

Mindfulness
Meditation
Notebook



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Richard Clarke on the web

Free Books

<https://sites.google.com/view/infinite-pie>

Spiritual Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/c/richardclarkeadvaita>

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<https://richardarunachala.wordpress.com>

Mindfulness Meditation Notebook

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I: PREFACE

This book is based on the weekly Mindfulness Meditation sessions conducted online over Zoom in 2020 and 2021.

Each session follows this format:

Each session starts with the review of last week's meditation,

Then 10 minutes of mindfulness meditation,

A talk by Richard,

A video from a variety of sources,

A final 15 minutes of mindfulness,

Then a closing chant.

You are invited to use a process like this as you work through the book.

This is not a book to read. Rather, the best use is to take each session into your direct experience. There is an ancient Indian teaching that tells how to do this:

Read, or listen to the teaching,

Reflect. Consider what has been said, deeply. Compare and contrast it with your own experience. If this is not your experience, ask yourself, "Why not?"

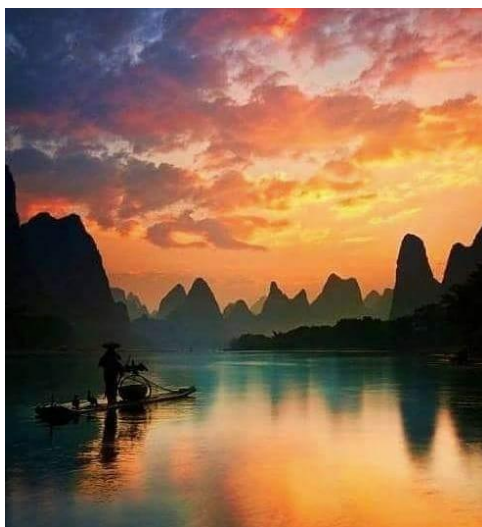
Deeply meditate on what you read, take it in as experiential knowledge. You want the experience of it, not just the mental understanding of it.

VIDEOS

Links to videos are throughout this book. To get the most from this book, watch each video.

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1: INTRODUCTION



The approach we will primarily be taking in these sessions is Mindfulness Meditation. Mindfulness is both effective and easy to get started with. It is also something that you can practice in the long term.

Mindfulness meditation is the practice of purposely focusing your attention on the present moment—and accepting it without judgment.

Mindfulness contributes to your happiness.

Mindfulness usually brings with it a sense of calm and peacefulness.

Being in the present moment, the now, with mindfulness also gives you a chance to experience the underlying joy of life.

From Thich Nhat Hanh:

*Nothing is more precious than being in the present moment.
Fully alive, fully aware.*

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In addition, I find that mindfulness frees my own creative energy. -

Meditation is more than just 'mindfulness,' 'being in the now,' or being calm and peaceful. Meditation is a way to better know yourself, others, and the world. This is a powerful way to bring change into your life.

10 MINUTE MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Mindfulness is PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS

Paying attention;

On purpose,

in the present moment, and

non-judgmentally.

Practice this way:

Fully receive the present experience, no matter how difficult.

Investigate the nature of experience.

Examples:

What does it feel like? Where in the body?

What ideas and feelings are associated with it, or does it bring up? What have I assumed about myself or the world that led to this?

Then let go of the experience, no matter how pleasant or unpleasant it may be.

ABOUT THIS COURSE

I am not a guru or some kind of spiritual master. I am just a guy who has spent my entire adult life interested in eastern spirituality. I have practiced mindfulness for maybe 35 years as an everyday part of my life.

For 15 years I was with a living sage, a genuine Self-realized teacher.

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I have a long-standing daily practice. I am here to share with you some of what I have learned over the years.

We will focus on mindfulness. Occasionally I will introduce other ways to meditate. I will start at the very beginning.

What I want to happen is for each of you to start and then maintain a meditation practice as a regular part of your daily life.

Here are some of the proven ways that mindfulness can benefit you...

Mindfulness reduces stress, anxiety and other destructive emotions.

Mindfulness increases your sense of well-being, reduces lethargy and increases energy both mentally and physically.

Mindfulness reduces depression.\

Mindfulness creates clearer, more focused thinking.

Mindfulness improves confidence and emotional resilience.

Mindfulness slows the gradual deterioration of the brain as we age. This is especially important for those in their senior years.

Mindfulness sharpens your memory and increases your focus and attention.

Mindfulness frees your creative energy and ideas.

Mindfulness improves your emotional and social intelligence and develops your empathy and compassion. It is also shown to improve relationships.

Mindfulness improves health and boosts immunity. Mindfulness is shown to have beneficial effects on many serious illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

Mindfulness reduces compulsive and addictive tendencies.

Mindfulness can be an important element in your day-to-day happiness.

The more mindful you are the happier you are.

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DAILY CALM | 10 MINUTE MINDFULNESS MEDITATION | BE PRESENT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZToicYchIOU>

MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR 15 MINUTE MINDFULNESS

MEDITATION:

First, from the Buddha's Satipatthana Sutra, the original instructions on mindfulness, about 2500 years ago. This text has been used by many thousands of people over many centuries.

Buddha's words:

She breathes in, aware that she is breathing in.

She breathes out, aware that she is breathing out.

When she breathes in a long breath, she knows, 'I am breathing in a long breath.'

When she breathes out a long breath, she knows, 'I am breathing out a long breath.'

When she breathes in a short breath, she knows, 'I am breathing in a short breath.'

When she breathes out a short breath, she knows, 'I am breathing out a short breath.'

Note that Buddha does not instruct us to control our breath, just to watch it.

Now breathe.

Get comfortable; feet flat on the floor, hands on your legs or in your lap. Eyes closed, or open with a loose focus on the floor a few feet ahead of you.

Notice your body, and then start to breathe deep, slow breaths. Be aware of, really feel, what is happening in your body as the breath

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comes in, and then as it leaves. It is more about feeling it than thinking about it.

Acknowledge thoughts as they come. Just notice them and then let them go. You don't need to do anything about any of them.

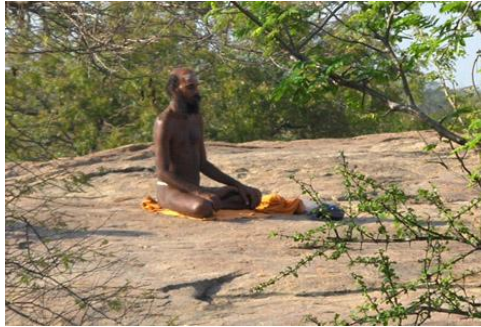
If your mind wanders, just notice and acknowledge that your mind has wandered, then gently bring your focus back to the feel of your breath.

Be present without needing to hurry things along, or move on to the next part of your day. This can be difficult, but remind yourself that whatever happens is okay.

Just notice, let it be, and then let it go.

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2: THE DEFAULT NETWORK



THE DEFAULT NETWORK AND MEDITATION

The “resting” brain, they found, is not really at rest. Brain scientists found that there is a brain network that is active pretty much all the time, even when we are not doing anything. Since it is activated by default, they call this “The Default Mode network” or default network. The default network is a background of thoughts about yourself and others. This default network is the source of all these thoughts that seem to flood your mind. If you look closely at these thoughts you will notice that they are all self-referential in some way – they are all really about you.

I said before that the default network is active ALMOST all the time. One time it quiets down is when you meditate. When you focus on body sensation like the feel of your breath coming in and going out, the default network stops and another network that they call “the direct experience network” takes over. It may be that a reason meditation is calming is that the default network shuts down, and it is kind of like you are on vacation, vacation from all the noise of your mind.

Mindfulness, specifically watching your breath and the feel of your breath, shuts down your default mind, so you can rest from it for a

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while. And start to see what is behind all the noise made by what Buddhist call “the monkey mind.”

Now onto our meditations ...

10 MINUTE GUIDED BODY SCAN MEDITATION FROM THE MEDITATION COACH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obYJRmgrqOU&t=19s>

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3: EVERY-MINUTE MINDFULNESS



For longer than I can say, paying attention, mindfulness of each moment, has been the way I want to approach life. Maybe this started when I was about 23, and a friend, who was a yoga teacher, said, “Do you want to be enlightened? Then take every breath consciously for the next year, even while sleeping.” It was an incredible idea. But over the years this has become the way I approach my day-to-day life. I still think, but the noisy “monkey mind” is pretty quiet.

Here is a Zen story to illustrate how important mindfulness is to Zen Buddhists:

Zen students are with their masters at least ten years before they presume to teach others. Nan-in was visited by Tenno, who, having passed his apprenticeship, had become a teacher. The day happened to be rainy, so Tenno wore wooden clogs and carried an umbrella. After greeting him Nan-in remarked: 'I suppose you left your wooden clogs in the vestibule. I want to know if your umbrella is on the right or left side of the clogs.'

Tenno, confused, had no instant answer. He realized that he was unable to carry his Zen every minute. He became Nanin's pupil, and he studied six more years to accomplish his every-minute Zen.

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We can practice “every minute mindfulness.” Just really pay attention to what you are doing right now, this instant; the feel of your body, the feel of your skin. What do you hear, what thoughts are going by, right now – in this instant?

When we do this the monkey mind pretty much shuts down, and you are just in the present moment.

Can you do this? Try now and just notice.

How does it feel? How long can you do this? Why don't you try and see?

Now, onto our meditation ...

VIDEO: 10-MINUTE MEDITATION FOR BEGINNERS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9YKY7fdwyg>

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4: MEDITATION IS NON-LINEAR THINKING



VIDEO: MEDITATE BY LETTING YOUR MIND BE AS IT IS – YONGEY MINGYUR RINPOCHE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2va3j-Ub3B0>

MEDITATION IS NON-LINEAR THINKING

For most of us, “Linear thinking” has been the main mode in which we have used our minds.

Linear thinking is analytic, methodic, rational and logical. It is where one thing follows another, if A and B happen, then I should do C. Linear thinking is what is needed in most jobs. But linear thinking is **not the only way** we know things, our selves, others, and the world.

In contrast, a **non-linear thinker** tends to have a myriad of unrelated thoughts that somehow interrelate; these thoughts lead to conclusions that might otherwise not have been evident, with a sense that the conclusions are more profound and insightful.

A linear thinker knows things one thing at a time, in pieces. A non-linear thinker knows things all together, as a whole.

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In my walking meditation (and moving meditation while driving a car) I have had many experiences where a deep understanding or solution to something I was dealing with just came, suddenly, whole and complete. A friend calls these “spiritual downloads.” What happens is that this whole understanding of a complete thing, comes all at once, not in parts. These are non-linear understandings that just come, unsought.

And it is not just me who can do this, **everyone** has this within them. For most of us, life trains us in linear thinking. Meditation, living in the feel of your body and open to it, opens this non-linear mind, the mind that understands as a whole, not in parts. There is evidence to support this; in MRI brain scans of meditators, they found out that the Corpus Callosum gets bigger and more robust. This part of the brain connects the right brain to the left brain, the linear thinking brain with the holistic brain.

I think as we get older that this is of vital importance. This is the time when we must really absorb and integrate all of life’s lessons, and develop our legacy. To live it well, we need to use all our internal resources. This means using **all of our mind**, not just part of it. And regular meditation helps do just that.

The following is adapted from *buddhism.stackexchange.com*

Meditation is not linear, as it involves the whole of ourselves. There is one part/side of us that is connected to our rationality, logic, linear thinking, and understanding. The other side of us is connected to feelings, nurturing, caring, compassion, love, and all the emotional qualities. This is how our right and left hemisphere in the brain is programmed. The left side of the brain processes information in a linear manner. It processes from part to whole. It takes pieces, lines them up, and arranges

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them in a logical order; then it draws conclusions. The right brain however, processes from whole to parts, holistically.

Intellectual understanding about meditation is never the same as the actual experience of it. It is similar to that of having to bite into a mango to know its taste. We can read everything that there is about a mango – that it can be sweet, delicious, soft, etc. but we cannot imagine its taste unless we get the feeling of the mango on our tongue and have the personal experience. Then we can no longer debate whether the mango is sweet or not, because we have experienced the truth. This is the difference between just thinking or thinking coupled with the experience of feeling.

As meditation deepens, the internal thinking comes to a stop, and memory of past experiences never come up. From there on there is no such thing as a linear process. From there on it is total awareness in staying with the breath. This is being one with your meditation, singleness of mind.

CLEAR MIND PRESENT MOMENT 10 MINUTE MINDFULNESS GUIDED MEDITATION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6uvlMPglqE>

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5: MEDITATION AND THE BRAIN



I want to talk today a bit about meditation and the brain.

In simple terms, mindfulness strengthens the good parts of your brain and helps calm the parts that stress you out. These changes are measurable after just 8 weeks of regular meditation.

The parts of your brain involved with learning, memory, planning, problem solving, relationships, and creativity-- all these parts of the brain get bigger.

The parts of the brain involved with anxiety and stress get smaller.

This brain growth continues as long as you continue regular meditation. If you stop, the growth stops.

Now, onto our meditation ...

Today we will practice Loving Kindness Meditation, also called Buddhist Metta Meditation. This is especially good for the parts of your brain involved with compassion.

VIDEO: 10-MINUTE MEDITATION: LOVING KINDNESS

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