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# INTRODUCTION

Meditation is a practice where science and mysticism meet. It has deep roots in history, spirituality, religion and culture, and it's rich in philosophy, ritual and tradition. It is also a practice deeply valued by modern science, with a growing body of peer-reviewed research proving the incredible benefits meditation has on all aspects of mental health and wellbeing.

In essence, meditation is a way of getting to know yourself more intimately, even through the simplest of practices. It is in stillness, quietly sitting with ourselves without distraction, that we get to know our inner world of thoughts, feelings and emotions. Through mindfulness and physical awareness, we are able to understand the language of the body and harmonise communication between mind, body and spirit. Through movement meditations and sound practices, we are able to enter trance-like states, transcending the mind and reaching deeper states of consciousness. As a meditation practice deepens, we become familiar with our spiritual essence. We might feel a deeper sense of connection with nature, energy and forces much bigger than ourselves. Through regular meditation practice, we become more of who we truly are.

There is no one way to practise meditation and no practice that is superior to another. Each brings with them unique traits, benefits, instructions and a set of possibilities. You can see this book as a box of chocolates, offering a taste of a number of meditation approaches. Some you'll enjoy more than others. Some you'll find helpful today, but by next year may be another will be more useful. Meditation always meets us where we are.

There are 52 meditations within this yearbook, one for every week of the year, separated into six different categories: spiritual connection, nature connection, mind-body-spirit, movement, true self and mindful living. Within each meditation, you'll find an introduction that outlines the history, the benefits and the intention of the practice. You will then find a 'how to', offering simple guidance to allow you to practise at home. Finally, there is a personal reflection from me, offering you an honest, raw and candid insight into my own experience of each meditation or my thoughts and reflections on the theme around it.

## How to use this book

You can work through this book in several ways. You might choose to systematically move through the book, reading and practising one meditation over the course of each week, for the duration of the year. You might choose to read through all the meditations in this book in one go, gobbling up the guidance, and from there deciding which meditation you would like to try first. You may wish to glance through the meditation titles and select a meditation that best suits your needs right now. Or you may choose to use it as a divination process, opening a page at random and letting the book decide what you need. Either way, let this journey be about playful curiosity and exploration. See each meditation as a path back home to yourself and your true nature, and be kind to yourself as you go.

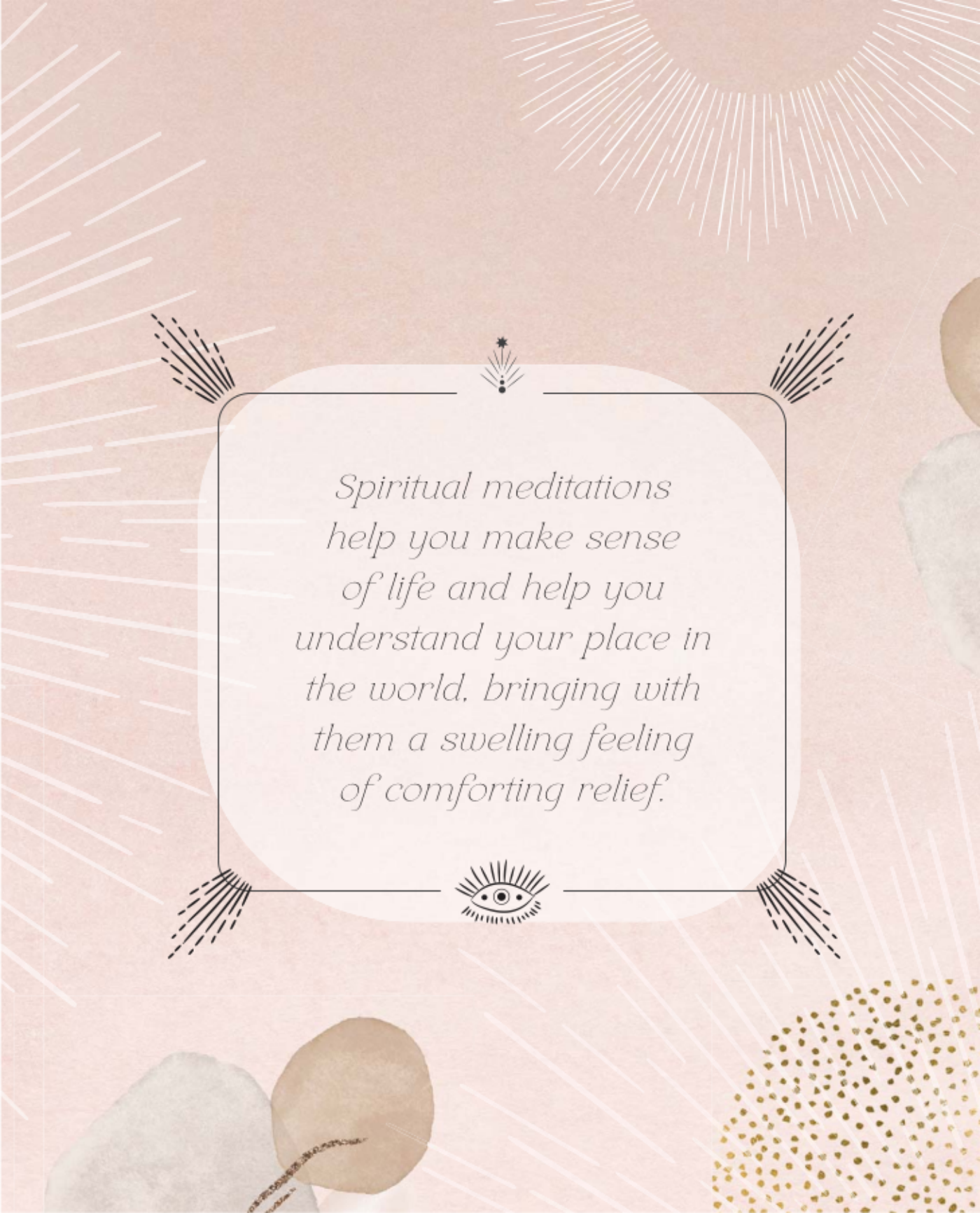




# AWAKEN

*Spiritual Connection Meditations*





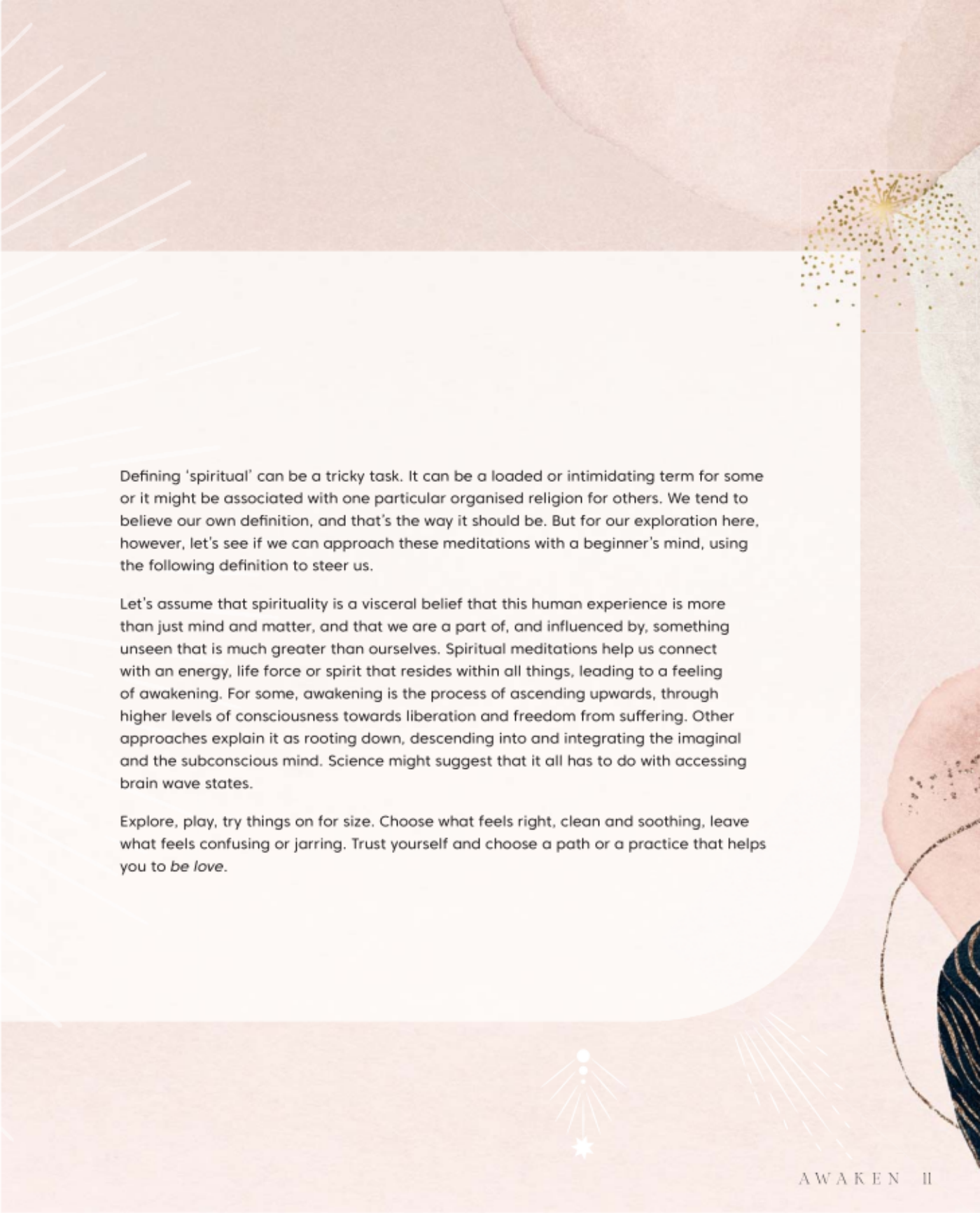
*Spiritual meditations  
help you make sense  
of life and help you  
understand your place in  
the world, bringing with  
them a swelling feeling  
of comforting relief.*



# The Meditations

Are you ready to dive deep and explore the wild and mystical realm of spiritual meditation? In this chapter, you will begin a transcendent journey, exploring otherworldly realms and your subconscious mind. You will train your focus, befriend the present moment, meet spirit guides, remember your true nature and recall lost wisdom, all to help awaken you to a divine energy that is always available to you, and is found within.

There is a growing number of people who identify as 'spiritual but not religious', perhaps you are one of them? Exploring and practising spiritual meditations such as Zen, Kundalini, Celtic and Shamanic practices doesn't require you to believe a certain way or pledge allegiance to a particular doctrine or religion. Giving yourself the freedom to explore various spiritual approaches, philosophies and practices, allows you to take what resonates and leave what doesn't. You may stumble across something that speaks to you on a profoundly deep level and decide to explore that particular path in greater depth. Spiritual meditations help you make sense of life and understand your place in the world, bringing with them a swelling feeling of comforting relief. Remembering that no one approach or practice is more effective, better or evolved than another is particularly important when exploring spirituality. Ultimately, all paths lead to the same destination.



Defining 'spiritual' can be a tricky task. It can be a loaded or intimidating term for some or it might be associated with one particular organised religion for others. We tend to believe our own definition, and that's the way it should be. But for our exploration here, however, let's see if we can approach these meditations with a beginner's mind, using the following definition to steer us.

Let's assume that spirituality is a visceral belief that this human experience is more than just mind and matter, and that we are a part of, and influenced by, something unseen that is much greater than ourselves. Spiritual meditations help us connect with an energy, life force or spirit that resides within all things, leading to a feeling of awakening. For some, awakening is the process of ascending upwards, through higher levels of consciousness towards liberation and freedom from suffering. Other approaches explain it as rooting down, descending into and integrating the imaginal and the subconscious mind. Science might suggest that it all has to do with accessing brain wave states.

Explore, play, try things on for size. Choose what feels right, clean and soothing, leave what feels confusing or jarring. Trust yourself and choose a path or a practice that helps you to *be love*.

# SHAMANIC MEDITATION

## *Journey Within*

The cross-cultural roots of Shamanism are so rich, it could be said they penetrate the whole globe: from Inuit tribes to Indonesia, from the Amazon to Australia, South America to Africa and ancient Britain to Siberia. Evidence of shamanic practices appears in all ancient cultures<sup>[1]</sup>, predating any organised religion. Although it is a lost way of life in many modern cultures, for many native cultures around the world, it is still an established cultural practice today.

Shamanism is a way of life, one that deeply honours the interconnection of us humans with nature, the mysteries of the spirit world and the power of the subconscious mind. Community-based rituals, rites of passage and ceremonies are vitally important in shamanism, while most shamanic philosophies and practices point towards self-healing. Sometimes referred to as a medicine woman or medicine man, a Shaman is a healer or guide who acts as a bridge or mediator between the spirit world (or the unconscious mind) and the physical world (the conscious mind).

Journeying is a shamanic meditation practice that engages the active imagination of the subconscious mind and the spiritual realm. A shamanic journey is a trance-like meditative state that often involves working with spirit guides, ancestors or nature, allowing you to go on an internal journey to return to wholeness, and to access your own inner wisdom. Although some shamanic cultures use psychedelic plant medicines in ceremonies to induce altered states, it is not always the case. Altered states of consciousness and trance-like states are often brought about by drumming, music, chanting or dancing.



**Benefits:** *Promotes emotional healing; processes experiences; shifts creative, emotional and physical blocks; clears stagnant energy; connects you with spirit guides*

**Key features:** *Working with the subconscious mind, allowing you to daydream, receive visions or meet spirit guides*

**Length:** *20 minutes to 1 hour*

**Frequency:** *Weekly/monthly*

**Tools:** *Smudging sage or other native herbs, a drum or drumming music, blanket and a timer*

**Best practised:** *With a guide (Shaman) to lead the journey in ceremony, but it can also be a self-led practise experienced at home*

It is in the meditative state when the mind becomes more creative and what is stored in the subconscious mind becomes more accessible. There is nothing you need to do to 'journey' but simply trust, let go and surrender into the lucid dream of the subconscious mind. Let images, visualisations and memories come and go without effort to control, reject or analyse them. Hand over control of the mind's grip and trust the stirrings of the subconscious mind, allowing your own inner wisdom to guide you. This grants permission for the magical realm of the subconscious to process emotions, experiences and memories. You might emerge feeling realigned, cleansed and whole.