



#MeditationChallenge



Welcome

I'm so excited to share with you my love affair with meditation. I want you to know that you don't need to be a monk meditating for hours a day to achieve the results you're looking for. Simply five or ten minutes a day is enough to reap the benefits.

You can view meditation as a tool you can add to your kit of living a more balanced lifestyle. It goes hand in hand with other wellness practices. I'm a true believer in not being able to meditate your way through life, there must be actions and a change in mindset to accompany it. I don't think I've ever met a healthy individual who has meditated their way to a successful life. In the following pages you will find information on the benefits, how to meditate, why you must meditate and much more.

I designed this program when I realised that many of my class participants weren't putting the time aside to practice outside of class, therefore they weren't building the muscle around meditation and not truly receiving the life changing benefits. I now run classes with this challenge, see what they have to say below.

I'm so glad you have joined the challenge, you being here means that you're committed to yourself and to this journey. Be sure to contact me and share your experience, I would love to hear from you!

Stephanie D'Ovidio

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What others have to say..

"I highly recommend this course for an unintimidating entry into meditation. I always believed that I was unable to meditate because of my busy mind and short attention span, but Stephanie's small expectation of allowing yourself to meditate for just 10 minutes a day removed the enormity of the challenge. I now find myself looking forward to my meditation and sometimes able to do it naturally throughout the day."

Bryan Summers, Perth

"I looked forward to my weekly meditation class and loved that I could meditate each week with a new guided audio at home to keep me motivated and on track."

Tanya Robinson, Perth

How To Use This Course

1. Please ensure you read this eBook and fill out before commencing with the recordings
2. Start with Week 1 *Beach Guided Meditation* and listen to the recording each day for one week (7 days). Then move onto Week 2 and so forth. I have included a check list that you can put on your fridge or somewhere visible so you can tick off as you go to help keep you on track
3. If you skip a day, I recommend starting the course all over again from the start. This is a challenge remember, nobody is going to know if your skipping days other than you.

I have purposely made this course to be simple to help you build your muscle around meditating. Each recording will take you to a different location, for example to a beach or a forest and last for around 8 to 12 minutes per recording. If you want to meditate longer, go for it!

Set Up Your Space

It is important to ensure your in a place of little distractions, eventually once you have the hang of meditating you could literally do it anywhere, even with your eyes open. For this exercise however, ensure phones are away and nobody is around to disturb you if possible.

You can lay down or sit up in a chair or on the floor. You could also sit in the lotus position (see picture below) with your feet resting on the opposite legs if you are keen, however it is not necessary. Keep your body still. No scratching or shuffling, so get comfortable before you start. I generally like shoes off and palms facing upwards, it signifies open body language and allows flow of energy to pulsate through your body. Listen to my voice and suggestions and follow along like a movie screen playing out in your mind, remember this is your meditation so make it as creative as you wish.

And that's it!



What is all the fuss about Meditation?

Meditation seems to be the new black these days and for a good reason. Life is more hectic than ever, we are busier, stressed, suffering from more illnesses, have more distractions such as technology, addictions, financial pressures and world issues. So much more is demanded of us in today's fast paced society. And that's also including our children, as someone who works with people I have lost count of the number of parents telling me of their children as young as four years of age suffering from anxiety.

Here are some statistics on mental illness that are startling from the Australian Bureau of Statistics:

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. On average, 1 in 4 people – 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men – will experience anxiety.

3 million Australians are living with depression or anxiety

Almost eight Australians take their own lives every day.

Our mental, emotional and physical states are so paramount, without these elements being in check we are just surviving day to day and not thriving.

At some point in most people's lives they will possibly experience the symptoms of anxiety. To help you understand what anxiety is, it's our flight or fight mechanism. It's our bodily response to the perceived threat/circumstance. Without flight or fight if a car was moving towards us our body wouldn't know how to jump out of the way quick enough to avoid getting hit. This response we have keeps us safe. However, the interesting thing is, our mind sometimes cannot distinguish the difference between a real life threat or a perceived threat an example of this would be worrying about something that hasn't happened yet. The part of the brain responsible for fear based emotions is the amygdala. The really exciting piece of information I'm about to share with you is since neuro plasticity was recognised around 10 or so years ago, scientist's discovered that the brains structure and function can be changed.

From birth we create billions of neuro pathways in our brain, these pathways are influenced by a number of factors in our lives such as belief systems, values, experiences, memories and so on. When your brain has repetitive thoughts, a trauma or incident occurs it forms new neural pathways, these pathways strengthen the more you have the reoccurring thoughts. This becomes the limit of your existence where you may not challenge your own thinking simply because you're unaware of how your mind operates and you may just settle with saying that's the way I am. Scientists have found that once a behaviour pattern was interrupted the neuro pathways would literally disconnect from each other and form a new pathway. This is exciting because we can change the structure and function of our minds.

I don't have enough fingers and toes to count the amount of people who tell me that there is no way that they could meditate. Let me tell you, I was one of those people. It took a traumatic incident to push me in the right direction and I have never looked back. I think there are too many people just hoping they survive life. I'm here today to remind you not to wait until it is absolutely necessary for you to make changes, starting now gives you the tools to handle whatever life may throw your way. Sure we may have many years ahead of us, but time is limited. Think about it, this very second you will never get back again. There is no time like the present!

If your meditating for the first time or maybe it has been a long time since you have tried, it's going to be difficult. Actually, you may just suck at it. Don't be discouraged or buy into those limits. Imagine a person who has never lifted weights before, it's going to take sometime to build the muscle to lift the weights. It is exactly the same with meditation, it takes practice and persistence to form a new habit.

Remember, a toddler never decides to give up trying to learn how to walk, they fall down and scrape their knees countless amounts of times before they build enough strength to start walking.

Meditation disengages us from the flight or fight response. A study done by Dr Herbert Benson, M.D shows that people who meditate frequently actually have the reverse effects that of someone who is suffering with anxiety. He also lists a number of conditions that can be healed through this self-care technique in his book called *The Relaxation Response* if you're interested in reading it.

Not only does meditation aid in this area, it also is a wonderful teacher of how to embrace the present moment, something so little of us can do.

"Realise deeply that the present moment is all you ever have "
Eckhart Tolle

Meditation is a great tool to aid in your development to be conscious of your own thoughts and what is happening around you in any given moment. Most people are living in a zombie like state, going from A to B and not even remembering how they got there. How many times have you driven to a destination and not remembered if you stopped at the traffic lights or how you got there. I know I used to live like this, fascinating enough for the last couple of years I haven't experienced this anymore. The benefits of being aware of your thoughts, is allowing yourself to know when your thoughts are out of alignment with the truest vision of your life or moving away from self love. Scarily enough many people don't even know what they want out of life including their relationships and career choices. They have no hopes, dreams, goals or aspirations. Most people I meet don't even know their life values, yet they want to experience happiness and have no idea how to experience it. More time is spent planning a holiday and little time planning their life. Self awareness is 90% of the journey, meditation offers a new focus to help people reflect their attention back to their own mind and body to align actions and thoughts that are going to serve, support and nurture their highest ideals. We must care for the house we live in.

Other benefits people have reported but not limited to include, relieving stress, aid in sleep problems, high blood pressure, aid people with heart conditions, clarity of thought, memory, self discovery, gratitude and weight loss (when we feel good internally we naturally care for our bodies).

Meditation Styles

There are many different meditation styles, here are just a few;

- Breath meditation
- Zen meditation
- Transcendental meditation
- Guided meditation
- Mantra meditation

This #MeditationChallenge focuses on guided, breath and mantra meditation. I find them to be the easiest if your new or inexperienced to meditation.

Interesting Facts

The Breath

Our breath is the controller of our mind, when we are stressed our breath is short and shallow and when we are calm our breath is slow and deep. Therefore, if you experience high levels of stress. Simply bring your attention to your breath and slow it down. There is an exercise in the recordings, the instructions are breathing in for a count of 4 holding your breath for a count of 2 then releasing slowly for a count of 5.

The indian sages say that if we slow our breath down we extend our life span. A bit like the tortoise who lives for hundreds of years, they are slow and deep breathers.

Brain Waves

There are four types of brain waves that occur during meditation, see below;

Alpha brain waves:

This basically causes calming changes in the autonomic nervous system. It lowers blood pressure and the heart rate. It also lowers the amount of stress hormones in the body, as well as calming the mind.

Gamma brain waves:

Represent intense focus. In experienced meditators, it has been documented that these brain waves decrease anxiety and fear, create positive emotions and decrease in depressive feelings and symptoms.

Theta Brain Waves:

Is known as the third eye, it is said to be the channel which we gain enlightenment and wisdom through vibrations.

Delta Brain Waves:

We experience these while we sleep, however this brain wave in meditation help experienced practitioners access the unconscious mind

How do you know if your doing it right?

Meditation is NOT the process of removing thoughts, that very thought is a thought. Therefore you're still thinking if your having that thought.

Most people ask me for some sort of gauge so they know they are meditating properly. Here is a list of things that I have noticed in my own journey of meditation.

- Your body is nice and relaxed in your meditation and you notice that you are not moving or fidgeting. It can be difficult to do this at first, with anything it takes time so practice keeping still.
- You could be meditating for thirty minutes and it feels like five minutes. There is no time when you meditate, you become so engulfed in the moment.
- Instead of judging your thoughts, you notice them whether resourceful or unresourceful and you accept them for what they are. This process is so important because it also brings on the journey to removing self judgement and restoring self love.
- You begin to experience better clarity of thought.

Setting Your Intention

Please fill in the below before commencing, if you have a big enough why it is easier to stay on track with a goal.

What would you like to achieve from this four week #MeditationChallenge?
Be specific

If you achieve the above, what will it give you?

Why is it important for you to achieve this outcome?

How will you know you have achieved your outcome?

What other actions are you willing to do to complement your meditation practice?

Stay On Track

To keep you on track, put this on your fridge and tick off the dates and days you meditate;

Date: _____

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

Date: _____

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

Date: _____

- Monday
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- Wednesday
- Thursday
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- Saturday
- Sunday

Date: _____

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One Last Thing

My last piece of advice to you is know your outcome, then release it. Release all expectations and just go with the experience. This isn't a journey of "getting it right" this is an experience to be had.

My hopes and dreams include people like yourself making changes that nurture your life. My mission is to have an impact on others to help create more fulfilled and happier individuals.

Once again, remember to contact me I would love to know how this experience has contributed to your life.

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