



Keys to Unlock the *Alkaline Mindset*



Mindfulness by Katy Joy Freeman
Let Your Spirit Soar by Jeanne Grunert

Keys to Unlock the
*Alkaline
Mindset*

Mindfulness by Katy Joy Freeman
Let Your Spirit Soar by Jeanne Grunert

800.578-5939
www.AlkalineLifestyle.com



Katy Joy Freeman



Mindfulness: Creating the Alkaline Mindset

By Katy Joy Freeman

My Name is Katy Joy Freeman, and as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, I have the blessing of facilitating the Mindfulness Meditation group at the mental health clinic where I work. It is an honor to have the opportunity to share the practice of Mindfulness with you. The practice of Mindfulness has transformed me personally and professionally. I am now at ease with all aspects of my life and can easily offer my full attention to those I work with.

The Alkaline Lifestyle has been an important part of my life. Living this way has allowed me to lose significant weight and keep it off for 23 years. The Alkaline Lifestyle has freed me from depression and anxiety, improved my relationships with myself and others, increased my energy level, increased mental clarity, enjoyed better health, and increased my sense of overall happiness and well-being. The practice of Mindfulness has been an integral part of this transformation. It has been a genuine gift in my life and I am so pleased to be able to share it with you.

It takes time and effort to re-train our brains to work with us to create a sense of peace in our lives. I have spent many years practicing Mindful Movement

with yoga. The work enabled me to sit quietly and work with all the mental chatter that I encountered when I stopped and got quiet. Once I learned to be okay with what was happening in the moment and accept myself in the “now,” things got very exciting for me. My mind and I now work in harmony, and my spirit is light and happy. The practice of Mindfulness is a beautiful way to be with yourself and others and it will improve your life if you allow it. I extend many blessings to you as you settle into the moment and discover all that is waiting for you.



What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a way to pay attention, without judgment, to what is going on in each moment with a stance of curiosity and compassion. It is a state of being present in the here and now; being in the moment, being in your body; not being on autopilot. This sounds simple, but with all of the things competing for our attention, being still and quieting the mind, body, and spirit can seem almost impossible. Creating stillness, calmness, and peace within, is an art to be cultivated and the practice of mindfulness provides the mentoring and guidance to settle down.

The origin of mindfulness is from Buddhist philosophy and practice, however, mindfulness practice is a wholly effective practice on its own, without the religious context of Buddhism. This practice may be done by anyone of any faith or religion; it is merely training the mind and does not require you to adapt any religious belief system. The practice is increasingly being used in the West to treat many different mental and physical conditions. Many people, in search of ways to reduce stress and cultivate a satisfying life, have discovered its subtle power. The wonderful thing about Mindfulness is that there is no “right” way of doing it. I invite you to find your own path for how use the Mindfulness techniques to enrich your Alkaline Lifestyle.

For all of the reasons listed below, we felt it was important to introduce you to the practice of Mindfulness as you transition into the Alkaline Lifestyle. You are creating many important habits in your life and letting go of those that no longer serve you. Mindfulness is a beautiful way to guide you along your journey. It is like having a gentle coach instructing you how to achieve your fullest potential with love and compassion.

Research conducted over the past twenty-five years shows that Mindfulness training can:

- Reduce stress
- Improve immune system function
- Enhance appreciation and gratitude
- Allow greater acceptance of yourself and others
- Improve positive decision making
- Calm the mind
- Improve focus and concentration
- Help manage physical and emotional pain
- Create inner peace and feelings of joy
- Reduce reactivity and helps us control our responses
- Retrain your brain to think more positively
- Decrease anxiety and depression
- Improve eating habits

Why Mindfulness?

Reducing stress is a vital aspect of alkalizing your body. In my professional and personal experience, the practice of Mindfulness has been the most profound and gentle way to relax and enjoy life to the fullest.

Erkhart Tolle, who is most well known for his book, *The Power of Now*, states "Stress is being in conflict with the present moment." He goes on to say we often feel the pull to be in the future getting things done, achieving more, and being different than we are right now in this moment. We are somehow never quite "getting there or good enough." A longing for something else to be happening drives us out of the moment and we miss out on what is happening right here, right now. We become obsessed with being happy when "this or that" happens. For example "when we get more money" or "lose weight" I'll be happy. Or we are stuck in the past, feeling unable to move on from disappointments and/or hurts. This build-up of stress wreaks havoc on the body and we become out of touch with ourselves and others without even knowing it. Mindfulness is our ticket back to making peace with the present and offers specific tools on how to do this. As a result we can reduce stress in our mind, body, and spirit and we heal on all levels.

Foundations of Mindfulness

The following are the key components of a well-balanced mindfulness practice. I will provide more in-depth information how to use each aspect of mindfulness in the Tools to Cultivate Harmony and Peace section of this chapter.

- **Breathing** – *Calm the mind and body by consciously following your breath. This is a key component.*
- **Focus on the Present Moment**- *Reduce and alleviate depression and anxiety as you learn to put aside your worries about the future and regrets about the past. Be able to be with what is happening right here, right now*
- **Awareness** – *Change how you pay attention; notice your thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the present moment*
- **Observing** – *Notice what is happening without reacting to it*
- **Non-judgment** – *Experience life without judging it – become a compassionate observer of your life and the world around you*
- **Acceptance** – *Be at peace with whatever is happening*
- **Non-attachment** – *Let go of outcomes and be flexible with life*
- **Loving-Kindness/Compassion** – *Look at yourself and others with eyes of compassion; extend love and acceptance to yourself and others; get away from wasting time evaluating yourself and others*

Mindful Living is: Conscious, Creative, Calm, Simple, Purposeful, Responsible, Mature, Grateful, Empowered, Openhearted, Relaxed, and Focused

Automatic Living is: Unconscious, Habitual, Restless, Complex, Chaotic, Blaming, Immature, Complaining, Fearful, Rushed, Reactionary, and Scattered

Mindfulness includes what is called “formal practice” and “informal practice.” Informal practice refers to being mindful throughout your day, as you engage in your usual activities of living.

Formal and Informal Practices

You can choose which Mindfulness practices that fit your lifestyle. Why not explore both?

- **Formal Practices:** Formal Mindfulness practice refers to the use of meditation exercises. There are many different meditation exercises that you can engage in. I will introduce you to the basic meditation used in Mindfulness which simply requires you to follow your breath. Sitting meditations, visualizations, and body scan exercises are done in a quiet setting. Usually the person sits upright and there is a specific time frame for the mindfulness practice.

- **Informal Practices:** The informal practice does not require any additional time on your part. You do not need to do anything extra than what you are already doing. Informal Practice is a 'living' practice; it enables you to discover the gift of being awake and aware of your life while doing whatever it is that you are doing as you are living it! You notice your breath, feelings, thoughts, actions, speech, etc. all throughout your day. For example, when eating, you mindfully chew and taste your food. You enjoy the smell of the food and the experience eating in a calm and relaxed manner. When washing the dishes you notice what the water feels like on your hands. When engaging a co-worker or friend you give them your attention and focus and avoid other distractions. Essentially you compassionately train yourself to "stop and smell the roses" throughout your day.

Positive Thinking and the Use of Affirmations

"Anything less than a contemplative perspective on life is almost certain program for unhappiness." - Father Thomas Keating

Affirmations are positive statements that create awareness and generate positive feelings. Affirmations are a tool used to move you toward the positive intentions you are aspiring to. Physical Exercise is strongly encouraged to be an integral part of your Alkaline Lifestyle. Getting your body

in shape takes time and consistency, and so it is with the mind! The use of affirmations is one way of getting ***your mind*** in shape. Just as one needs to exercise regularly to stay fit so it is with your thinking. Affirmations are one way of keeping your mind in tip top condition!

It is essential to examine our thoughts and not believe everything we think! Oftentimes we have distorted our thinking to support ideas that keep us trapped in misery. We become what we think, therefore, it is vital to pay close attention to our thoughts, and make a consistent effort to adapt thoughts and beliefs that enhance our lives while letting go of negative thoughts and beliefs that hold us back. When used consistently, affirmations can change your view of yourself and the world around you. Often times we get caught up in focusing on what is not going right in our lives. We may also focus on what is not going right in the world around us. Just turn on the news and you are likely to see more information about what is going wrong in the world around you rather than what is going right. If you hold this mind-set of negativity for yourself in your own life, then you are likely to create and experience more suffering. You can become wrapped up in a tendency to tune in to all that is wrong, and may automatically ignore or minimize what is going right.

Exercises on Using Affirmation

Checking In:

This is a helpful exercise for you to practice before you begin writing out your affirmations. It is designed to get you thinking in a more positive manner which will help you create healing affirmations for yourself.

Think about something that is not going well for you right now. You might want to write down the first thing that pops into your head:

Now see if you can find a way of focusing on what things are going right about the situation, it doesn't matter how small they may be in comparison to the overall picture. If you cannot think of something that is going right, imagine how you would like for things to be going and describe that intention here:

The practice of writing affirmations can be difficult at first. If you find yourself stuck, talk to someone you trust and see if you can get an outside perspective on the situation.

Affirmations work best when they are practiced regularly and done with an open heart. They can be used to assist you in any area of your life. They can be done anytime, anywhere. When using affirmations it is important to be compassionate with yourself. Opposing thoughts may pop into your mind when you first begin using affirmations, and that's okay. Merely notice the competing thoughts, and then move on with your affirmations. You can use affirmations as a way to ground yourself in your Mindfulness practice.

Examples of Affirmations of Being Mindful

- *I easily and effortlessly stay focused in the Present Moment*
- *I am aware of my breath*
- *I breathe in and out in a relaxed manner*
- *I feel the air in my nostrils as I breathe*
- *I breathe deeply and begin to feel at Peace*
- *My breath keeps me anchored in the Present Moment*
- *I use my breath to stay present*
- *I give my full attention to what I am doing*

Affirmation Exercise 2

Read through this exercise and then close your eyes and practice it on your own. See if you can believe in what you are affirming, feel it, absorb it, open your heart and mind to the power of its simple message to you.

- Pick an affirmation from the list on the previous page, and then say the affirmation slowly and mindfully
- Take a breath, and then repeat the affirmation
- Take another breath and repeat the affirmation one last time
- Take another breath

Use this space to “free write” on the affirmation exercise - by free writing, we mean for you to write without editing. Whatever comes to your mind, write it down. Do not be concerned with spelling or sentence structure.

Now come up with your own affirmations:

1. Everything in my life is working out easily and effortlessly
2. I attract peace and peaceful people into my life
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Mindful Eating: Creating a Loving Awareness of Your Relationship with Food

A very large part of the Alkaline Lifestyle is changing the way you eat. We all need help when it comes to changing our food habits. For this reason, I felt it important to devote a good portion of this chapter to Mindful Eating.

When you practice Mindfulness, you become ***Aware!*** You begin to slow down and listen to your body's wisdom. As this happens you will notice a desire to take better care of yourself. You will want to begin to nourish all areas of your life, including your body! When our bodies feel good, we feel good. What we eat has a profound influence on our body, mind, and overall sense of well-being. With the Practice of Mindfulness you can eat in a way that creates more happiness in your life. You will be able to get out of the habit of eating when you are stressed or emotional.

The pace of life can be mentally and physically exhausting at times. We all like to slow down for a nice meal, but the pressure to rush and get on to the next thing competes with our intention. Thus, we may find ourselves picking up fast food, eating while working, driving, or on the phone. We may feel it is too much effort to sit at a dining table and slowly enjoy a meal. Instead, we may find ourselves eating mindlessly in front of the television, not fully chewing our food, or not eating at all! If we do have a meal at the dinner

table, oftentimes our minds have a hard time slowing down and allowing us to just eat. All of this contributes to creating poor habits around eating. If you are mindlessly engaging in poor eating habits, you are most likely not giving your body the true nourishment it really needs. When you eat mindfully, you are more aware and attuned to the factors that lead you to eat even when you are full, and deprive yourself of food when you are really hungry. We need to give our bodies the right fuel so we can operate at our best. Many people operate on High or Low – High on sugar and Low after the crash!



One purpose of being mindful is to develop a close and loving relationship with your mind. You begin to notice what you are feeling, thinking, and you become less reactive to the thoughts, emotions, and cravings that you have. You become more aware of why you do what you do. You can use whatever thoughts come up in your awareness to learn about what you truly need in any given moment.

Mindful eating is less about what you eat and more about ***the way you eat***. Susan Albers, in her *Eat, Drink, and be Mindful* workbook describes three steps to mindful eating using the mind and mouth:

- 1. Tune in to the physical characteristics of food:** Use your senses. How does the food taste? Use your tongue to feel the texture. Gauge the temperature. Notice the aroma. Ask yourself: "How does this really taste? What does it feel like in my mouth? Is this something I really want? Does it satisfy my taste buds? Is my mind truly present when I take a bite so that I experience it fully?"
- 2. Tune in to the repetitive habits and the process of eating:** Notice how you eat. Pay attention to times you are eating on autopilot. When on autopilot mode, you are more likely to eat out of habit. Ask yourself: "Is there something I do over and over again that leads to mindless eating? Do I have any ingrained habits concerning how I snack? When I begin to eat is there something that gets in the way of my feeling in control?"
- 3. Tune in to mindless eating triggers:** Become aware of what prompts you to start and stop eating. Is your kitchen a hot spot for snacking? Does a hard day (or other feeling, such as stress, discomfort, or boredom) lead to a overeating? Do judgmental thoughts like "I am so stupid" trigger mindless eating? Get to know what triggers you to eat

when not physically hungry. When you know your triggers, you can anticipate them and plan ahead on how to make more conscious and healthy choices. Ask yourself “What am I feeling? Am I physically or emotionally hungry? Is my environment, emotional state, or dining companion helping or hurting my efforts to eat mindfully?”

I am sure many of you can relate to the habit of carrying multi-tasking abilities right into your eating habits. Once your day gets going and it can seem almost impossible to pause, sit down smell, taste, chew, and feel while you are eating. Life can get going so quickly, you can find yourself trying to pack more into your day to try and get everything done. A gentle reminder to get into the habit of mindful eating can help whether you are at home with the kids, rushing around to meet their needs (while neglecting your own), or when you are at work trying to keep on top of things.

My husband no longer allows himself to eat at his desk at the office. He takes time out to sit in the kitchen area where he mindfully makes his lunch. He tells me this helps him feel more at ease and has decreased his stress level in the middle of his work day.

One Mindfully, is a concept that encourages us to focus on one thing at a time; to fully embrace the task at hand and be aware of what we are doing. For many of us who are used to multi tasking this may seem like an overwhelming new habit to create. I suggest you

begin to just practice **One Mindfully** with your meals. Make a commitment to yourself to slow down and enjoy your food. Below are some suggestions on how to have one mindful meal at a time. Incorporate this practice with one meal a day at first, and gradually begin to eat this way all the time.

1. Choose nutritious fresh foods to eat that alkalize the body.
2. Choose the most serene place you can find to enjoy your meal.
3. Take a few breaths and relax before you start to eat. Scan your body as you breathe and release built up tension as you breathe out.
4. Put your food on a nice plate and make it look appetizing.
5. Give thanks for the food and for the ways it will nourish your body.
6. Take small bites and work on chewing your food until it is liquid before swallowing since digestion begins in the mouth.
7. Notice the smells, tastes, colors of the food, and how you feel while eating your food.
8. Avoid picking up the phone or engaging in heavy conversation while eating.
9. Pause in between bites and breathe; notice if you are satisfied and avoid the tendency to overeat.
10. Enjoy your food and refrain from doing other tasks while eating.

I encourage you to take a few moments now to reflect on your eating habits. Think about ways you can create a more loving and thriving relationship with food. It may be that you simply decide to sit down and have one meal a day in silence, engaging all of your senses while you eat. Or it may be that you decide to take a few minutes to practice some deep breathing or do some journal writing before grabbing for food when you are not truly hungry. I also encourage you to get in the habit of only eating when you are hungry. You may be surprised how much food you begin to pass up as you notice you are reaching for food for other reasons than hunger. If you struggle with under eating, then pause and take time to nourish your body when hungry and notice if this has an impact on your mood and energy level. This is not an easy task, but can provide you with a great deal of information about your relationship with food.



Mindful Exercises: Tools to Cultivate Harmony and Peace

Basic Breath Meditation

1. **Settle In:** Adjust your sitting posture to make your body comfortable. Press the sitz bones down and lift your upper body all the way up to the crown of your head in order to elongate the spine. If you are sitting in a chair, resist the tendency to lean against the chair back as it can compress the abdomen and interfere with deep breathing.

2. **Bring Yourself Present:** Bring yourself to be fully present in your body through the five steps of breathe, relax, feel, watch and allow
 - a. **Breathe:** Let your breath flow freely and naturally in and out.
 - b. **Relax:** Consciously soften your muscles and let go of mental tension
 - c. **Feel:** Open yourself to the full spectrum of sensations flowing through you.
 - d. **Watch:** Observe this moment closely, without clinging to what is pleasant or avoiding what is painful.
 - e. **Allow:** Accept yourself and your experiences as it is, dropping the need to change it in any way.

3. **Deepen the Breath:** Let your attention rest on the natural flow of your breath. Gradually deepen the breath to allow your tummy to push out as you breathe in and to drop back in as you exhale. Do this slowly and evenly. Take ten or more slow, smooth deep breaths.

- 4. Watch the Breath:** Let go of any effort to control your breath. Place your attention on the natural flow of your breath, watching it rebalance. At first, focus on either the movement of air in and out of the tip of your nostrils, or on the rise and fall of your belly. Once your concentration is established, broaden the scope of your awareness to include the full spectrum of sensations, feelings, and thoughts passing through you. If you begin to wonder off, just notice that you are doing this and say “I am thinking” then come right back to your in and out breath. Avoid getting caught up in the story your thoughts are telling you. Patiently bring yourself back to your breath over and over again. Enjoy your inner experience. Observe closely what is going on. This will shift you into Witness Consciousness.
- 5. Let Go of All Technique:** Drop all techniques. Come into the experience of effortless being by letting go of any effort to focus your mind or understand your experience. Allow who and what you naturally are to radiate out without any restrictions. Rest in this place within until you are ready to end your formal meditation practice session.

Count Your Breath Meditation

If your mind is very busy and you need some structure to keep you focused, this is a nice meditation to use.

1. Sit upright yet relaxed. You can also do as a walking meditation.
2. As you inhale, be mindful that you are inhaling by saying: "I am inhaling, one" then be mindful that you are exhaling by saying "I am exhaling, one" Remember to breathe from the abdominal area.
3. Continue on with "I am inhaling, two" and "I am exhaling, two" and work your way up to 10.
4. After you have reached 10, return to one. If you lose count, return to one.



Body Scan Meditation Exercise

Use this grounding technique as a way to increase your awareness of yourself. Your body is living in the here and now yet your mind is often meandering in the past or venturing out into the future. The Body Scan is designed to have your mind rendezvous with your body in the present moment. You will use your breath to guide you into deeper relaxation and awareness of your current body sensations. By using this meditation exercise you will naturally bring about more self awareness and let go of tensions held in your body, thus reducing stress so you can feel your best. It is also a helpful technique if you are bothered by racing thoughts or intense emotions.

Read this to yourself and then practice it on your own. You may also choose to tape yourself reading this guided meditation and then listen to it as a way to guide your practice. Another option is to get a partner, and take turns leading each other through the body scan.

Short Version:

1. Gently close your eyes. Begin to notice your breath and allow it to deepen as you take three deep, calming inhalations and exhalations. Inhale deeply into your belly and exhale completely.

2. Begin to scan your body and notice any obvious tension. With your next exhale, release the stress in your body that you are aware of. (Pause)
3. Now place your attention on your head, neck, and shoulders. Release any built up tension in your upper body on your next exhale. (Pause for 3 seconds.)
4. Move down to the middle of your body and notice any stress in your chest, tummy, arms, and hands. Allow the tension to melt away as you continue to breathe. With your next exhale, let any tension go and feel your middle body relax (Pause for 3 seconds).
5. Now place your awareness on your lower body including your buttocks, genitals, thighs, calves, ankles, feet and toes. Use the next few breaths to release tension in your lower body. Inhale slowly and then exhale. See the tension leaving your body. Feel the breath moving through the body, calming, soothing, relaxing, and removing built up tension. (pause for 3 seconds)
6. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and return your focus to the outside world.

Long Version:

1. Gently close your eyes. Begin to notice your breath and allow it to deepen and take five breath cycles. Inhale deeply into your belly and exhale completely. Breathe. Again inhaling deeply into the belly...and exhaling completely. Take nice slow, even breaths. (Pause after 5 breaths have been completed – about 10 seconds).
2. Now I invite you to place your focus on your forehead. Notice how it feels. Are your muscles tightened? Is your brow furrowed? Become aware of any tension you are holding in your forehead. With your next exhale, let any tension go and feel your forehead relax. (Pause for 5 seconds).
3. Move to the area around your eyes. Notice how your eyes feel – are they tired, are you squinting, do you perceive fatigue in the muscles around your eyes? With the next three breath cycles, release the outer corners of your eyes with each exhale.
4. Continue to breathe slowly, pull air into your nose and down deep into your belly, and then let go of tension with each exhale. Release.
5. Come down to your mouth and jaw. Observe any anxiety or stress that you are holding in the muscles around your mouth and the bones of your jaw. With your next exhale, let your lower jawbone drop down

and your mouth open slightly. Release the tension completely in your mouth and jawbone. Inhale and then exhale, release the tension. (Pause).

6. Become aware of the space between your neck and shoulders. Concentrate on bringing your inhalation deep into your belly and with each exhale release your shoulders so that they release down towards your feet. Feel the weight of your collarbone drop several inches with each exhale. Breathe in and feel your neck get longer as you leave your shoulders down in the relaxed position. Exhale, and feel your shoulders drop lower and lower.
7. Shift your awareness to your elbows, wrists, and fingers. Do you sense any tension or gripping in these joints and the muscles that support them? Just take notice of this as you slowly notice your upper arm, lower arm, the palms of your hands, and your thumb and fingers. Use your inhale to pull fresh cleansing air deep into your body's center and with each exhale release the tension in your arms and hands. Feel your arms get heavy as they let go and sink to the floor.
8. Sense the floor (or chair) beneath you. Give your complete weight to the floor and let it support your whole being. Continue your slow inhalations and exhalations as you let your body sink down into the floor – lower (pause) and lower (pause). Exhale completely and let go of all the stress and tension that has built up in the muscles of your back.

9. Internally scan your upper and lower legs for any signs that you are contracting your muscles. Inhale and hold this awareness about your lower body. Exhale slowly and completely. With your next inhalation let go of all the worry and stress that you have stored in your lower body. Exhale and let your legs feel heavy against the floor (or chair). Let your feet and toes soften and relax.
10. Breathe. Release. Revisit your forehead, eyes, mouth, and jawbone. If any tension has slipped back into these areas, just use your deep slow exhalations to erase it and let go again. Feel your neck become long and your shoulders drop down. Continue to breathe enjoying the sense of peace and calm you have created by allowing your body to rest and release.
11. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and return your attention to the outside world.

Half Smile Meditation

"In ancient China, the Taoists taught that a constant inner smile, a smile to oneself, insured health, happiness and longevity. Why? Smiling to yourself is like basking in love: you become your own best friend. Living with an inner smile is to live in harmony with yourself." -Mantak Chia

I'm not sure of the origins of this technique, but I know it's been around for a long time. Once you try it, I think you will know why I am so fond of doing this simple and transformative meditation. In her book, *Radical Acceptance*, Tara Brach writes: *"The power of a smile to open and relax us is confirmed by modern science. The muscles used to make a smile actually send a biochemical message to our nervous system that it is safe to relax the flight, fight, or freeze response."*

Katy's version of the Inner Smiling Technique: Sit in a relaxed manner. Do a couple shoulder shrugs up and down to loosen up. Then roll your shoulders forwards and backwards a couple times (great when traveling to release tension). Gently close your eyes and softly bring a small smile to your lips. This is not a forced smile. It's a gentle "half" smile. Simply breathe in and out for five minutes while maintaining this smile. If your mind starts to wander, simply label it as "thinking" and return your focus to your breath and your smile. You can't help but feel good afterwards!

The Five Senses Exercise

(designed to increase your awareness)

Some things that people commonly do automatically, without any (or very little awareness) are:

- **Driving** (automatic pilot). How many times have you driven down a familiar stretch of road only to realize later that you don't remember doing it? Or have you driven home not realizing what you were doing because you were so lost in thought?
- **Eating** during conversations with others. The other person is talking, but you are thinking of something else or just not enjoying the experience of eating.

List some of the activities you have engaged in while in automatic pilot, or have done while having little awareness of what you were doing.

One way to bring ourselves back into the present moment and to expand our awareness of ourselves and our environment is to use our senses. You can use your senses as a way to ground yourself in the here and now. By checking in with your senses (your sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) you can get out of your thinking mind and return to the present moment of awareness. This is a way of waking up! This is also a technique that can help you settle a busy mind or racing thoughts.

Practice this exercise now. Take a moment to check in with all five senses and then write what you observed down in the spaces below. See if you can be as detailed as possible in noticing your environment.

In this very moment, what are you

Seeing:

Hearing:

Smelling:

Tasting:

Feeling (sense of touch):

Loving- Kindness Exercise

Loving kindness is a key component to a Mindfulness practice. Loving kindness refers to a stance you take towards yourself and to the world around you. It would be unrealistic to expect that you will always be in a constant state of love and kindness towards yourself and everyone around you at all times. The concept of loving kindness is a guiding philosophy.

It is difficult to be at peace with the world around you if you are in a constant state of negativity. The capacity for loving kindness is a very powerful force. When used as part of a Mindfulness practice it can be a transforming life experience.

It is human to be hard on yourself at times. Have you noticed that the times when you are often the hardest on yourself are the times you really need love and kindness from yourself? Often when people are struggling with difficult emotions or are trying to feel better in their lives, they can become quite frustrated with themselves. It is not uncommon for people to tell themselves that they should or should not have a certain emotion, or to beat themselves up for feeling pain.

Common statements which indicate judgment toward yourself and a lack of loving kindness are:

- “I shouldn’t be feeling this anxious. (depressed/ angry/etc)! Other people wouldn’t feel this bad if they were in my shoes.”
- “I don’t deserve to feel this sad. (or anxious or angry) Think of how much worse other people have had it.”
- “Why do I feel this way? What is wrong with me?”
- “I am never going to change.”
- “It’s all my fault.”

Sometimes cultivating an attitude of love and gentleness towards yourself is the first step in making change.



Love Letter to Yourself

If you have never done this before you are in for a real treat! Get in a comfortable place with a pen and paper handy. You may also want to find a nice piece of stationery or card to use. If you prefer, you can type this out. It's up to you. Spend a moment breathing deeply and getting relaxed. Tell yourself "I am easily filled with loving thoughts towards myself." Then write a very special love letter to yourself. You can encourage yourself or write about the things you admire in yourself. Be creative and have fun. If you have problems getting started try to imagine the loving things you would write to a dear friend or companion, then offer those same words to yourself. Once you have finished the letter, put in an envelope and address it to yourself and then mail it! If you opted to type the letter, then save the document and send it to yourself in an e-mail but wait for a couple days to open and read it. Once you receive your note, mindfully and lovingly read it aloud to yourself. Read it over a few times. Enjoy the warmth it brings to your heart.

It is not necessary to love or appreciate every single aspect of yourself in order to effectively practice loving kindness. You do not need to be perfect in order to love yourself. The loving-kindness attitude toward the self recognizes that there can be aspects of ourselves that we may be frustrated with or don't appreciate. However, you can still love and accept the totality of who you are as a person, just as you may love and

accept others despite what you may perceive as their faults or imperfections—the same goes for your sense of love towards yourself.

Fill in the blanks below as a way of practicing unconditional kindness toward yourself.

I can be angry and still love myself.

I can make mistakes and still love myself.

I can _____ and still love myself.

I can _____ and still love myself.

Even though I feel emotional pain, I am still deserving of self love.

Even though I have made mistakes, I am still deserving of self love.

Even though _____, I am still deserving of self love.

Even though _____, I am still deserving of self love.

Basic Loving-Kindness Meditation

- Sit quietly in an upright yet relaxed position. Gently close your eyes and begin to breathe from your belly.
- Notice any obvious tension in your body and begin to release it as you breathe out.
- Think of a person you care about and want to send love to. Visualize them and send them these silent words:
 - *May you know love and the root of all love*
 - *May you know peace and the root of all peace*
 - *May you know happiness and the root of all happiness*
 - *May you be free from any suffering and may you feel safe and secure*
 - *Feel free to add any of your own wishes.....*
- Now offer these same loving-kindness wishes to yourself ("May I know....")
- Lastly, offer these loving-kindness wishes to someone who is a difficult person in your life
- You can use this loving-kindness practice in an informal way throughout your day by simply silently wishing others to be happy, peaceful, calm, healthy, etc. I have found this practice very useful in hostile environments where there is a great deal of reactivity happening. I silently wish the other person peace and calmness. It keeps me focused on finding peace in all situations and not adding unnecessary drama to the situation. I also like to place my hands over my heart area when I am having a rough

moment in the day and offer myself validation and reassurance. I say a few nice things about me to myself, breathe it in, and notice a wonderful shift that happens inside of me. Instead of beating myself up with negative self talk, I feel comforted and peaceful, ready to face the rest of my day.



Journal Exercise: Identifying Personal Blocks Living the Alkaline Lifestyle

Journaling is an effective tool to create awareness and help you identify what is going on in your thought life. It's a way to download thoughts and feelings and help you clarify your needs and desires. Try not to get caught up in correct grammar or sentence structure. Just allow yourself to freely write whatever comes to mind. Be patient with yourself if this does not come easily to you at first. It takes some practice to comfortably express yourself in writing, especially if you tend to have any perfectionist tendencies or if you minimize your struggles. This is for your eyes only. Be as honest

as you can when you journal as it will help you get a more realistic view of how you are really doing in this moment. Some prefer to make lists instead. Be creative. Just do what works best for your style!

What is getting in the way of you being able to change your diet?

How would your life be different if you totally accepted yourself? What would be the first thing you would notice in the morning if you woke up and suddenly knew that you totally accepted yourself for you? What would your actions be? What would your facial expression look like? What would your body expression be? Your posture? How would you interact differently with those around you? What might other people notice about you?

List one step you will take to move closer towards self acceptance and kindness.

Road Blocks to the Practice of Mindfulness

- **Discomfort/Fear:** Some people report that it is too unsettling to become still and pay attention in such a detailed way. They try to stay busy as a way to avoid pain and difficult emotions. Some people who suffer from anxiety find it very challenging to sit still with their ruminating thoughts. I have had many group members report that they were terrified when they heard they were going to be meditating in silence for 20 minutes. Once they trained their minds to calm down and found ways to manage the anxious thinking, they often reported that they wanted more time in group for longer meditations! The magic of mindfulness is that you learn to tolerate all of your feelings and pay attention to your thoughts in a way that releases them instead of recycling the same negative messages over and over again. It can be helpful to attend a Yoga, Tai Chi, or Qi Gong session to experience Mindful Movement before starting to do seated meditations when you are first beginning to meditate. Then you can ease your way into more formal meditation practices.

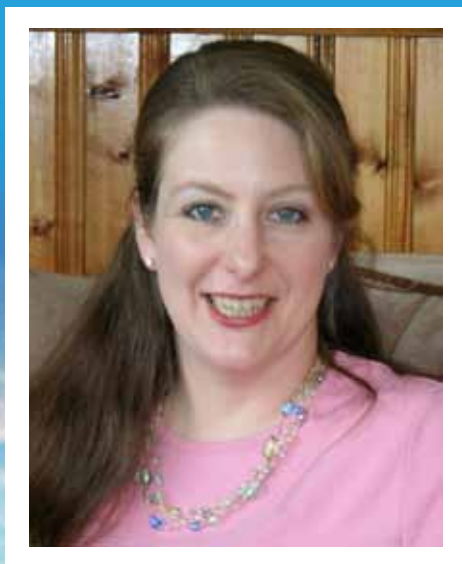
- **Poor self care habits:** If you are not in the habit of taking time for yourself, it can be a challenge to take the time to develop a conscious breathing practice or just slow down enough to pay attention to your own needs. As you give yourself permission to be centered and calm, you will find your practice soothing, and that Mindfulness is something you make time for.
- **Addiction to stress:** Our sympathetic nervous system (the part of us that controls the fight or flight response) is often over stimulated due to past trauma, busy lives, and a tendency towards being overly dramatic. We can feel a rush of adrenaline during these stressful times and get used to being “wound up.” We are in the habit of being stressed. Habits can be broken! Once you practice Mindfulness and your parasympathetic nervous system (the part of us that controls the rest, digestion, and relaxation responses) has a chance to become more dominant, you will enjoy a more peaceful life.
- **Giving up too soon:** Developing a Mindful life takes some time. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to do this. The key is to be consistent and find ways to remain in the present. There is a great new company called Meaning to Pause (www.meaning-topause.com) that makes bracelets for men and women to wear during the day. A vibration goes off every half hour to remind you to be present. I have found it very useful in training myself to come

back to the moment and notice when I am getting caught in the past or carried away into the future. Allow yourself to slowly develop mindful habits. Start with incorporating deep breathing into your life. Once that is a habit, maybe you can have one mindful meal each day and so on. Changes made slowly over time are changes that we can maintain!

- **Lack of Support:** Books can be a great mentor for your mindfulness practice. You may also find joining a mindfulness group or meditation group beneficial as you first get started. See the resource section at the end of this chapter for more details.

Key Points to Remember

- Mindfulness can help you reduce stress and become more aware of the emotional undercurrents in your life.
- Mindfulness is a practice; like anything you practice, the more you incorporate the suggestions into your life, the more you will progress.
- Mindfulness is neither a race nor a destination. It is a journey. Take your exploration of mindfulness at your own pace.
- Mindfulness includes breathing, focusing on the present moment, and releasing judgment. It includes awareness and observation with loving detachment.
- You can use mindfulness techniques as part of a formal practice or an informal practice. The choice is yours.
- Practice the meditation and mindfulness exercises presented in this section at your own pace. You may wish to note and record your experiences in a journal or diary to monitor your practice and progress.
- Loving yourself and cultivating an attitude of love and acceptance towards yourself is one of the most important things you will ever do.



Jeanne Grunert



Let Your Spirit Soar:

Finding Your Spiritual Center

By Jeanne Grunert

My name is Jeanne Grunert, and I'm a writer and editor for the Alkaline Lifestyle and many other websites and publications. The topic of finding your spiritual center is very dear to me. Although I grew up within a traditional organized religion, I left the faith of my childhood when I turned 20 and spent the next decade seeking a way to find and discern God's will for my life. I craved a direct, personal relationship with God as I understood him – not the God who looked like Zeus sitting on a big throne in the sky dispensing judgment and punishment. After studying meditation with the Self Realization Fellowship for many years, I found what I was seeking. Through meditation, I have developed a rich, deep spiritual life. My connection with my spirit life extends into my work as a writer and editor and colors the world I see around me. I have learned that without a personal spiritual life my life is bland and meaningless. When I don't nurture my spiritual life, I find my thoughts turning pessimistic, judgmental and critical. When I allow my spiritual life to blossom and unfold and I spend time nurturing my relationship to my spiritual self, I become buoyant, optimistic, peaceful, charitable, loving and calm. That's the very definition of the Alkaline Mindset as described by Dr. Robert O. Young in his many books on the Alkaline Lifestyle. Although I returned to the traditional religious culture of my

youth, I brought with me the new yogic traditions and direct connection to spirit that I found in my years of seeking, blending the two into an organic whole. I encourage you to do the same, finding a way to relate to the spiritual world around you or to God as you understand him or her to be. Start wherever you are, and let the path unfold before you whether you believe in a supreme intelligence or not. Namaste.

Let Your Spirit Soar – Finding Your Spiritual Center

What is spirit? What do we mean by finding your spiritual center?

Rabbi David Wolpe writes in his book *Why Faith Matters*, “No single arc covers all human complexity.” I would amend that statement to say, “No single definition of spirit covers all human complexity.”

We know intuitively that people are different from other living creatures. Sometimes people use the word “soul” to describe this quality. We may love and respect the animal kingdom and our companion animals but when it comes to people, we intuitively sense that something is different, unique about human beings. That difference is what I call spirit or our spiritual selves.

Whether you believe in God, gods, a goddess, a supreme intelligence or an intelligent force behind the universe or nothing more than what you can see beyond your nose is immaterial. Each of us possesses a creative spark that seeks beauty and expression, connection and wholeness. It is this spark that is the spiritual side of our natures.

Sparks Can Be Dimmed – But Not Extinguished

Many times when I describe this notion of spirit to others they exclaim, “Yes, but I don’t feel it!” They are very mired in what the yogis call “maya” or the delusion of the senses. They have become so immersed and inundated with their sense-nature that they can no longer feel their spirit-nature. But the divine spark of spirit can never be extinguished. We can dim it through the cacophony of the sense, through busyness, drugs, alcohol, sense pleasures. We can be so distracted that we tune it out. But nothing in this world can ever extinguish the spark of human creativity and yearning to connect to the spiritual world.

Link to the Alkaline Lifestyle

Why all this talk of spiritual stuff in connection with the Alkaline Lifestyle? Other materials in the course quoted extensively from Dr. Young, one of the foremost proponents of the alkaline lifestyle in the nation. Dr. Young believes that your mindset affects your body’s pH. You’ve probably heard or read stories about Norman Cousins, who overcame a life-threatening illness using laughter, and the many mind-body studies such as those conducted by Dr. Dean Ornish which demonstrate the connection between mental and spirit dimensions of life to improvements in outcomes among cardiac rehabilitation patients. There’s a wealth of scientific and anecdotal research linking the earlier

chapters' information on mindfulness, affirmations and positive thinking with health, and an equally impressive body of evidence about the role spirituality plays in health and healing.

Do you need to believe in God or participate in an organized religion to benefit from the spiritual techniques mentioned here? Although such a belief may help, you can practice any of these spiritual techniques without swearing allegiance to a doctrine or faith. If you believe in God, you can use meditation and any techniques in the spiritual section to deepen your connection to divine spirit, and I encourage you to look more closely at the mystical or prayer traditions of your own faith community to find the riches therein. I remember vividly discovering a whole tradition of mysticism in the faith of my childhood; it was like finding buried treasure! I went out of my faith to find a way to connect with God only to find out there was a way within the traditions I learned as a child. It was there all along, just hidden under the surface. The adults teaching me my faith weren't familiar with it and they could only share what they knew, which were the many rules, regulations and liturgical traditions. It took maturity and a willingness to approach a familiar topic with a fresh viewpoint to unearth the richness within. There may be hidden riches of prayer to discover too within your own faith community.

Delve into your own traditions if you have them or choose one of the paths suggested here. But please don't stop here. I'm sharing what I learned and what I tried. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands more schools of thought from around the world, and one may be a better fit for you. Seek and you will find. Just remember that once you find something that feels in your heart and soul like a good fit for your spiritual needs, stay with it. Do not be like the butterfly flitting among the many garden flowers, never pausing on one but sipping from each. You have the freedom to explore the world of spirit and find what appeals to you and what meets your spiritual needs, but once you have chosen a path, the best way to make progress is to stay the course and follow one path consistently.

Connecting to Your Spirit: Three Paths to Try

There are as many ways to connect with your spirit as there are people on this planet! People are forever finding creative ways to encounter and experience their spiritual natures. Since this section isn't meant to be an exhaustive analysis of man's ways of finding his spiritual nature but rather practical suggestions to connect to your spirit to cultivate the alkaline mindset, I'll focus on three that I have found are both useful and accessible for most people to try.

Path 1: Nature

Throughout the Alkaline Lifestyle course materials, we mention the rejuvenating effects of connecting to nature. Whether it's looking at beautiful images of beaches, mountains or sunsets or taking a walk in a city park, many experiments demonstrate that connecting to nature improves one's outlook, perks up the spirits, and enhances feelings of calmness and peace—all qualities we want to cultivate on the Alkaline Lifestyle.

Connecting with nature doesn't have to be a formal practice. If you look back at Katy Joy's section on mindfulness, you can incorporate an information mindfulness practice with this path to connect with your spirit. Lace up your sneakers, leash up your dog if you have one, and step outside for a mindfulness walk in nature. Instead of tugging at your dog's leash every time she stops to sniff a twig or leaf, whenever she stops, pause, take a deep breath, and look around you. Still and quiet your thoughts. Allow the scene to unfold before you. Note the colors, textures, sights and sounds. It's as if a new world unfolds before you!

This morning I used Katy Joy's tips on my morning walk. I live in a rural area and walk my dog through the woods. As we came to a clearing filled with juniper bushes, she stopped, and so I stopped, too. I paused. The rich tangy scent of juniper filled my nostrils. Tangerine and gold filled the morning sky as the sun peeked over the horizon. A crisp breeze blew wispy white clouds across a

dark azure dawn sky. A mockingbird sang a sweet song, squawked, and changed tunes like a radio changing stations. I drank in the peace, tranquility, and beauty of dawn and felt my spirit connect with nature. It was a moment of connection, of pure peace and bliss that came about through a simple moment of mindfulness. Now imagine linking such moments together throughout the course of your day like stringing beads on a necklace or snapping children's blocks together. What would your day be like if you could bring that peace into another moment, and another beyond?

Many people find that spending time in nature is a simple way to connect to their spirits. It uplifts the mood and provides moments for mindfulness that leave a lasting impression.

Here are some ideas for spending time in nature, including ideas for people who live in urban environments where "nature" may be taken loosely to mean anything in the natural environment such as plants or pets:

- **Take a daily walk.** Whether it's walking your dog or a stroll around your office building, step outside for at least five minutes a day. People evolved outdoors. We weren't meant to spend our entire days locked in climate-controlled buildings under fluorescent lights. Take a walk and spend a few moments looking at the sky, the clouds, the stars. Drink it in. Allow the moment just to be.

- **Spend time with pets.** Millions of people love their dogs, cats, horses, hamsters, fish, birds, reptiles and whatever other companion animals they welcome into their homes. Pets bring a touch of the wild indoors with them. Even the most domesticated cat or dog retains some of that wildness! Spend time playing with your pet. Enjoy time spent with your pet. Pets boost moods, reduce stress, and help us cultivate the qualities of the alkaline mindset such as caring, compassion, and joy.



- **Tend a garden.** Even caring for a houseplant is a good opportunity to spend time in nature. Houseplants, a planter box on a balcony, a window box, a little patch of ground to grow tomatoes, or a full fledged garden are all ways to engage with the natural world. If you hate plants or have a brown thumb, consider hanging pictures of flowers and gardens in your home.

- **Enjoy outdoor places you love.** When I lived on Long Island, my home was only 10 minutes from the North Shore beaches and a federal bird refuge. On Sunday mornings, in lieu of formal church services, I'd drive to the bird sanctuary, hike through the forest until I reached the beach, then sit on a rock and meditate for an hour. I love the beach and I left each Sunday's outdoor meditation session feeling reborn. I now live on a timber farm and feel that same connection through my trees, my little creek, the fields beyond my house. Whether you love the ocean, the mountains, a wintry hillside or a meadow, find ways to spend time in outdoor places you love.
- **Look at the sky.** When all else fails, all of us – even people in prison – can see a patch of the sky every day. Use the beautiful blue sky as your chance to connect with nature. Stargazing is another way to feel the child-like sense of awe and wonder.
- **Surround yourself with natural beauty.** I keep a rock from that beach where I used to meditate on my desk. Even when I worked in Manhattan in a gray cubicle, where the only office window overlooked a brick apartment building and neon signs from Macy's Herald Square next door, I kept that rock on my desk. I'd pick it up like a talisman while on stressful telephone calls, feeling a sense of peace and calm every time I touched it. It became a touchstone to that beach back at home where I felt such peace and serenity on Sunday mornings.

You can surround yourself with natural beauty no matter where you are. At that same office building, I kept a small houseplant called a pothos on my desk. It thrives under the awful office lighting we all know and tolerate. I also enjoyed scenic beauty on my computer screen saver, setting the pictures to rotate among various scenes I'd found on stock photography websites online of waterfalls, creeks, and forests. Use whatever tools are at hand to enjoy the natural world and keep some of it with you .



Path 2: Explore Your Creativity

Another way to shake off the pessimistic, busy, me-centered thinking that leads to acidity and cultivate the qualities Dr. Young suggests are part of the alkaline mind is to engage your creative spirit. Creativity is one of the sparks that sets people apart from other creatures.

You may think that creativity is only the realm of the gifted. I believed that once, too. Growing up with a relative who was a professional classical musician, I felt intimidated every time I sat down at the piano and fumbled my way through a beginner-level song. Yet playing the piano and singing are two ways I give voice to my creative side. When I play or sing, I forget all about myself and merge with the beauty of the music. Music moves my spirit in ways that other arts do not. As a writer, I engage my right-brain creative side daily in my work, yet even though I am constantly creating, I too need an additional creative outlet. As long as I keep my musical pursuits non competitive, learning a new piano sonata, challenging myself to sing a complicated piece with the choir I sing with, or listening to music mindfully lets my spirit sing. It connects me to my spiritual self.

Do you enjoy any creative pursuits now? Stop and think for a minute. Do not judge your creativity as I once did by the efforts of others. Listen only to your spirit. Do you feel uplifted, happy, free, timeless when you

engage in your creative pursuits? That's the hallmark of connecting to your spirit. Scholars call it being in the "flow" of the moment. Time seems to flow effortlessly. You lose track of the time. You forget where you are. The other evening, I sat down to practice the piano. I am teaching myself a piece that challenges me in many ways. I worked on the piece and suddenly my dog was nudging my hand and whining. I looked at the clock and was astonished to see that almost two hours had passed! She was nudging me to go outside, because she had been waiting patiently to play all that time while I played and enjoyed myself. That's being in the flow – time rippled by endlessly while I was engaged in my task, my spirit connected to my creative self, my attention focused elsewhere, no judgmental, critical thoughts, just the motion of my fingers on the keys, the pleasure of hearing the chords finally coming together as I learned the piece of music before me.

I find myself "in the flow" when I engage in certain crafts I enjoy, too. I like to sew and do needlecrafts and the other day as I stitched together a quilted pillow I am working on, I found that time rippled by endlessly, too. The more you feel yourself slipping into the flow, the more you are connecting to your creative side and creating that wonderful positive, joyful space in your mind, heart and spirit that leads to the alkaline mindset talked about by Dr. Young. This is how I experience and see it, and I believe anyone can, too!

Here are ideas for engaging in your creative side. Which one appeals to you? Use the spaces below to write in things that occur to you or ideas that appeal to you. Perhaps this is your spirit's way of telling you to explore them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Write more if you wish to do so.

Ideas to nurture your creativity:

1. **Music** – play a musical instrument, sing, compose, listen to music.
2. **Art** – draw, paint, sculpt. Play with colors and clay. Buy a package of colored pens or pencils and sketch.
3. **Photography** – digital cameras make it inexpensive to try new lighting, angles, sights.
4. **Video** – make movies, create composites of videos and photography, add music and soundtracks, and explore the moving image
5. **Writing** – creative writing such as poetry, short stories, essays, novels, plays, creative non fiction. Journal writing is a personal method of expression that also releases emotions.
6. **Movement** – dance! Put on music and dance when no one is looking. Take classes in ballet, tap, jazz, ballroom dancing, Latin dancing, belly dancing, whatever dancing appeals to you. Watch dance programs, go to live performances.

7. **Clothing** – fashion is creative expression! Go “shopping in your closet” and challenge yourself to create new outfits from your current wardrobe. Take pictures of various looks. Create a ‘look book’ of pages snipped from magazines that showcase looks you wish to create. Have fun!
8. **Needle crafts** – sewing, needlepoint, knitting, crocheting, counted cross stitch, quilting, all fabric crafts are creative expression
9. **Scrapbooking** – create memories with photographs and creative presentation ideas
10. **Models** – miniature dollhouses, horses, trains, planes, automobiles, sailing ships, race cars, rocketships. Think back to your childhood. What did you play with? Play again as an adult. Create!
11. **Drama** – act! Volunteer at your local theater. Try out for plays. Look into amateur and college radio if you’ve yearned to use your voice talents on the radio. Do your own internet show through the various online free radio outlets. Explore your dramatic side.
12. **Volunteer** – creative relationships enhance and nurture your spirit too, and volunteer activities help us both engage with the world around us as well as engage in creative relationships. Tutor children or adults, volunteer at the animal shelter or for a charity you believe in. Build relationships that cultivate love.
13. **Crafts** – create jewelry. Arrange flowers. Make collages. What do you love to do?

As mentioned earlier, there are probably as many ways to cultivate creativity as there are people on the planet. These are just a handful of ideas. What appeals to you? What else do you enjoy? These are all ways to engage your spirit and create peace, tranquility, harmony and happiness: the alkaline mindset.

Path 3: Meditation

The third suggested path to embracing and nurturing your spiritual connection is to learn meditation. At the end of the Mindfulness chapter, Katy Joy shares several exercises for you to learn how to meditate. There are many, many methods of meditation. There is no one “right” way to meditate. Meditation practices are found throughout all religious traditions and throughout the world. All share one commonality: quieting the mind and stilling the internal chatter that so often distracts and distresses us.



Many meditation practices focus on seeking and connecting to God. You can certainly practice meditation with this goal in mind, as I did, or you can practice meditation from a non believer or skeptic's point of view. You will experience benefits no matter what your belief system.

Eknath Easwaran and the Eight Point Path of Meditation

One of the best methods of meditation I discovered during my "seeker's journey" was the 8-Point Program taught by former Berkely professor Eknath Easwaran. Dr. Easwaran was an English literature professor who came to Berkeley from India. He taught English literature for many years until the faculty and students invited him to lecture on meditation. After his meditation lectures, students asked him to teach meditation, and from this developed his book, *Meditation*, which covers the basics of his approach and his 8-point plan. His nondenominational approach to meditation makes it appealing for people of all religious traditions and paths, and you can easily adapt the 8 points of his program to an atheistic point of view, too.

Easwaran's 8-point program includes:

1. Meditation, specifically Passage Meditation
2. Mantram meditation, or repeating a mantra
3. Slowing Down
4. One Pointed Attention
5. Training the Senses
6. Putting Others First
7. Reading the World's Mystical Literature
8. Spiritual Friendship or Fellowship

Point 1: Passage Meditation

Passage meditation is the basis of Easwaran's meditation teaching. During passage meditation, you choose from among the sacred literature traditions of the world or a small poem or piece of literature that exemplifies the qualities you wish to cultivate in yourself. Choose a passage that speaks to you. Memorize it slowly and carefully, or read it slowly and carefully until you get the hang of it in memory. Then sit quietly, with eyes closed. Sit in a normal chair and sit comfortable with your hands gently on your lap. Breathe in for a count of 10, out for a count of 10, and repeat that a few times. Then quietly to yourself, repeat the memorized passage, lingering over words and phrases. Slowly, repeat the passage, over and over again. You will find that having something to repeat gives your squirmy mind that wants to jump all over the place and think all sorts of thoughts during meditation something to hang on to! This paragraph greatly simplifies the great professor's teachings, but you can learn more on the Blue Mountain Meditation Center's website (the non profit established to share his teachings) or in his book, *Meditation*, listed in the Resources section.

Point 2: Repeating the Mantra

Throughout the years the word mantra has become associated with esoteric teachings, but in Easwaran's meditation program it simply means choosing a word or phrase that exemplifies a quality you seek and quietly repeating it to yourself during odd moments of the day.

Like passage meditation, it gives your mind a focus and counteracts the tendency to think negative, pessimistic, critical or judgmental thoughts. I never understood the power of the mantram until I was on a long, cross-country drive many years ago. I sat in the passenger seat of the car as my husband drove through the endless highways of the Midwest. Using mindfulness techniques, I realized that my thought-chatter was very critical and negative. I decided to use the quiet time in the car while my spouse drove to repeat my mantra. For over an hour, I focused on the mantram. By the end of the hour, when it was time for us to switch and for me to drive (and concentrate), I was at peace. I had released all those negative, critical thoughts and was filled only with an awareness of the present moment. Mantra meditation is taught in the basic book *Meditation* and Easwaran also wrote an entire book dedicated to the topic, appropriately enough called *The Mantram Handbook*.

Point 3: Slowing Down

We rush through life as if it's a race. Slowing down, whether it's taking time to eat breakfast unhurriedly or stopping for a mindful moment while walking the dog, releases tension which I interpret as leading to an alkaline mindset. Hurrying through the day increases tension and stress, which lead to an acidic mindset. Slowing down complements the other points in this mediation system.

Point 4: One Pointed Attention

At first Point 4: One Pointed Attention seems stupidly easy. Focus on one thing at a time. Check, okay, done. But not really. Most people do many things at one time. They try to write a term paper with the radio or television on in the background. They drive with music blaring in the car. When they're talking with someone, their minds are wandering all over the place, thinking of what they want to say next or their grocery list or whether or not they remember to turn off the stove before they left the house. One-pointed attention is very similar to the Buddhist teachings of mindfulness in the moment, or paying attention to the task at hand and focusing all your attention on it. It fits in with Point 5, Training the Senses.

Point 5: Training the Senses

Yogis liken the senses to wild horses that need to be trained and harnesses to work together as a team. Taste, touch, smell, sight, sound....your senses can enhance your tranquility or increase your discomfort. How many times have your senses led you astray? If you're like me, plenty of times! Whenever I fall away from the Alkaline Lifestyle and alkaline diet, it's because my senses – my palate – gives in to cravings for things that aren't good for me. Training the senses to enjoy chard as much as chocolate are part of this meditation system. While not easy, they will enhance your peace of mind and the ability to embrace to the Alkaline Lifestyle!

Point 6: Putting Others First

Think back to the other course materials in the Alkaline Lifestyle where we first mention the connection between your mental (and spiritual) state and alkalinity. One of the hallmarks of the alkaline mindset was compassion and positive feelings. Well, when you step outside of your own selfish concerns and put other people first, you create the positive emotions linked to alkalinity. Easwaran writes at length about the benefits of this point on his 8 point plan, and it should be fairly obvious to most that when you see how you can help other people first you find joy. There are countless stories throughout the world of people bored and unhappy with their lives who found meaning through volunteer work. This is Point 6 – Putting Others First – in action as it connects people back to the spiritual side they thought they lost.

Point 7: Reading Mystical Literature

As an English professor, Easwaran was keenly aware of the power of words, and he recommended reading widely and deeply of all of the world's great spiritual traditions to enhance your own spiritual path and practice.

Point 8: Spiritual Association or Friendship

The Indian word “sangha” means fellowship, and it refers to the unique and wonderful spiritual friendships and fellowship that develops when “two or more are gathered in my name” as Jesus said. He knew the power of group spiritual pursuits. That is why many organized religions focus on worship time together; connecting to the spirit includes a dimension of connecting, uplifting and supporting others in spiritual pursuits. How you go about this depends on your personal beliefs and worldviews. There are organized traditional religions, New Thought and New Age churches, alternative worship services, non denominational meditation sessions and more. The point is that the company you keep can either help you along your spiritual pathway or hinder you. Surround yourself with spiritual friendships who can encourage and support you on your spiritual journey.

Learning the 8 Point Path

This is only a brief summary of the Eight Point Program. You can learn more about each point through the writings of Eknath Easwaran. Even embracing one out of the eight points will take you further along the pathway to connecting with your spirit. As you embrace one, others seem to fall into place too. As you train your senses, you find you put other people first. As you repeat your mantra, you develop one pointed

concentration, and as you develop one pointed concentration, you can focus on passage meditation more, and so on. It's one of many meditation systems that's available and many people have found it useful.

Meditation in the Yogic Tradition

In brief introduction I mentioned that part of my own spiritual path includes the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda, as taught through the organization he founded, the Self Realization Fellowship. Yogananda was an Indian guru and the last in the line of his gurus. His own guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, gave him the task of traveling to the West and spreading the teachings he had learned. Yogananda taught meditation and the science of yoga from his arrival in the USA in the early part of the 20th century until his passing in 1952. He wrote lessons on meditation and how to live according to the yogic tradition that are offered in their original format today through the SRF for a nominal fee. If you follow these lessons weekly, you will learn how to meditate and will significantly deepen your meditation practice.

A good introduction to his work is the *Autobiography of a Yogi* which chronicles his life from his childhood in India to his journey to America. It's been in print since the 1940s and remains to this day a spiritual classic.

Yogananda teaches kriya yoga, a type of spiritual tradition that focuses on channeling the energies of the body into spiritual purposes. Yogananda describes Kriya Yoga in the *Autobiography of a Yogi* as follows:

The Kriya Yogi mentally directs his life energy to revolve, upward and downward, around the six spinal centers (medullary, cervical, dorsal, lumbar, sacral, and coccygeal plexuses) which correspond to the twelve astral signs of the zodiac, the symbolic Cosmic Man. One-half minute of revolution of energy around the sensitive spinal cord of man effects subtle progress in his evolution; that half-minute of Kriya equals one year of natural spiritual unfoldment.

If learning how to meditate and advance on the spiritual path appeals to you, start with the Self Realization Fellowship's website found in the resources section of this book or find a copy of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Then if you are still interested in learning this method of meditation and yoga, contact SRF for lesson information.

One of Yogananda's disciples, J. Donald Walters (Swami Kriyananda) wrote a book called *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga* which provides a textbook for meditation and yogic practices. It follows in the same tradition but offers a different way of approaching the topic. You may also wish to look at Walters' works and similar gurus and yogis.

Many other yogis, swamis and teachers have come from India and other countries to the United States sharing their forms of meditation and the teachings they learned from their own gurus. You can find many practicing now or other systems and teachings left behind. I have learned and follow both Yogananda's teachings and Easwaran's program, which have led to a reversal of my own tendency to be a critical, judgmental, pessimistic person. I credit both systems with helping me refocus my spiritual practices and learning new ways of relating to others. I recommend them because I know them and have tested them and found them useful – but they aren't the only ones out there.

When seeking a meditation teacher, be careful. Go with your gut instinct. Listen to what your teacher has to say and choose wisely. The Hindus have a saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." That is very true. When you are ready to find your personal guru, the teacher whose works appeal to you the most, you will encounter him or her. Seek and you will find.

Meditation for All

One of my greatest frustrations as a seeker has been the condemnation of meditation and various Eastern spiritual practices as satanic, evil or methods that lead people astray. Nothing could be further from the truth. If you belong to an organized religious tradition that discourages meditation, and you agree with a free will

to follow that tradition to the letter of the law, then that is your personal choice – but let it be a choice. I encourage you to keep an open mind and explore freely from the world’s great religious and spiritual traditions.

The world of the spirit is roomy and big, offering something for everyone. One time during meditation I had a simple vision. I like to keep prisms in my home and have many suncatchers and stained glass pieces hanging in windows in my home and office. In the small sunroom at the back of my house where I meditate, I have a crystal heart-shaped prism hanging in the window that I purchased at a museum gift shop while on vacation. When the dawn light hits the prism, it scatters it into the pure colors of the rainbow, leaving streaks of violet, blue, green, red, orange and yellow on the walls.

One day while meditating, the voice in my heart spoke and said, “God is like light passing through the prism. He is one, but when he passes through human consciousness, we each see him according to the lens of our prism. Some see him as blue, some as green, but they are all of God.”

I took that teaching to heart. To me this means that there is something of value in many spiritual paths. I do agree with the great masters that you will make the greatest progress if you choose one path and stay with it. A cafeteria approach to spiritual pursuits leads to frustration and two steps back for every one step forward. There are, however, methods of seeking God

and connecting with spirit found in every great world tradition. We can all learn from one another. The human experience of connecting with spirit is the same no matter if one calls oneself a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu or whatnot. We are looking for the same thing, just looking in different rooms of the house.

There is a saying among 12 step groups that is also useful. "Take what you can and leave the rest." This means to take what you find useful, valuable and helpful and leave the rest behind. It works when someone is sharing or giving advice, as in a 12 step group situation, and it works when examining various forms of meditation and spiritual practices. Take what you can from what you learn and leave the rest behind.

At the end of your seeking, some pathway will call you more than others. Others may look enticing, but one path feels right. Walk that path. Follow it. That is your spiritual connection.

References mentioned in the Mindfulness section

Research supporting the benefits of Mindfulness can be found at:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2679512/>

Baer, R. A. 2003. Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 10 (2): 125-43

Brown, K.W., R.M. Ryan, and J.D. Creswell. 2007. Mindfulness: Theoretical foundations and evidence for its salutary effects. *Psychological Inquiry* 18 (4):211-37

Davidson, R., J.Kabat-Zinn, J.Scheumacher, M. Ronsekranz, D. Muller, S. Santorelli, F. Urbanowski, A. Harrington, K. Bonus, and J. Sheridan. 2003. Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation. *Psychosomatic Medicine* 65:564-70

Resources

(Recommended by Katy Joy Freeman)

Books:

- *The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness*, Williams, Teasdale, Segal, and Kabat-Zinn
- *Mindfulness For Beginners*, Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, Jon Kabat-Zinn
- *The Mindfulness Solution: Everyday Practices for Everyday Problems*, Ronald D. Siegel
- *A Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction Workbook*, Bob Stahl & Elisha Goldstein
- *Beginning Mindfulness: Learning the Way of Awareness*, Andrew Weiss
- *Mindfulness for Dummies*, Shamash Alidina
- *Radical Acceptance*, Tara Brach
- *The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology*, Jack Kornfield
- *Awakening to Mindfulness*, Richard Fields, Ph.D

- *The Mindful Woman*, Thoele
- *Women Who Worry Too Much*, Hazlett-Stevens
- *Mindful Solution to Pain*, Gardner-Nix
- *Eating The Moment*, Somov
- *The Self-Compassion Diet: A Step-by-Step Program to Lose Weight With Loving-Kindness*, Jean Fain, MSW
- *Eat, Drink, and Be Mindful Workbook*, Albers
- *50 Ways to Soothe Yourself Without Food*, Albers
- *Savor, Mindful Eating, Mindful Life*, Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life, Miracle of Mindfulness*, Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Miracle of Mindfulness*, Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Don't Just Do Something; Sit There: A Mindfulness Retreat with Sylvia Boorstein*, Sylvia Boorstein
- *The Gift of Loving-Kindness: 100 Practices for Compassion, Generosity & Forgiveness*, Mary Brantley & Tesilya Hanauer
- *The Mindful Path to Self Compassion: Freeing Yourself from Destructive Thoughts and Emotions*, Christopher K. Germer

- *Living the Mindful Way: 85 Everyday Mindfulness Practices For Finding Inner Peace*, Sharon L Horstead
- *Fully Present: The Science, Art, and Practice of Mindfulness*, Diana Winston
- *Daily Meditations for Calming Your Anxious Mind*, Jeffrey Brantley, MD & Wendy Millstine, NC
- *Peaceful Mind*, John R. McQuaid, Ph.D & Paula E. Carmona, RN,MSN
- *Five Good Minutes*, Jeffrey Brantley, MD & Wendy Millstine, NC – There are a series of these books by the same authors
- *Buddha's Brain*, Rick Hanson, Ph.D.
- *The Power of Now*, Eckhart Tolle
- *The Mindful Child: How to Help your Kid Manage Stress and Become Happier, Kinder, and more Compassionate*, Susan Kaiser Greenland

Websites:

- www.wisebrain.org
- www.tarabrach.org
- www.ucsd.tv – under programs go to Health and Medicine

References

Spiritual and Meditation Resources
(Recommended by Jeanne Grunert)

Books

- *Meditation* by Eknath Easwaran
- *The Mantram Handbook* by Eknath Easwaran
- *God Makes the Rivers to Flow*, selections from the sacred literature of the world, edited by Eknath Easwaran
- *Your Life Is Your Message* by Eknath Easwaran
- *Why Faith Matters* by Rabbi David Wolpe
- *The Story of a Soul*, Therese of Liseux
- *Finding God's Will for You*, Francis de Sales
- *Second Sight* by Judith Orloff, M.D.
- *Anatomy of the Spirit* by Caroline Myss
- *Creative Visualization* by Shakti Gawain
- *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga* by Donald Walters (Swami Kriyananda)
- *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda

- *Man's Eternal Quest* by Paramahansa Yogananda
- *Power Through Constructive Thinking* by Emmet Fox
- *The Tough-Minded Optimist* by Norman Vincent Peale

Organizations and Resources to Learn Meditation

- Self Realization Fellowship,
<http://www.yogananda-srf.org/>
- Ananda Sangha,
<http://www.ananda.org/spiritual-living/fellowship.html>
- Blue Mountain Center for Meditation, focuses on an 8 point program as taught by Eknath Easwaran,
<http://www.easwaran.org/>
- Kripalu Center, features yoga classes, meditation, courses, retreats, www.kripalu.org

Keys to Unlock the Alkaline Mindset
By Katy Joy Freeman & Jeanne Grunert

Published by Alkaline People Publishing
6352 Corte Del Abeto, Suite H
Carlsbad, CA 92011
888.800.0459
www.AlkalinePeoplePublishing.com

All Rights Reserved
Copyright Alkaline People Press

Printed in the United States
1st Printing January 2011

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher.

These statements have not been evaluated by the food and drug administration. The preceding information and/or products are for educational purposes only and are not meant to diagnose, prescribe, or treat illness. Please consult your doctor before making any changes or before starting ANY exercise or nutritional supplement program or before using this information or any product during pregnancy or if you have a serious medical condition.

By reading and using the suggestions in these materials, you take sole responsibility for the outcomes. AlkalineLifestyle.com makes no claims, guarantees, or warranties regarding the use or outcomes of these suggestions. Use this information at your own risk. No materials, including this course, can substitute for the advice of your doctor who knows your personal health history. Consult your doctor if you have any questions.



Let your spirit soar! Harness the power of mindfulness to make positive changes and live the alkaline lifestyle. Cultivate a peaceful, centered, calm mindset through mental and spiritual disciplines. Part of the alkaline lifestyle is maintaining an alkaline mental state or a positive mental state that fosters change, encourages creativity, and harnesses the power of positive, centered thinking. This book will start you on your way to changing your mindset and freeing your spirit. Let your spirit soar!

ISBN: 978-1-937343-02-6

5 0 7 9 7



\$7.97 US