and low-cost PAPR kits. One son has even made a robot for sanitizing rooms. Currently students and members of AYUDH [the Ashram's youth organization] are running 24-hour call-centers to help people get the assistance they need. We also conducted outreach programs to educate tribal populations about the disease. And we gave money towards the Indian government's relief programs—Rs. 13 crores [\$1.7 million U.S.]. Around the world, many of the centers have been supplying food and other essentials to people. I receive hundreds of letters every day from devotees all over the world. They are always in my mind. When I can, I call them and see how they are doing. We are also having broadcasts of the evening programs for the public once a month.

All we can do now is follow the government protocols, pray and accept the situation. With grace, before too long visitors will be able to come back to the ashram. →





How can we comfort people when we can't touch them?

Amma: It's true that people receive a lot of comfort from such things. However, consider this as a time for all of us to find comfort and contentment from within, by dwelling in the Inner Self. That is the greatest security one can ever have. In reality, the ever-present Self alone is the one and only source of love, peace and security. If we are able to tap into that inner source of love, they can never be obstructed by physical distance.

In truth, where there is true love, there is no distance. Understanding this, we should make a firm decision that we will remain happy and courageous, regardless of the circumstances. Whether we laugh or cry, the days are going to pass by. So, why not be happy? When you make the decision to face life cheerfully, no matter what it brings, it will definitely create an atmosphere of happiness around you. This ambience will also impart happiness and optimism to those around you as well.

However, the reality is that even before the pandemic started and even after it is over when physical interaction is possible again, the majority of people feel isolated and lonely. People spend a lot of time on things like Facebook, but they rarely look into the faces around them with love and compassion. We have to discover that true peace and love rest in the Inner Self. Just as Internet connection has become

an indispensable part of the modern-day world, we should also connect ourselves with the "Inner-net." When we can do that, even if we are physically "locked down," within we will be free.

You have said that the pandemic is Nature's response to humankind's exploitation of her, can you elaborate on that?

Amma: For a very long time, Mother Nature has forbore and forgiven all the abuse man has heaped upon her out of his selfishness. However, with the coronavirus, she has made it clear that this isn't always going to be the case. The pandemic has been a loud alarm sounded by Nature. She wants us to wake up and see all the harm our greed and exploitation are causing. If we can do that, then this pandemic will be like stepping on a thorn and gaining the awareness to later avoid stepping on a snake. We have to remember that by destroying Nature, we are destroying ourselves. We have to become humble before Nature. We have to love and serve her. At least now, we should stop our ceaseless selfish exploitation of her. We need to plant more trees and stop polluting the earth, rivers and air. Let it never come to pass that in order for the world to survive, man has to die.

What should we keep in mind as we move back into post-COVID reality?

Amma: We have to learn the lessons that

COVID has taught us and never forget them. We have to recognize the mistakes we were making and not repeat them. We should never forget the infinite power of Nature and that we should never disturb or provoke her. Because she can completely wipe us out in the blink of an eye.

It's okay to fulfill desires that are within the scope of dharma [righteousness], but not those that transcend ethical limits. We need to view all of our fellow beings and Nature with eyes of love and treat them with love, compassion and respect. We need awareness in our thoughts, words and deeds. We cannot keep living only in the intellect. We need to live in the heart. The intellect is like a pair of scissors; it cuts everything apart. The heart, on the other hand, is like a needle and thread; it sews everything together in unity and harmony. If humankind doesn't make these changes, we will have to face worse, more dangerous disasters in the future.

From this pandemic, we should understand the reality that even our next breath is not in our hands. The present moment alone is ours. It's our ability to practice awareness and discernment in the present moment that determines our real lifespan. How many people were not even able to catch a glimpse of their loved ones when they died? So many people had to leave their bodies without any loved ones at their bedside. This shows us that the present moment is all we have. In truth, we are always alone—whether -



Amma and her devotees have helped bring massive amounts of aid to those in need, all around the world. She radiates love through her actions & selfless service.

or not we are in a crowd or in solitude. We should try to maintain awareness of this truth and keep the realization of the Supreme as our primary goal.

But at the same time, we have to remember that no one is separate from us. Even if the sun is reflected in 100 pots of water, there is still only one sun—right? Similarly, in truth, there is but one Supreme Self that is expressing itself through all beings and forms in creation. When our right hand is in pain, our left hand will automatically comfort it, recognizing it as part of itself. When others are in pain—be it related to the coronavirus or otherwise—we should try to see their suffering and sorrow as our own and do what we can to help them.

Amma in numbers

40+
million
people hugged

5 million
people provided with
free medical care

47,000
homes built for
the homeless

100,000
people unable to
care for themselves
provided with
financial aid

Can normal people radiate love to the world, the way you do?

Amma: That power is within everyone because its source is the Supreme Self—the one true reality of us all. To me, everything—people, animals, plants, the rivers, lakes, trees and mountains, the sun and moon and stars... everything is divine. But most people are unaware of this truth. The one True Self reflects in people according to the condition of their mind, similar to how electricity is one but manifests differently in a zero-watt bulb, a 100-watt bulb or a 1,000-watt bulb. So, the question is only one of degree of manifestation. If an ordinary person is like an electric post, then a tapasvi [someone who has engaged in

tremendous spiritual practices and attained Self-realization] is like a power transformer. Their spiritual practices and mental discipline have generated tremendous energy within them. That is why when regular people come into contact with a mahatma, they are uplifted. Their inherent innocence is awoken. Everyone should try to manifest that love and innocence and share it to whatever extent possible. Let each of us try to do what we can. We may not be able to uplift everyone, but if we can help one person—make one person smile or forget their sorrows, for one minute—at least that is something. Such moments are what give our life real value.



Why do you think that hugs have such a transformational effect on the people who visit you?

Amma: Amma's hug is not just a physical embrace. It is like receiving a glimpse—a fragment—of the total unconditional love of the universe. In that flow of pure love, a true meeting of hearts takes place. That love is the true essence of everyone. When that goodness within people is touched, it overflows in the form of tears. So, darshan awakens that goodness—that spirit of compassion, selflessness and giving within everyone.

Human beings are born to love, to live in love and to die in love. Sadly, the biggest scarcity we have in the world today is the scarcity of love.

Do you ever get exhausted, giving hugs 20+ hours per day?

Amma: It is like asking the sun, “How do you shine?” or asking a river, “How do you flow?” To love and serve people, to dry their tears, to try to do what I can to solve their problems—that is just my nature. I'm not like a battery that has to get periodically recharged; I am one with the eternal source of all power.

What mantra or meditation technique would you recommend for people who are interested in beginning a spiritual practice today?

Amma: Since people are of different mental, emotional and physical dispositions, one path will not suit everyone. Asking everyone to follow the same path or to chant the same mantra is like saying, “Everyone must wear the same size shoes.” In fact, anything done with awareness can be a meditation. It is that awareness principle that marks the difference between yoga and mere exercise. The type of meditation really doesn't matter. We can focus on our inhalation and exhalation; we can focus on a mantra; we can focus on a divine form. We can practice Self-inquiry. The important thing is that we do so with concentration and sincerity.

For physical health, we need to move the body as much as possible. But mental health is just the opposite. To promote



Amma's Ashram, on the shore of the Arabian Sea. Photos courtesy of Mata Amritanandamayi Math

mental health, we need to spend some time stopping the mind and making it still. Tragically, in today's world, people do just the opposite. The body never gets out of a chair, and the mind runs rampant wherever it likes. This is what leads to a lot of the physical and mental disease we see around us. So, every day, for at least a few minutes, we need to still our mind. Any method we like that helps us to do this is a good form of meditation. But in our ashram, we have certain techniques, like IAM Technique [Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique] and Ma-Om Meditation. One can learn these at our centers.

Can you explain and elaborate upon your famous quote, “Love is our true essence?”

Amma: Love is the True Self; it is our true nature. Love is the innermost essence of us all. Ignorant of this, people are constantly searching for love in the external world. In this way, they tragically search for it everywhere but the one place it actually is. Thinking the

external world will give them love and happiness, people become like a dog with a bone. Hoping to get something tasty from the bone, the dog begins to chew it and soon tastes blood. It thinks it's getting the blood from the bone, but in reality that blood is coming from its own cut gums. Similarly, we keep projecting the love that is our own true nature upon external objects. Then, when we get those objects, we think we are getting happiness from them. But this is incorrect. We are merely superimposing happiness and sorrow, good and bad, etc, upon those objects. There is only one source of love and happiness in all of creation—the True Self.

The first ripple of love emerges from within us. When a pebble is dropped into a still pond, the first little ripple forms around the pebble itself. Gradually, the circle of that ripple expands until it reaches the shore. In the same way, love should start within. Then, if we are able to purify the love inherent in us, it will gradually expand to encompass the entire world. ●

"Love is our true essence"

**"I AM ENOUGH!
I CAN DO THIS.
THIS LIFE IS
WORTH
EVERYTHING"**

While meditation and modeling are often seen as worlds apart, they find common ground in one beautiful and unique human being: Jasmine Sanders.

Words by Kevin Ellerton
Portrait by Kyleen James



J

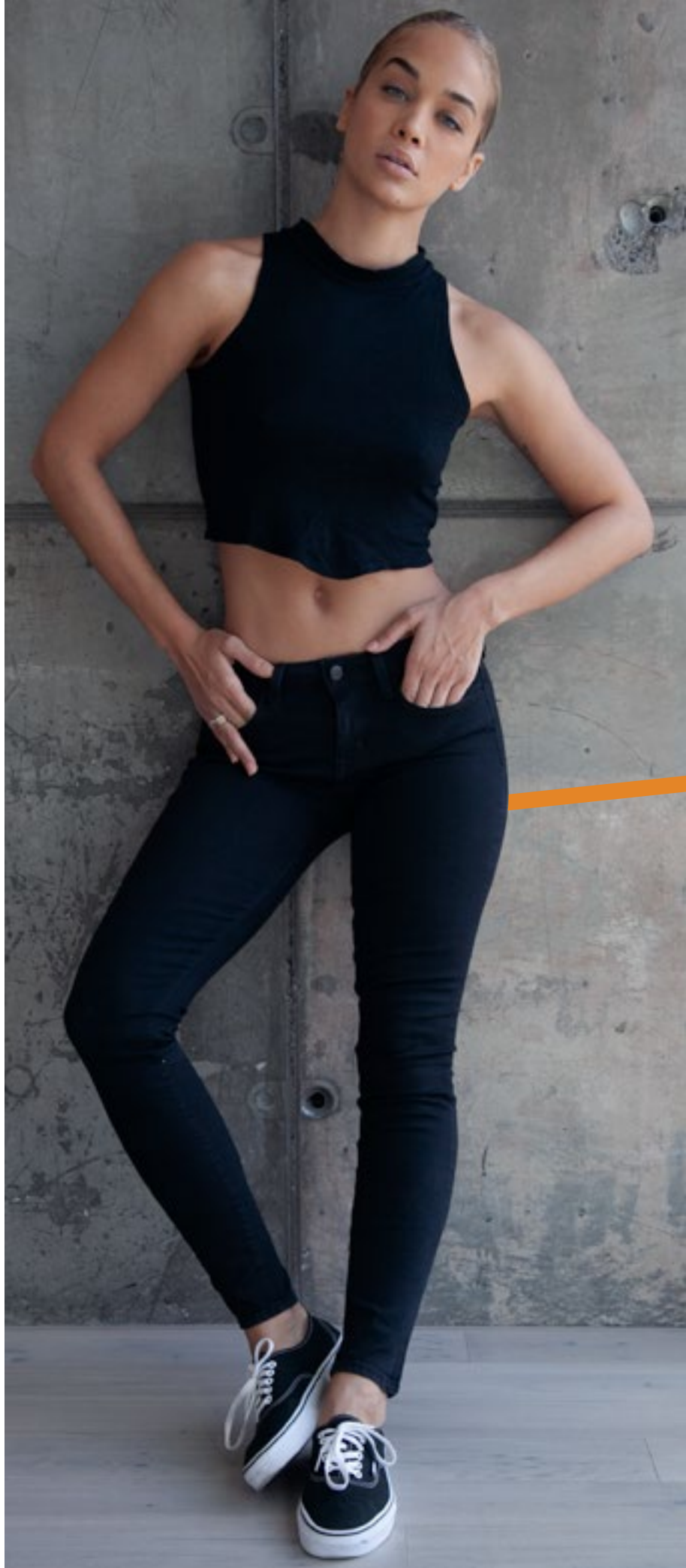
asmine Sanders is a rising star in the modeling industry, who has recently graced the covers of Maxim, Elle, Harper's Bazaar, and the 2020

Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue. Having recently attained supermodel status, Jasmine is now known in the industry as "Golden Barbie" for her mixed-race golden complexion.

But while she may seem like a picture of superhuman perfection on the surface, her soul runs deep, and her inner world is intensely human. Jasmine has privately struggled with anxiety and panic attacks that have interfered with her life and career. She has recently taken up meditation as a way to transcend her stresses & anxieties, and live a happier life.

I've spent the past few years working mainly with gurus and zen masters, so interviewing a supermodel was a new experience for me. I found myself kneeling in the sand on Miami Beach, setting up a bunch of tripods & video cameras, waiting for Jasmine to arrive, wondering what our conversation would be like. But when Jasmine emerged from the 92nd Street beach entrance, joyful presence radiating from her bouncy gait and kind smile, my worries fell away. I could see that she was not just some conceptual "supermodel" – she's a human being, with a deep soul and powerful emotions, just like me.

After a centering mindful meditation and a powerful pranayama breath-work, we were deeply immersed in the present moment, and ready to have a real conversation about anxiety, meditation, self-esteem and the modeling industry:



"LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE, I HAVE INSECURITIES"

How did you get into meditation?

Jasmine: When I was getting into yoga, I went to Costa Rica [for a yoga retreat]. At the end of one of our yoga sessions, the teacher was like, "Are you interested in a little bit of meditation?"

At that point I was like, "Look, I feel like I've tried everything, and nothing's working. So why not try one more thing."

And it was the only thing that allowed me to relax.

I cried. And when I say cry, I mean, bawling. Everything was just a release. It was insane. I felt the biggest weight just lift off of my shoulders.

Often when people cry in meditation it's because they've had some deep realizations about themselves. Did you have a realization like that?

Jasmine: My realization, which I try to

instill now every day in my affirmations, is constantly letting myself know that I'm enough, and that I'm strong, and that I'm powerful.

And I feel like that was hard for me to just know and tell myself everyday.

The yoga teacher said something to me that just had me realize:

"You know what? I am enough! I can do this. This life is worth everything. And let me just smile more, and enjoy life, and just try and take a beat as much as I can."

It was very eye opening. Like, I wanted to kiss the ground before I left. It was insane.

You're one of the most successful, beautiful, and admired women in the world. Why did you feel like you were not enough?

Jasmine: Everybody says it like that! And I'm like, "Guys. That means nothing. Just because you're beautiful or you have a

great career or you get to travel the world -- they're all bonuses! -- but we all have our own struggles. We all go through things. I had been through crazy relationships, friendships, childhood things...

Like everybody else, I have insecurities. I have mornings where I don't wake up feeling my best. Sometimes I feel like I woke up on the wrong side of the bed, and my boyfriend is like, "Go back to sleep, you'll be okay," and I'm like, "No, you don't understand. My heart's so heavy."

I'm a cancer, so everything is like a weight on my shoulders.

How do you work through those feelings?

Jasmine: For me it's just waking up in the morning, giving myself ten to fifteen minutes, whether its eyes open, eyes closed and just like taking it in.

Being by water... I love, love love being by the water. I like listening to the ocean, or just peaceful music in the morning... something to allow my brain to think →



"STARTING MY MORNINGS WITH MEDITATION, OR JUST PEACE AND QUIET FOR A MINUTE, REALLY HAS HELPED ME"

it's on pause for a minute. And then I know that I can handle the rest of my day.

What would you say to a girl who is reading this right now, who's thinking, "I'm not good enough because I don't look like Jasmine Sanders?"

Jasmine: Please, please, stop comparing yourself! That was the number one thing that I had to learn and stop doing.

In mainstream western society, external beauty is often worshipped, and models are admired and looked up to. In the meditation and spiritual community, there's a different value system. The emphasis is on internal attributes, like heart, love and compassion. In the meditation community, there's often a feeling that the modeling industry is promoting superficial beauty, or even a certain type of look, with skinny people favored over larger people...

Jasmine: It's slowly starting to change, but not at the pace that we want it to. Definitely not fast enough for me! But that's a big thing in the modeling industry right now... people are really finding a way to be inclusive.

We are filled with beautiful people, all shapes and sizes, all different colors, all different hairstyles. I just don't feel like anyone's mastered it yet, but we will get there eventually. And I'm trying my hardest to play a part to make sure that girls know that they're beautiful, and that their faces and their bodies and weight do not define their beauty.

I wish that I could look in more magazines and see more people that look like my family, my mom, my sister, my cousins. It's slowly happening. It's not happening at the pace we all want it to, but if there's anything I can do to play my part, I'm here!

I feel like it's my part to make sure that girls know that, just because I'm a beautiful face, it doesn't mean that I don't go through my own things, I don't have my own struggles.

You have a big platform in social media, do you ever try to use that to



promote this type of idea?

Jasmine: All the time. I'm constantly trying to let people know: "Look, you are gorgeous! Let's do a challenge with no makeup!"

With my social media lately, I've been really trying to see how many of us can stop using filters, as much as possible. Even just the filters alone -- and I've played my part in it, because I downloaded all of them like everyone else did and use them -- they morph our faces and make us look completely different.

Then I woke up one day, and I was like, "Wait! When I get on my phone and I immediately go take a selfie, I look for the filter first. So I'm not thinking that I'm beautiful anymore, without my filter." So I was like, "I gotta stop doing this!" And I asked one of my girlfriends to join me, and she was just thinking the same thing, and deleted all of hers! We make ourselves think that this stuff is beautiful, and then we slowly feel like we may need to get work done or whatever to look like that filter...!

And that's my biggest part right now, if I can play any position in stopping a sixteen year old from going and getting work done on her face at such an early age.

I'm not against it -- if you guys feel like you need to do something for you, do it -- I just want people to embrace their natural beauty more. And if there's any way that I can say it, or things I can do, like little challenges that might just get somebody to embrace and love their

personal look and their natural beauty, then that's what I want to do.

What other benefits have you noticed from meditation?

Jasmine: My latest thing is like, "A couple that meditates together, stays together."

If you are not okay in the head and the heart, then that person, the closest person to you, always sees that, and it sucks for them.

[Tearing up] I'm sorry to anyone I hurt. We've all done it. I'm so sorry.

And starting my mornings with meditation, or just peace and quiet for a minute -- or ten minutes -- really has helped me before hopping on my phone.

I used to have the habit of getting on my phone the second that I woke up. The second my eyes opened, I was like, "I need to check instagram! And I need to check my emails! And make sure my agents are good and everything!"

And then I was like, "Wait. I need to take a beat and dial back before I go to them, upset for no reason because of whatever bad dream I had last night, or whatever I'm dealing with personally." Taking that moment for me, to have a personal beat and then jump into work, has been life changing. ●

POINT YOUR PHONE CAMERA AT THIS QR CODE TO WATCH THE FULL INTERVIEW ON BEAUTIFUL MIAMI BEACH!



MEET MEKA

While full-grown meditation teachers around the world struggle to pull people into their classes, 12-year-old Meka Leach is teaching sold-out meditation retreats in Illinois.

By Kevin Ellerton

How does this even happen? How does a 12 year old (who was not born into a meditation/yoga/hippie family) get into meditation, let alone teach it to thousands of children and adults?

Most people who get into meditation do so as adults, looking for relief from stress or anxiety or depression, searching for meaning in life, something to make them feel happier or more connected to the world around them.

Not Meka. Her epic spiritual journey began at four years old... at a fencing competition.

Meka: I was best friends with this boy in preschool.

So, we wanted something that we could both do together, and we could car-pool to get there.

We found this basketball class. The basketball coach was a world cup fencer. He would follow us around and tell me —not my friend, but just me — that he really wants me to try fencing.

Then one day, there was a fencing competition coming up at his gym that he teaches at. We decided that we would go, but that I would kindly tell him that I do not want to fence. I was in preschool, so my mom thought I was like this big princess, and that I was not gonna touch a sword or anything.

So we went, and my mom was like, “Ok, now tell him that you don’t want to do it!” And I’m like... “I wanna try this!” And she was thrown for a total loop! She was like “WHAT?! You wanna try sword fighting?”

Meka’s coaches quickly found her to be a fencing prodigy. She was winning

her matches, but she was getting too muscular for her own good and losing her natural flexibility. Her coaches recommended yoga to improve her flexibility, and Meka loved it. Yoga helped Meka become a better fencer, and feel better while doing it.

By age 10, Meka had won 1st place at the national Y10 Women’s Epee to become the US national fencing champion ... Oh yeah, and she also became the youngest certified Bhakti Yoga instructor in the USA in the same year!

One day, Meka’s mom took her to a Sound Healing session that changed Meka’s life forever, and set her on her path to becoming the Meditation Teacher that she was destined to be.

Meka: With my first sound journey, me and my mom had no clue whatsoever →



PHOTOS BY ALYSSA LANG



Meka's just like a regular 12-year old... except she's a national fencing champion and teaches meditation retreats.

what it was. We just thought we'd try it because... why not?

It sounded like fun! Sound healing. Healing with sound. We had no clue what it was.

So then, I told my mom, right after the sound healing: "I want to do this."

And she was like "What?! What?! NO!" She was so confused.

And I was like, "YES! This is my Purpose. To teach this."

And she was like, "Oh my God!" She was so confused.

Then finally, after that, I was drawn into it. Ever since I tried the first one, I just fell in love with it, and I couldn't stop.

Throughout the years, I got really shy... but I feel I'm not really shy anymore, because meditation -- and letting-go ceremonies, and SoderWorld [the wellness center where Meka teaches] -- has helped me so much.

SoderWorld let me teach my first class here. They trusted me to have a studio, to teach in, when I was only ten years old. They trusted me enough just to let me teach here, and I feel that was amazing, just super cool.

Yoga & meditation have since become so important to Meka that she has completely given up fencing, the sport she'd dominated and conquered for her entire young life.

Meka: I decided to switch. Fencing was like, so many hours in the gym. It took so long and it took like my whole entire day away. It was a really competitive sport and I felt that, that's not helping me achieve what I was meant to do. Because I feel I was meant to change my generation.

And I feel that I'm meant to really teach how to meditate, and how to be positive... and definitely about self love.

It was not sitting with me anymore, and it took up too much of my time, and it was just too much on me with fencing. I couldn't teach how much I really wanted to, because it was taking up at least twenty hours a week, maybe even more.

So then I was just always so overwhelmed with it, and I could never have the time to really get into my yoga. And now that I stopped fencing, it's just been a lot easier for me to do more yoga classes, and that's why I did my retreat.

Because if I were still fencing, I wouldn't be able to do the retreat. I wouldn't be able to do as much as I'm doing right now.

Kevin: Do you teach differently depending on if you're teaching adults or kids?

Meka: Yes, I kinda do!

With kids, I feel it's easier sometimes, because they're open. Like they're more open to listen sometimes. And when their parents are gone, they're like different people. They're funny! And if you mess up, sometimes when you're doing a yoga flow and you call a pose the wrong name, you can say, "Oops, I meant to say this!" They will just laugh, and it will be so much fun. It's just a really fun class.

The adults are always harder to teach, because they're all so serious. They wanna listen to you word for word, they wanna make sure you're getting everything right, they wanna make sure they're getting everything right... With the kids, it's kinda looser... that's why I'm also more nervous about teaching adult classes. Even with my mom in my class, she's strict, she's like, "What are we doing

next?" She can't wait to see the next step.

Also, it's harder because some of the adults, they see me as a different person. They see me as this person teaching them all of this knowledge, as a great person... and I just see myself as a normal person. And I really don't understand, when that happens. Because the kids see you as equal to them, and the adults see you as this high person, and it just puts a lot of pressure on you.

Sometimes I post on my page like, "Why do you see me as this amazing high person? I understand that I'm doing good things, but it's only because I'm following what my heart says. I'm a person that's

following my heart. And I'm not doing anything else but that."

Kevin: How do you avoid getting your ego inflated, when people put you on a pedestal like that?

Meka: What I like to do is, I normally take the compliment as somebody being nice. It's just a nice journey, something nice that a person says.

If a person goes up to you and says they like your hair, or if you have cool shoes on, it's just exactly like that. You know that they're not trying to inflate your ego or make you feel like you're this

huge, amazing person -- even though sometimes it does happen that way and they want you to feel that way. But, just take it as a compliment.

Kevin: That's powerful... to take the compliment in the flow of the journey, rather than using it to create a sense of self, like "This is who I am, I am this great person who has all of these great attributes." It's more like: this is a journey and a flow, and these compliments and these beautiful words are coming as a flow. That's a very wise perspective.

Kevin: Why do you feel like meditation & yoga is your path, your calling and your mission in life?

Meka: I feel that a lot of kids now that are my age or younger or even older -- even some adults now -- they're just so zoned in to like this negative energy.

I feel that everybody has just been so negative lately and I really feel like it's in my power to change it. I feel like it's been so negative lately, and the world has been so hateful, and we really haven't had this time to just take a moment to close our eyes and to really, like, "How do I actually feel? Am I really feeling this way, or is it just something that I tell myself that I am?"

Half of my friends are so zoned into video games, and they cannot stop talking about them. So then if we have other things to do -- not just video games -- we can think more positive, and we can learn how to deal with our emotions. 'Cuz I know a bunch of my friends do not know how to deal with their emotions.

And I feel it's very important to deal with your emotions. I feel it's very important to spread this kindness and this wisdom. Because it's really what will make our generation better. ●

DURING OUR INSTAGRAM LIVE INTERVIEW, MEKA GUIDED US THROUGH A BEAUTIFUL AND UNIQUE GUIDED VISUALIZATION MEDITATION (WHILE LITERALLY PLAYING THE DIDGERIDOO IN FRONT OF A WATERFALL). IF YOU WANT TO WATCH THE FULL INTERVIEW, JUST SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE, OR FIND IT ON OUR INSTAGRAM @MEDITATIONMAG -- AND FEEL FREE TO LEAVE A COMMENT FOR @MINDFULNESSWITHMEKA!



You can also find Meka's guided meditation here in this magazine, on page 18





PHOTOS BY MATT THOMAS, TAWNI BANNISTER, AND FABIO FILIPPI

The Transformational Power of Loving Kindness Meditation

An interview with Sharon Salzberg, co-founder of the Insight Meditation Society, bestselling author, and popularizer of vipassana & loving kindness meditation in the western world.

By Forrest Neal

*"May all beings be safe.
May all beings be happy.
May all beings be healthy.
May all beings live with ease."*

When I was just starting out in my meditation journey, I remember wondering whether I was meditating correctly or not.

It was a challenge for me to have compassion for myself and enjoy the meditation experience. It seemed like nothing was happening during the silent portions of the practice, so it was hard for me to find signals that I wasn't just wasting my time sitting quietly with my eyes closed. In those moments, I questioned if meditation held any value at all, or if the community surrounding it was just a bunch of people who were fooling themselves.

Little did I know, this period of time was like a training program for the one specific meditation exercise that I would personally connect with the most, that would trigger major changes, very quickly, in my life.

That meditation exercise, which has largely been popularized in the US by Sharon Salzberg, is called Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM).



Sharon is one of the founders of the Insight Meditation Society, along with other world renowned teachers like Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein. I've been learning from Sharon since the beginning of my meditation journey, and I recently had the opportunity to ask her about the transformational practices that she's written about in her New York Times Bestselling Book *Real Change: Mindfulness to Heal Ourselves and the World*.

How did you get started with Loving Kindness Meditation?

SS: I first heard of the practice in January of 1971. I was in India as a college student, and I wanted to learn how to meditate, so I did an intensive 10-day retreat.

At the very end, the last thing the teacher did was a short loving kindness practice. It was the first time I'd heard of it, and I thought, "Wow, what is that?" I was very taken with it.

At the beginning of the insight meditation society, we had a month before there was any programming. So we thought, "Let's just do our own retreat for a month!"

I thought, 'Hey, I've got a month. I don't have a teacher here to guide me through loving kindness, but by this time I know how to do it. So I'm going to do that!'

I spent the first week doing the LKM practice, by myself, all day long. 'May I be happy, May I be peaceful', whatever phrases I was using. And I felt absolutely nothing. It was a very dreary week. →

Then, something happened to one of our friends in Boston in our larger community, and everyone had to suddenly leave the retreat.

I was in one of the bathrooms getting ready to leave, and I dropped a big jar of something that just went down on the tile floor, and it just shattered with stuff going everywhere.

I can remember the first thought that came up in my mind was, “You are really a klutz. But I love you.” And I thought, “Look at that!”

I had to laugh, thinking back upon all the times I’ve made careless mistakes, and how my thoughts have become more compassionate toward myself over time, in the same way that Sharon described.

Why is LKM such a transformational practice?

SS: If you look at the classical perspective, the Buddhist context, they say that the Buddha taught loving kindness meditation as the antidote to fear.

It’s also said within that context -- and in more current research -- that the part of the mind or the psyche that is most strongly impacted by doing LKM practices is the field of intention.

So if we’ve largely been governed by fear, or alienation, or resentment in our choices, decisions, and actions, and we do a practice like LKM, those emotions will be replaced by a feeling of connection.

Those new feelings don’t govern WHAT we will do, which is always very contextual... but WHY you’ll do what you do will shift.

That’s a huge upheaval in our lives, to be coming from a place of caring and connection for ourselves and others!

Why is LKM so much more powerful when practiced during times when we’re experiencing negative emotions?

SS: Over time, we stop thinking of those particular emotions -- fear, greed, anger, jealousy -- as negative... and start to recognize them as painful.

To be able to see those feelings, and have compassion for ourselves instead of judgement, is a function of greater loving kindness.




You can also find
Sharon’s guided
meditation here
in this magazine,
on page 16

I found the distinction that Sharon made about seeing these emotions as painful instead of negative to be refreshing.

It reminded me of a famous saying about holding grudges against others: “Holding a grudge is like swallowing poison and expecting the other person to die.”

Sharon’s distinction allowed me to understand that we unconsciously inflict pain upon ourselves by holding on to these emotions, and that LKM can help transform those painful emotions into something that allows us to feel more compassionate and equanimous!

How would you share this exercise with others?

SS: I think the critical thing is to understand what to expect and what not to expect. Otherwise you would just get discouraged.

You might not see big changes in your formal practice each day, but you can look at your life.

What seems to help people, including me, is to have some kind of structure. For example, make an experiment, and say:

“I’m going to practice for 12 minutes per day for a month. And I’m going to wait until the end of the month to check out the results, how I feel in this situation where I normally get very anxious.”

Sharon’s role in popularizing LKM in western culture has largely changed the way that people think about meditation. Meditation had been seen as a passive activity: someone sitting on the floor, resting and relaxing. The introduction of LKM has shifted the western perception of meditation into being a functional skill set, much like having different tools on a tool belt.

Bringing this broader understanding of meditation to the West made Sharon Salzberg a Powerful Woman in Meditation, and it’s one of the reasons that she is loved and admired by meditators around the world today. ●

TO LISTEN TO THE ENTIRE INTERVIEW, AND FOLLOW ALONG WITH A GUIDED LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION FROM SHARON HERSELF, GO TO [MEDITATIONMAG.COM/SALZBERG](https://meditationmag.com/salzberg), OR SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE CAMERA!



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Articles

MY FATHER, THE ICEMAN

Laura Hof on family heartbreak, a childhood with no rules, and the lessons she learned from her legendary father

It is winter in Amsterdam, and freezing cold outside. All streets and houses buried underneath a layer of snow. I am waiting for my father to pick me up, next to all of the children in the school yard. I see parents starting to arrive, all in big winter coats, snow boots, gloves and winter hats. Then my father arrives to pick me up, clothed in nothing more but shorts, sandals and a hawaian shirt, ending up doing some yoga tricks on the school yard in the snow, before we leave for home. This was the parent me and my three other siblings were raised by: different but completely himself, a yogi, and unconventional.

The techniques that we now deem the Wim Hof Method, were practices that were ingrained in my childhood memories. →

PHOTO BY CRISTIANA STOIAN



Laura Hof with hands in Namaste Mudra. Photo by Cristiana Stoian. Opposite Page: Laura with her sister and father.

When I used to have nightmares in the middle of the night I would go to the living room to get soothed by my dad, and there he was at 4 o'clock in the night sitting on the couch doing breathing exercises. When it was winter, we used to play outside while my father was doing meditation and cold dipping in nature.

I was doing cold showers when I was 11, but it was 10 years ago, when I was 23, that I discovered how effective my father's breathing techniques were. I had a student party that I attended and drank too much, causing an enormous hangover. My father was visiting me and I just didn't want to go out of bed. He told me to sit with him on the couch and we did three rounds of breathing together, after which I looked at him with big eyes and shouted: "Holy Moly, This shit works!" I was up on my feet again and ready for school, I was detoxed and feeling happy. It was a wake up call. I don't party nowadays, and I do the breathing as a substitute for my morning meditations, but this is how I really got started on the techniques my father did his whole life.

If I look back to my childhood, my father was really the 5th kid in the house. There were no rules, we had all the freedom in the world. We were like Macaulay Culkin in *Home Alone*: we could play outside until dark, watch tv until we fell asleep on the couch, and were free to stand and walk wherever and whomever we wanted. When I was upset because all my friends were getting grounded, and I didn't get house arrest ever, I asked my dad to give it to me. He told me oke and gave me house arrest, which I was fed up with after 3 hours, and returned to my normal being playing outside.

My mother had a severe form of schizophrenia and because of this, she was never around for a long time with my father and my siblings, always moving back and forth to Spain, where she came from. She committed suicide when I was 8 and in Spain, and it has been one of the most traumatic experiences in my life. I still remember the night she jumped from the balcony of my grandparents, 8 stories high, as we prayed together in bed and my mother kissed me and my

little brother goodbye for the last time. It was a difficult period full of confusion and hurt. My father, a true free spirit was left behind to raise us, and we could feel the pain that everybody had to deal with. I can still feel the unbelievably heartbreaking situation we were in, it taught us everything about loss, a painful loss that I am now grateful for.

We were a wolf pack of 5 really trying to cope with the situation and the loss that struck us all in different ways. At the same time we were also afraid that social governmental institutions would take us apart, as our household seemed very chaotic and disorganized, so social services came by at our house now and then for a check up. It is true that our household lacked structure, and a bit of structure would be helpful, but looking back there are lessons that I have learned that I would otherwise not have. We got the most important lesson of life from my father, and that was a lot of unconditional love, the kind that is truly without any condition.

We were the odd kids in the neighborhood, poor and not well mannered in the conventional sense, raised by a kind but different hippie man. We didn't eat at the table, ate with our hands, only learned to eat with a knife and fork together when I was in my twenties (I am still uncomfortable with eating -vegan- pizza with knife and fork). However, neighbors would come by our

house a lot to have a rest and a coffee, children always came to our house to play with us, as it was the most fun house in the neighborhood. We were a household with no rules, everlasting chaos, while in a very structured society as Holland.

We might have been the poorest in the neighborhood, but we were rich in our way we perceived the world: our mindset. We felt very proud of ourselves, and my father made sure of that. We were and are truly happy, strong and healthy, and my dad taught us important lessons, that I now understand are so important:

Express your true self

My father is an unbelievably integral and pure man, this is why I always believed in a just world. To us, people are kind and inherently good. Perhaps very naive, but the locks of our house were always open, people of the neighborhood could walk in and out. I was taught to speak my truth, never to hold back on what I wanted to say. Looking back, this also helped me to stay true to myself, as I didn't have to hide anything, positive or negative emotions I felt, I was able to express these instantly, never having to suppress them, or withhold them, of fear for not receiving love or criticism. I was able to express my true self, every moment, regardless of what the reaction was.

It also led me to not have to build any conditional layer, coping mechanism, →



another persona, around me to cope with the inability to express myself. No imposed manners, means, being completely open. Having your heart on your sleeve and not trying to measure yourself against anybody else. We were never told ‘no that is not good’, ‘no, you should do that’, ‘no, you should be doing this or being that’, were told to be kind, honest, open, accepting, and yourself, the rest was not a priority.

Follow your heart

My father’s mantra: be happy, strong and healthy, also applies to the way he raised us. We were very free in what we wanted to do, and we were also able to go after whatever we wanted. If it made us happy, my father would support it, it was never about himself. If I loved basketball, he would play with me every day. If I loved drawing, he would buy pencils for me, so I was able to do this at home. It was always about enhancing an already present love of life and fueling this.

It has kept my actions very close to my innerlife. When I do not want to do something that makes me unhappy, and I am not talking about the discomfort of learning new things, but a job that just makes me miserable, for example, I have been out in no time. This has kept me happy emotionally, even though economically I was in a less comfortable position. Money was never an issue for us, and I know to live with very modest

means, while being super happy and content. This is because my father also lived a life following his heart, economically poor perhaps, but emotionally super rich, and I am so grateful that I was given this invaluable lesson.

It is not about having the job that society values, it is about having a job that makes you happy. My father was always proud as long as we were happy and creative, doing what we loved.

Accept everybody as they are and praise differences.

My life has always been an influx of people coming and going in my life. They have joined my road and exited my road, and it was always ok with me. What I now understand is that I have always remained open for anybody wanting to be my friend. I never belonged to any group, or I belonged to them all, and I moved in between happily. I have always been drawn to kindness, and I have always responded back the same. Never have I adhered or felt drawn to social norms, or social hierarchies, in my world they just did not exist. People are people.

This openness of being is something I always thought was so normal, while I now know it is not. Often, based on conditioning we become part of a group, we learn to distance ourselves from certain persons that have different traits from us. I love people who are different from me, it teaches me so much about myself.

The most interesting and fun people

are just people who are themselves. When people are their true selves, they become their most fun selves, and it makes me want to be around them. It is the uniqueness that makes a person beautiful.

Believe in yourself

A true unconventionalist and idealist, my father was always talking about how to change the world. changing the world for the better. And I naively perhaps, always believed him. The beauty is however, that he really did change the world! He showed people that they are capable of so much more, has changed the scientific paradigm of medical history that we are able to influence our autonomic nervous system, that which was considered outside of our will! This, I believe, is due to his unwavering belief in his own light. This belief also made him do it! My father is not a man who doubts himself, he is not crazy, he is also very modest in many other ways, but he has this self shining light, this core belief, outside of conventional wisdom, from which he is led. This is something that I also got from him.

This belief in oneself has made me do unbelievable things in life and achieved goals I thought I was not able to. My father’s mantra was always: ‘just do it’! This was his response to everything I wanted to do in life, and it has served me unbelievably well! I jumped from 20 stories down with puenting, done bungee jumping, I have travelled the world on my own, worked abroad, started my own company, and it all comes from this little mantra of my father of having belief.

This belief is not about arrogance, it is completely in line with an inner yearning of yourself, your intuition, a voice within that needs to be heard by yourself and followed. It is this belief that wants to come out, and wants you to have belief that whatever you do, if done in service of your growth, and for the common good, it is always a good thing. It is in service of humanity.

Have no fear

Live in love and F*ck fear. We were 6 years old and jumping in the water from 10 meter down from a bridge, climbing mountains and cliffs in Spain together →



Laura Hof following in the snowy footsteps of her father, Wim.

with my father, who was a guide. Now this was physical fear, but it also taught us about mental fear. It comes in the absence of love of life, it is a narrowing, as my father always says, of your neurology, of your consciousness. So if you live in a state of love, happiness and trust in the universe and of life, fear does not exist. It is this love and zest of life that I have from my father 100%!

Life for me is an amazing playground where our abilities, our wants, our yearnings may be explored. You can fail and you can succeed, but it is about recognizing those things that you feel fearful about, and doing them anyway.

Fear is definitely something to be respected because it signals that there is danger, but not the kind that is pure perception and holds you back. When fear is only a product of your irrational mind trying to keep you in your comfort zone, based on certain conditioning, you need to break out of this.

Death to me is a beautiful thing to be experienced as a human being. Although the death of my mother left me with a trauma of the fear of loss, having also dealt with this fear with the mindset my father taught me, I have no more fears in life. It enables you to live exposed, naked, but strong and happy. You live from a state of love for and trust in the universe, which is a state of fearlessness. From this point of view, life is a unbelievable gift that we are able to experience every day. What an unbelievable blessing!

I truly love my father for the pure man that he is and the way he taught us to be. It is the absence of conditioning I feel that has been so valuable in his way



of raising us. Play and creativity were always central in our life. My father I consider one of my greatest teachers and the best father in the world, but also my best friend.

Philosophy of Wim Hof method

If I think of the Wim Hof Method, it is a set of techniques, but actually it is also a philosophy, I believe, that which represents the very core of human creativity. I believe my dad embodies that very well. This touches upon all bits that you can see in different kinds of religions and philosophies. We were immersed in spirituality, it was a normal thing in our household, nothing to think differently about it. We used to go to the Hare Krishna temple to dance and sing, I read the Bhagavad Ghita when I was 9, we saw Bruce Lee's movies at home, did karate with my dad, all summers we stayed in the mountains in Spain where my father used to guide people into the mountains.

My grandmothers were both

ferociously Christian, and so for them I got baptized and did my communions. I always read and was interested in different kinds of religious and philosophic books: the Gilgamesh, the Bible, Koran, The Torah, The Dao, the Vedas, Bavagan Ghita, even different kinds of stoic texts. I always felt a deep connection to spirituality and to the essence of our being. My father always talks about the liberation of the soul, the freedom of our souls to express ourselves deeply and fully. This makes a person whole, being happy for no reason other than being alive fully, it is the very expression of the soul. Spirituality helps us get there. ●

Laura Hof is the daughter of Wim Hof, 'The Iceman'. She is a licensed nutritionist, Yoga Teacher, Holistic Therapist in training and also gives workshops in breath, cold exposure and mindset as a Wim Hof Method Instructor.

Follow on Instagram @laurahofalchemy

Can CBD help with meditation?

With our lives filled with endless To-Do lists and emails to answer, it is no wonder more people are seeking opportunities to be still, re-center, and become present through meditation.

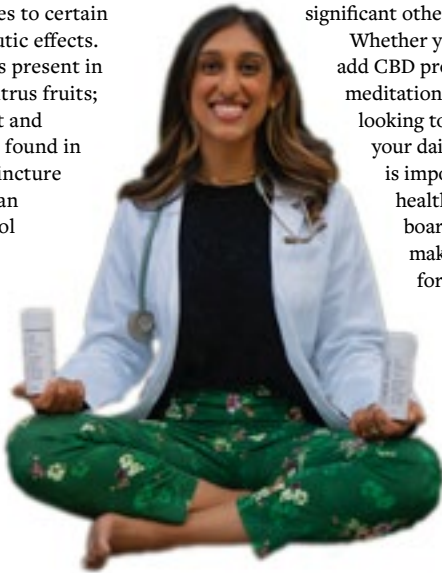
Cannabidiol, better known as CBD, is a cannabinoid in the cannabis plant. Its surge in popularity over the past decade has welcomed the many published and ongoing clinical research studies to determine where it can fit in our daily lives. But, the question is, can CBD be used to enhance our meditation practice?

CBD has been shown to increase certain neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) in the brain that are linked to reducing our overthinking and anxious thoughts. Unlike its counterpart, tetrahydrocannabinol or THC, CBD cannot make you feel high, but rather it can make you feel a sense of zen when getting into and maintaining a meditative state. When taken before meditations, it can improve your focus and concentration, as well as help enhance your feelings of awareness and sense of grounding into the earth.

Beyond CBD, there are other anti-inflammatory cannabinoids that are coming to the surface that could benefit your meditation practice. Two of the most well-cited are cannabigerol or CBG, and cannabinalol or CBN.

CBG, known for promoting a positive mood and calm mind, can be found in Element Apothec's Calm Cool Collected, while CBN, known for promoting rejuvenative sleep and muscle recovery, can be found in Rest Relax Recover. As a clean, innovative beauty and wellness brand, we decided to include these compounds in addition to CBD to provide you with the best of what the cannabis plant and Mother Nature have to offer.

In addition to cannabinoids, there are components in cannabis called terpenes. These aromatic compounds are rarely given the limelight, but have vital importance when it comes to certain well-researched therapeutic effects. The terpene, limonene, is present in high concentrations in citrus fruits; the tangerine leaf extract and bergamot fruit oil can be found in the Rest Relax Recover tincture and the orange peel oil can be found in the Calm Cool Collected tincture. This fragrant terpene can soothe your central nervous system, increase circulation, and support your immune system. Another terpene, linalool, also in the Calm Cool Collected tincture is able to ease your mind



ADVERTORIAL

and lift your spirits. Meditation has been shown to boost your endocannabinoid system—the system in the body that interacts directly with cannabinoids and terpenes to promote homeostasis, or balance. Pairing a meditative practice with taking CBD regularly can optimize the functionality of your endocannabinoid system.

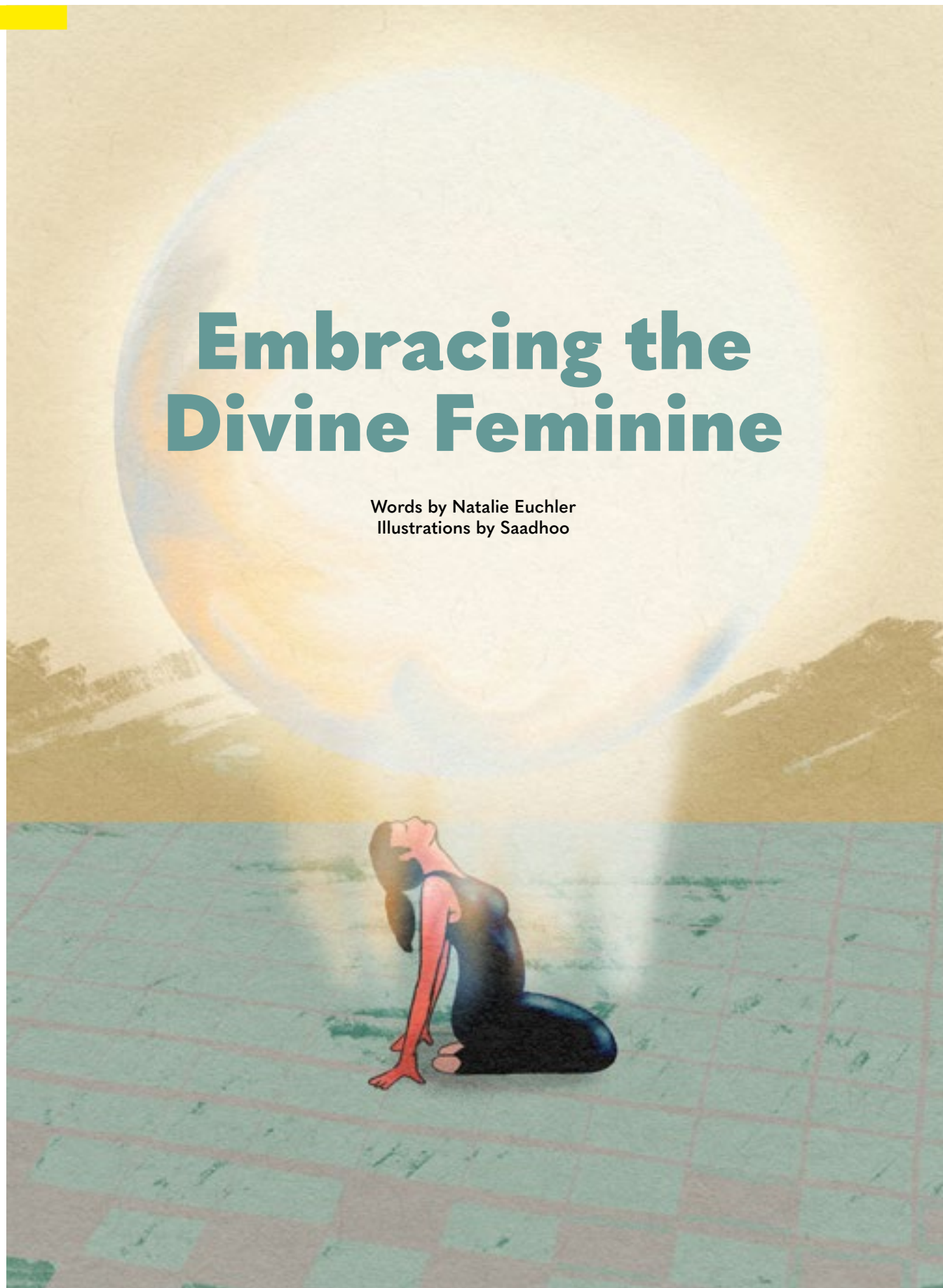
It is important to note that when it comes to integrating CBD products into your life, there is no one-size-fits-all. Everyone's endocannabinoid system is wired a little bit differently, which means that the dose that makes you feel best could be different from what works for your parent or significant other.

Whether you are looking to add CBD products to your meditation practice, or you are looking to integrate them to your daily self-care routine, it is important that you have a healthcare professional on board who can help you make the best decision for you. If you want to learn more, do not hesitate to reach out to Element Apothec's Chief Scientific Officer, Dr. Swathi Varanasi, at elementapothec.com/pages/dr-swathi-s-corner with any questions.



Embracing the Divine Feminine

Words by Natalie Euchler
Illustrations by Saadhoo



There exists a duality in each of us: the divine feminine and the divine masculine.

It's not that one is male and one is female per se; they're simply energies that are present no matter who you are or what gender you identify as. Labeling them as masculine and feminine seems to make the most sense to a world that holds a binary view on gender.

Being in alignment with your feminine energy means you're more intuitive, empathetic, vulnerable, humble, expressive. Think of all things soft and fluid, or even the Moon. Masculine energy on the other hand, embodies aggressiveness, analytical thinking, and independence; a much more rigid and harsh viewpoint that is typically associated with the Sun.

As someone who is nonbinary but appears as a cisgender woman, I've grappled a lot with the concept of gender and how it relates to myself over the years. I was assigned female at birth, but as early as six years old, I can remember being told that I was too aggressive and getting into fights with boys. All things considered unladylike. One specific moment of grappling with my femininity came after a seemingly innocent haircut.

I had always wanted to wear my hair short, but I kept getting pushback from my Mom about how girls were meant to have long hair. She meant no harm, but it caused so much anger in me. Why was I not able to express myself? Because I was born a female and females aren't supposed to have short hair? Who made up this rule? One day in ninth grade, I took matters into my own hands by grabbing the kitchen

scissors and going to town on my own hair.

It looked so terrible when I was finished. I felt like spiraling over my botched haircut. My Mom of course wasn't happy, and immediately booked me an appointment at the salon to get it fixed. I had messed up so terribly that the stylist told my Mom the only way to fix it was to give me a pixie cut. I was (secretly) ecstatic!

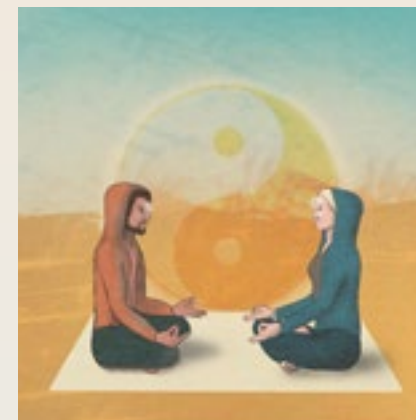
That happiness wasn't long lived when I returned to school the following Monday. I walked down the hallways and felt like the scene in the movie

where everyone is looking at the main character and whispering and laughing at them. I heard the phrase "dyke" and "lesbo" so often, that I eventually convinced my parents to switch schools because I couldn't deal with the bullying over my "masculine" appearance anymore.

I started to shun my femininity. I hadn't fully recognized myself as non-binary, but I definitely held a

deep resentment for femininity. I thought of it as a trait of weakness, something to be embarrassed of. Like who would want to be emotional when you can be tough?

Oh how wrong I was. I thought embodying the masculine energy of the Sun was the only way to be successful & resilient in life, but there is strength in vulnerability and softness. Opening up and letting others in is difficult. Not everyone can do it... or is willing to do it. I didn't learn this lesson until years down the line in my mid 20's as I entered into therapy and rehashed incidents from my past, like that haircut, that I still carried with me. →



Divine Feminine Meditation

Chandra Bhedana

I wrote this guided meditation with the hopes for any other man, woman, or nonbinary person who feels rejected or shunned by femininity to reconnect with the divine feminine self. It especially helps when one is in need of tapping into their intuitive side or expressive self.

When we want to connect with our divine feminine side, we need look no further than the Ida Nadi.

In traditional Indian medicine, there are three “nadis,” or energy channels, that run through your body. Just as blood flows through the veins and arteries, energy flows through the nadis.

The Ida Nadi (literally translated as the “comfort” nadi) is the energy channel that runs up and down the left-hand side of the body. This channel is associated with femininity, intuition, and lunar energy, and can be activated through an ancient breathing technique called “chandra bhedana” (literally translated as “moon piercing” breath).

This breathing exercise moves your energy to the left nostril which stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system associated with Ida Nadi.



To begin your meditation, you can start seated or lying down on your back. Feel free to use any support for your knees or lower back during this time.

Hold your right hand up in front of your face, and fold your pointer finger and your middle finger down into your palm, so that your thumb is sticking out on one side of your hand, and your pinky & ring finger are sticking out on the other side of your hand. You’ll be using your thumb to gently block your right nostril during inhalations, and you’ll use your pinky & ring finger to gently block your left nostril during exhalation. That way, your inhalations will come in through the left nostril, and your exhalations will go out through the right nostril.

Now, begin to focus on the breath. Notice where it is; no judgement required. You are simply checking in with your body to see where you are at.

When you are ready, begin chandra bhedana by blocking your right nostril with your thumb, while inhaling slowly and deeply, for four seconds, through the left nostril. Hold at the top for 3 seconds, close your left nostril and exhale gently through the right nostril for four seconds.

Continue in this manner, inhaling left, exhaling right, for a few minutes.

Return your breath to normal. Eyes still closed, begin to visualize yourself embodying the traits associated with feminine energy: generosity, curiosity, creativity, intuition. Notice if there are any specific problems you face, and take note of how these four feminine traits can serve to empower you.

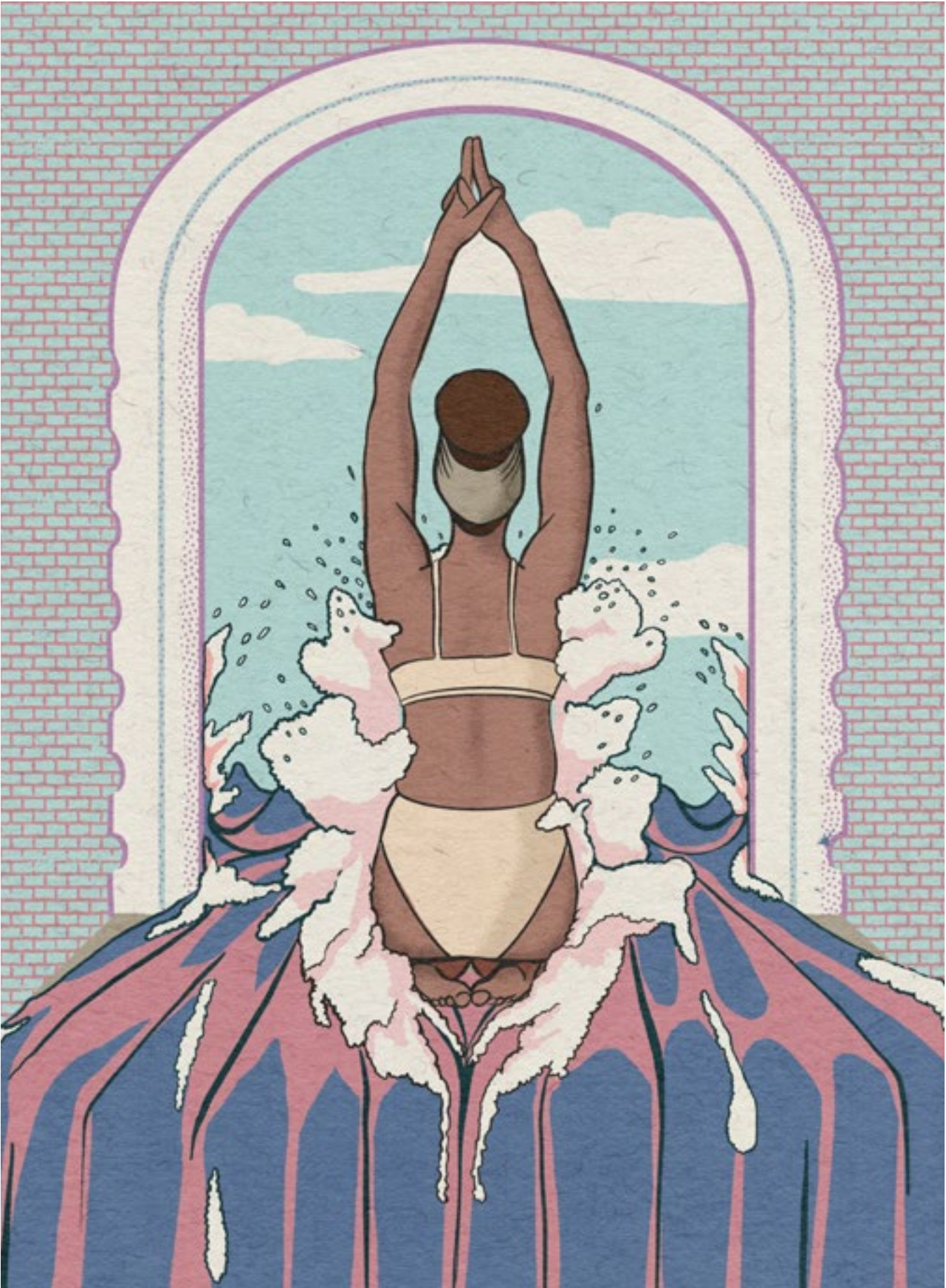
You can supplement this meditation by working with Goddess deities or timing your meditation at night time under the feminine moon. Whatever feels right.

Take as much or as little time here as you need. Once it feels right to end your meditation, take one last deep breath in, hold at the top for a final 3 seconds, and let it all go.

Come back to this practice any time you feel the need to tap into your divine feminine energy. ●

Natalie Euchler is the owner + copywriter behind Bloom Writing Studio. They enjoy all things spiritual as well as thrifting, cold brew, and corny jokes. Check out their IG @bwstudiolc

FOR A VIDEO TUTORIAL GUIDING YOU THROUGH THE IDA NADI PRACTICE, POINT YOUR PHONE CAMERA TO SCAN THIS QR CODE





MEDITATION

The Therapy Of The Future

On the front lines of neuroscience, Dr. Sara Lazar studies the effects of meditation on the human brain.

By Forrest Neal

When I was a teenager, I was prescribed drugs that made me feel worse than the problems I was being treated for.

I was forgetful and couldn't sit still or pay attention in class... and so, like many kids my age, I was diagnosed with ADHD.

The doctors told me that in order to function as a contributing member of society, I would need to take a cocktail of prescription drugs, every day. Every time I complained about the side effects I was experiencing, they would only switch around my medications, or possibly add another into the daily regimen. They told me that the side effects were "normal." But my level of intoxication felt anything but normal.

I couldn't find a viable solution to my problems. The frantic anxiety of my unmedicated mind was a real problem... but the prescriptions made me feel "checked out" of reality, which was arguably worse.

I had a few psychedelic experiences that opened my eyes to the difficulties that the prescriptions were causing in my life, but I would only ever catch glimpses, seemingly from a window, of the beauty of a natural life.

While psychedelics opened my mind to alternative therapies, they were never the answer to my problems. This was another hard pill to swallow, because within the psychedelic community, "Plant Medicines" are often touted as panaceas with the power to cure every imaginable ailment. This misconception causes many people to continuously invest large amounts of time and money to travel internationally in the hopes that the next ceremony will be the true answer to their lives' greatest problems.

So I reached out to Dr. Sara Lazar, the neuroscientist who is leading the charge in meditation research at Harvard University, about the facts, and the hype, surrounding the psychedelic therapy movement.



Dr. Sara Lazar All the headlines are "ONE TREATMENT AND EVERYONE IS SAVED!"

And it's like, well... no.

There are highly traumatized people. Not everyone gets better. I've heard numerous stories about people for whom things get worse. Sometimes one [session], and sometimes they

need 4,5, or 10. So be careful of the headlines. There's a lot of hype right now.

When I asked Dr. Lazar about her opinion of an alternative to psychedelic therapy that produces comparable results, she responded:

SL: "Meditation is even better. You really do get experiences that are way beyond anything you get with drugs."

In 2011, Dr. Lazar was involved in a landmark study to observe the effects that an eight-week meditation practice has on the brain.

SL: "The results suggest that participation in MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Relief) is associated with changes in gray matter concentration in brain regions involved in learning and memory processes, emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and perspective taking."

The findings from the study are fascinating. From an outsider's perspective, the meditator is sitting quietly and still, and it may seem as if nothing is happening. But, in fact, there is an extraordinary amount of brain development that takes place in those moments.

These are benefits that meditators have been experiencing for thousands of years, without the need for exogenous substances. This is the power that we already have within ourselves.

FN: What are your plans for your next meditation study?

SL: "People often talk about how meditation completely changed their lives. We haven't been able to really define that yet, but we are starting to get some handles. Trying to get a better sense of that: what does it mean



Thomas Calahan (front), Omar Singleton (center), Sara Lazar (back), and Noel Chan (below) perform an MRI brain scan in Charlestown as part of a 6 month study which hopes to explain meditation's effects on the brain. Photos by Melanie Rieders.



to completely change your life? What are the positive benefits? We know that meditation reduces depression and anxiety... but then there are these other positive qualities, and they are hard to define, so we are trying to understand those better."

My conversation with Dr. Lazar restored my faith in humanity, in a time when shiny new "magic pill" therapies tend to miss their marks.

To find solutions to difficult problems in life, without resorting to shortcuts and magic pill solutions, is gratifying. It seems like we are finally getting somewhere in our understanding of our natural abilities as human beings.

Please note: I am not suggesting that you stop taking prescription medications that you may have been given by your doctor. And no, these alternative solutions are not instantaneous.

But Dr. Lazar's groundbreaking research suggests that we have the ability to rewire the structure of our brains in beneficial ways that will last throughout our entire lives. With all the great progress that is being made every year with the research on meditation practices, it's never been a better time to find a meditation practice that works for you! ●

Hölzel, B. K., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S. M., Gard, T., & Lazar, S. W. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry research*, 191(1), 36–43.

Pema Chödrön's

COMPASSIONATE WISDOM

by Tamar Ellerton

Pema Chödrön is one of the most widely loved Buddhist teachers & authors of our time. When we reached out for an interview, we found that she's in a year-long meditation retreat. Thankfully, the team running The Pema Chödrön Foundation was able to send us some of their favorite quotes and excerpts from her books. We feel honored and grateful to help spread Pema's wisdom, to round out this Powerful Women in Meditation issue in a powerful and compassionate way.



At 85, Pema Chödrön continues to inspire through her words and actions, as she lives, practices, and radiates the dharma in a deep and relatable way. She is still actively participating in long-term meditation retreats, and teaching at Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia.

An author of many books, such as *The Places That Scare You, Start Where You Are*, and *Living Beautifully*, Pema has shared her compassionate wisdom and teachings with millions of people across the globe.

The nonprofit Pema Chödrön Foundation (PCF) sends Pema's books for free to those in need, including to prison libraries, rehab centers, and more. These charitable activities are supported by the revenue from Pema's book sales.

Through the PCF, Pema has also been active in supporting Buddhist nuns around the world, including aiding Tibetan refugee nuns in the Himalayas, helping nuns do three-year meditation retreats, and reforming Buddhist traditions that traditionally have not afforded the same educational opportunities to nuns as they have to monks. The PCF also runs programs for at-risk youth, including Homeboy Industries, Peacemaker Fellowship, and more.

You can find out more about The Pema Chödrön Foundation's activist endeavors at: pemachodronfoundation.org

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTINE ALICINO, MARGIE RODGERS, KALLEEN NORTENSEN



BEAUTIFUL EXCERPTS FROM PEMA'S BOOKS:

WHEN THINGS FALL APART

"We are told from childhood that something is wrong with us, with the world, and with everything that comes along; it's not perfect, it has rough edges, it has a bitter taste, it's too loud, too soft, too sharp, too wishy-washy. We cultivate a sense of trying to make things better because something bad is here, something is a mistake here, something is a problem here. The main point of Buddhist teachings is to dissolve the dualistic struggle, our habitual tendency to struggle against what's happening to us or in us. These teachings instruct us to move towards difficulties rather than backing away. We don't get this kind of encouragement very often.

Everything that occurs is not only usable and workable but is actually the path itself. We can use everything that happens to us as the means for waking up. We can use everything that occurs—whether it's our conflicting emotions and thoughts or our seemingly outer situation— to show us where we are asleep and how we can wake up completely, utterly, without reservations."

Pema Chödrön, *When Things Fall Apart*

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY

"At some point, if you're fortunate, you'll hit a wall of truth and wonder what you've been doing with your life. At that point you'll feel highly motivated to find out what frees you and helps you to be kinder and more loving, less affliction driven and confused".

Pema Chödrön, *Living Beautifully With Uncertainty and Change*

WELCOMING THE UNWELCOME

"We usually think of birth and death in terms of the whole cycle this body goes through, which can take place over many decades. But every day, we go through continual cycles of birth and death. Every event of our lives has a beginning, a middle and an end. First, it comes into being; it is born. Then it ends; it dies. And in between these births and deaths, there are many smaller moments with their own births and deaths. Every day is made of countless moments, and each of these precious moments ends and becomes a past lifetime."

Pema Chödrön, *Welcoming The Unwelcome*

"The most straightforward advice on awakening enlightened mind is this: practice not causing harm to anyone - yourself or others - and every day, do what you can to be helpful." -- Pema Chödrön

"YOU ARE THE SKY.
EVERYTHING ELSE...
IT'S JUST THE
WEATHER."

Pema Chödrön

PHOTOGRAPH: BEN MACK FROM PEXELS

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