

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

The Power of Meditation

A 28-Day Program for Real Happiness

Written by Sharon Salzberg

Published by Hay House

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

THE POWER OF MEDITATION

A 28-DAY PROGRAMME FOR REAL HAPPINESS

SHARON SALZBERG



HAY HOUSE

Australia • Canada • Hong Kong • India
South Africa • United Kingdom • United States

First published and distributed in the United States of America by:

Workman Publishing Company, Inc., 225 Varick Street, New York,
NY 10014-4381, USA. www.workman.com

First published and distributed in the United Kingdom by:

Hay House UK Ltd, 292B Kensal Rd, London W10 5BE. Tel.: (44) 20 8962 1230;
Fax: (44) 20 8962 1239. www.hayhouse.co.uk

Published and distributed in Australia by:

Hay House Australia Ltd, 18/36 Ralph St, Alexandria NSW 2015.
Tel.: (61) 2 9669 4299; Fax: (61) 2 9669 4144. www.hayhouse.com.au

Published and distributed in the Republic of South Africa by:

Hay House SA (Pty), Ltd, PO Box 990, Witkoppen 2068.
Tel./Fax: (27) 11 467 8904. www.hayhouse.co.za

Published and distributed in India by:

Hay House Publishers India, Muskaan Complex, Plot No.3, B-2, Vasant Kunj, New
Delhi – 110 070. Tel.: (91) 11 4176 1620; Fax: (91) 11 4176 1630.
www.hayhouse.co.in

Copyright © 2011 by Sharon Salzberg

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

Excerpt from “Escapist—Never” from the book, *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, edited
by Edward Connery Lathem. Copyright © 1969 by Henry Holt and Company.
Copyright © 1962 by Robert Frost.

Reprinted by arrangement with Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Excerpt from *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* by
Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. Bantam, 2010. Reprinted by permission of Random House.

Excerpts from “Keeping quiet” from *Extravagaria* by Pablo Neruda, translated
by Alastair Reid. Translation copyright © 1974 by Alastair Reid. Reprinted by
permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, LLC.

Design by Yin Ling Wong · Author photo: Liza Matthews · Illustrations: Phil
Conigliaro · Illustration (page 41): Judy Francis Zankel
· Mandala art: Clare Goodwin

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any mechanical,
photographic or electronic process, or in the form of a phonographic recording;
nor may it be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or otherwise be copied for
public or private use, other than for ‘fair use’ as brief quotations embodied in
articles and reviews, without prior written permission of the publisher.

The author of this book does not dispense medical advice or prescribe the use of
any technique as a form of treatment for physical or medical problems without the
advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The intent of the author is only
to offer information of a general nature to help you in your quest for emotional
and spiritual wellbeing. In the event you use any of the information in this book for
yourself, which is your constitutional right, the author and the publisher assume no
responsibility for your actions.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-8485-0499-8

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Mackays, Chatham ME5 8TD.

*To my teachers, who have
deeply realized the power of meditation,
and have always believed that I
(and all of us) could too.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



There are several people who supported the evolution of this book to whom I am very grateful. Amy Gross has always wanted a book like this and has long encouraged me to write one; Nancy Murray brought me to Workman and reminded me both of why I wanted to be a writer and came up with the approach that got me going; Suzie Bolotin kept the faith for a long time.

Rachel Mann collated research; Joan Oliver brought clarity out of the tangle of questions and answers I had recorded; Joy Harris has always guided me superbly, and Ambika Cooper offered help in a thousand different ways.

Judith Stone, whose work was invaluable, has been an essential part of this project, and Ruth Sullivan has been a wonderful and extremely patient editor.

May this book bring benefit and happiness to many.

CONTENTS



Introduction.....	1
-------------------	---

CHAPTER 1

What Is Meditation? (or, If You Can Breathe, You Can Meditate).....	7
--	---

ATTENTION, ATTENTION, ATTENTION * THE THREE
KEY SKILLS * WHAT MEDITATION ISN'T

CHAPTER 2

Why Meditate? The Benefits and Science of Meditation.....	18
--	----

THE PAYOFFS * WHAT NEUROSCIENCE HAS
SHOWN ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF MEDITATION
* KICKING OPEN THE DOOR

WEEK ONE

Concentration Breathing and the Art of Starting Over	35
---	----

GETTING READY: PLACE, TIME, AND POSTURE
* PRACTICE PREVIEW

 MEDITATION: BREATHING	46
MEDITATION: HEARING	51
MEDITATION: LETTING GO OF THOUGHTS	54
MEDITATION: MINI-MEDITATIONS THROUGHOUT THE DAY.....	56
FAQS	62
REFLECTIONS ON WEEK ONE * KEEP A SITTING JOURNAL * THE CHATTERING MIND * THE TAKEAWAY *	

WEEK TWO

Mindfulness and the Body

Letting Go of Burdens 77

PRACTICE PREVIEW

MEDITATION: BODY SCAN 84

CD MEDITATION: WALKING 86

MEDITATION: BODY SENSATIONS 92

MEDITATION: EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES 95

MEDITATION: DRINKING TEA 96

FAQS 101

REFLECTIONS ON WEEK TWO * THE TAKEAWAY

WEEK THREE

Mindfulness and Emotions

Dealing with Thoughts and Feelings 106

THE FIVE OBSTACLES * PRACTICE PREVIEW

CD MEDITATION: ON EMOTIONS 116

MEDITATION: CALLING UP DIFFICULT EMOTIONS 119

GENTLE NOTES ON MENTAL NOTING 120

MEDITATION: ON POSITIVE EMOTIONS 123

MEDITATION: ON THINKING 125

FAQS 131

REFLECTIONS ON WEEK THREE * NON-DOING

* THE TAKEAWAY

WEEK FOUR

Lovingkindness

Cultivating Compassion and True Happiness 144

PRACTICE PREVIEW

CD MEDITATION: LOVINGKINDNESS 153

MEDITATION: LOVINGKINDNESS FOR TIMES

OF EMOTIONAL OR PHYSICAL PAIN 155

MEDITATION: LOVINGKINDNESS FOR CAREGIVERS 159

MEDITATION: ON SEEING THE GOOD WITHIN	161
MEDITATION: QUIETING THE INNER CRITIC	163
MEDITATION: LOVINGKINDNESS WHILE WALKING.....	164
MEDITATION: CIRCLE OF LOVINGKINDNESS	165
FAQS	169
REFLECTIONS ON WEEK FOUR * THE TAKEAWAY	
* 10 WAYS TO DEEPEN YOUR PRACTICE	

THE WEEKS BEYOND

Keeping the Practice Going “Just Put Your Body There”	181
--	-----

START OVER * REMEMBER THAT CHANGE TAKES TIME
 * USE ORDINARY MOMENTS * YOUR LIFE AND YOUR
 PRACTICE * FAQs * FINAL REFLECTIONS

Resource Guide	200
----------------------	-----

PLACES TO LEARN INSIGHT MEDITATION AND
 FIND SUPPLIES * NOTES

About the Author	209
------------------------	-----

The CD: Guided Meditations	210
----------------------------------	-----

Introduction



BEN STARTED MEDITATING when he was an army reservist on active duty in Iraq. I became his teacher via e-mail. He told me that he felt meditation would help him deal with the stress and trauma that he faced every day and stay true to his deepest values.

Sarah wanted to be a good stepmother. She thought learning to meditate would help her listen more patiently and better negotiate the complex relationships in her newly blended family.

Diane took a meditation class I taught at the large media company where she's a division manager. She was seeking more balance between her work life and her home life, she said, and a way to communicate with colleagues clearly and calmly no matter how crazy things got at the office.

Jerry is a firefighter dealing with the aftermath of being a first responder at the World Trade Center on 9/11. Elena needed to concentrate on studying for her real estate licensing exam. Rosie hoped to cope better with chronic back pain. Lisa, the owner of a small catering company, told me that she wanted to stop feeling as if she were sleepwalking most of the time. “I’m on automatic pilot, disconnected from myself,” she said. “I’m so worried about the things on my to-do list, or about the future, that I’m totally missing my present. I feel as if I’m living my life behind my own back.”

I’ve changed the names of some of my students and some identifying details, but their motivations are real, and so are the many ways that the practice of meditation has improved their lives.

For thirty-six years, I’ve taught meditation to thousands of people, at the Insight Meditation Society retreat center in Barre, Massachusetts, which I cofounded in 1975, and at schools, corporations, government agencies, and community centers all over the world. I’ve introduced the techniques you’re about to encounter to groups of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, schoolteachers, police officers, athletes, teenagers, army chaplains and medics, doctors, nurses, burn patients, prisoners, frontline workers in domestic violence shelters, new moms and dads. My students come from every walk of life, ethnic background, and belief tradition.

And they’re part of a national trend: A 2007 survey (the most recent data available) by the National Center for Health Statistics showed that more than twenty million Americans had

practiced meditation in the previous twelve months. They did so, they told researchers, to improve their overall wellness; for help with stress, anxiety, pain, depression, or insomnia; and to deal with the symptoms and emotional strain of chronic illness such as heart disease and cancer.

People also turn to meditation, I've found, because they want to make good decisions, break bad habits, and bounce back better from disappointments. They want to feel closer to their families and friends; more at home and at ease in their own bodies and minds; or part of something larger than themselves. They turn to meditation because human lives are full of real, potential, and imagined hazards, and they want to feel safer, more confident, calmer, wiser. Beneath these varied motivations lie the essential truths that we're all alike in wanting to be happy and in our vulnerability to pain and unpredictable, continual change.

Again and again I've seen novice meditators begin to transform their lives—even if they were initially resistant or skeptical. As I've learned through my own experience, meditation helps us to find greater tranquility, connect to our feelings, find a sense of wholeness, strengthen our relationships, and face our fears. That's what happened to me.

I started meditating in 1971, as an eighteen-year-old college student spending my junior year studying in India. I was looking for practical tools to ease the misery and confusion that I felt every day, the residue of a painful and chaotic childhood. My father left when I was four; my mother died when I was nine, and I went to live with my grandparents. When I was

eleven, my grandfather died and my father briefly returned, until a suicide attempt spun him away into the mental health system, from which he never emerged.

By the time I left for college, I'd lived in five different household configurations, each change precipitated by loss. I felt abandoned over and over again. The people who raised me were caring, but they were unable to speak openly about the things that had happened to me. I came to feel that I didn't deserve much in life. I held my immense grief, anger, and confusion inside, fortifying my deep conviction that I was unworthy of love. I wanted with all my heart to find a sense of belonging, a steady source of love and comfort.

At sixteen, I entered the State University of New York at Buffalo. During my second year I learned about Buddhism in a course on Asian philosophy. I was attracted to its unashamed, unafraid acknowledgment of the suffering in life. That eased my sense of isolation: I wasn't the only one in pain! The Buddha, a prince turned spiritual teacher born in India about 563 B.C., wrote: "You could search the whole world over and never find anyone as deserving of your love as yourself." Not only did the Buddha say that love for oneself is possible, but he also described this capacity as something we *must* nurture, since it's the foundation for being able to love and care for others. This philosophy offered me a way to ease the suffering caused by my feelings of confusion and despair. Despite some doubts, the chance of a move from self-hatred to self-love drew me like a magnet. I wasn't interested in acquiring a new religion; I just wanted relief from so much unhappiness.

And so I went to India for an independent study program. When I got there, I heard about a respected teacher who was leading a meditation retreat for beginners and others. I was a bit disappointed to discover that meditation wasn't as exotic as I'd expected—there were no mystical instructions delivered in a darkened chamber with a supernatural aura. Instead that first instructor launched my practice with the words, “Sit comfortably, and feel your breath.” *Feel my breath?* I thought in protest. *I could have stayed in Buffalo to feel my breath!* But I soon found out just how life-changing it would be simply to focus my attention on inhaling and exhaling in order to connect fully with my experience in a whole new way, one that allowed me to be kinder to myself and more open to others.

Once I learned how to look deep within, I found the bright vein of goodness that exists in everyone, including me—the goodness that may be hidden and hard to trust but is never entirely destroyed. I came to believe wholeheartedly that I deserve to be happy, and so does everyone else. Now when I meet a stranger, I feel more connected, knowing how much we share. And when I meet myself in meditation, I no longer feel I'm encountering a stranger.

Because of meditation, I've undergone profound and subtle shifts in the way I think and how I see myself in the world. I've learned that I don't have to be limited to who I thought I was when I was a child or what I thought I was capable of yesterday, or even an hour ago. My meditation practice has freed me from the old, conditioned definition of myself as someone unworthy of love. Despite my initial fantasies when

I began meditating as a college student, I haven't entered a steady state of glorious bliss. Meditation has made me happy, loving, and peaceful—but not every single moment of the day. I still have good times and bad, joy and sorrow. Now I can accept setbacks more easily, with less sense of disappointment and personal failure, because meditation has taught me how to cope with the profound truth that everything changes all the time.

What Is Meditation?

**(OR, IF YOU CAN BREATHE,
YOU CAN MEDITATE)**



STRAIGHTFORWARD AND SIMPLE (but not easy), meditation is essentially training our attention so that we can be more aware—not only of our own inner workings but also of what’s happening around us in the here and now. Once we see clearly what’s going on in the moment, we can then choose whether and how to act on what we’re seeing.

For the next four weeks, we’ll be exploring the principles of insight meditation, the simple and direct practice of moment-to-moment awareness. We first train our attention by focusing on a single chosen object (most often our breath) and repeatedly letting go of distractions in order to return our attention to that object. Later we broaden the focus to

include whatever thoughts, feelings, or sensations arise in the moment.

People have been transforming their minds through meditation for thousands of years. Every major world religion includes some form of contemplative exercise, though today meditation is often practiced apart from any belief system. Depending on the type, meditation may be done in silence and stillness, by using voice and sound, or by engaging the body in movement. All forms emphasize the training of attention.

ATTENTION, ATTENTION, ATTENTION!



“My experience is what I agree to attend to,” the pioneering psychologist William James wrote at the turn of the twentieth century. “Only those items I notice shape my mind.” At its most basic level, attention—what we allow ourselves to notice—literally determines how we experience and navigate the world. The ability to summon and sustain attention is what allows us to job hunt, juggle, learn math, make pancakes, aim a cue and pocket the eight ball, protect our kids, and perform surgery. It lets us be discerning in our dealings with the world, responsive in our intimate relationships, and honest when we examine our own feelings and motives. Attention determines our degree of intimacy with our ordinary experiences and contours our entire sense of connection to life.

The content and quality of our lives depend on our level of awareness—a fact we are often not aware of. You may have heard the old story, usually attributed to a Native American elder, meant to illuminate the power of attention. A grandfather (occasionally it's a grandmother) imparting a life lesson to his grandson tells him, "I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is vengeful, fearful, envious, resentful, deceitful. The other wolf is loving, compassionate, generous, truthful, and serene." The grandson asks which wolf will win the fight. The grandfather answers, "The one I feed."

But that's only part of the picture. True, whatever gets our attention flourishes, so if we lavish attention on the negative and inconsequential, they can overwhelm the positive and the meaningful. But if we do the opposite, refusing to deal with or acknowledge what's difficult and painful, pretending it doesn't exist, then our world is out of whack. Whatever doesn't get our attention withers—or retreats below conscious awareness, where it may still affect our lives. In a perverse way, ignoring the painful and the difficult is just another way of feeding the wolf. Meditation teaches us to open our attention to all of human experience and all parts of ourselves.

I'm sure you know the feeling of having your attention fractured by job and family, the enticement of electronic diversions, or the chatter of your mind—that morning's spat with your mate replaying in your head, a litany of worries about the future or regrets about the past, a nervous endless-loop recitation of the day's to-do list. Parts of that mental

soundtrack may be old tapes that were instilled in childhood and have been playing so long we've nearly tuned them out of conscious awareness. These might be unkind pronouncements about the kind of person we are or preconceptions and assumptions about how the world works (for example: *Good girls don't act like that, men/women can't be trusted, you've got to look out for number one*).

We may no longer even notice the messages we're sending ourselves, just the anxiety that lingers in their wake. These habitual responses are often the result of a lifetime's conditioning—the earliest lessons from our parents and our culture, both explicit teaching and nonverbal cues.

This diffusion of attention can be mildly discomfiting, creating a vague sense of being uncentered or never quite there. It can be disheartening, leaving you exhausted from being dragged around by your jumpy, scattered thoughts; it can be downright dangerous (think of what can happen to distracted drivers). We can be lethally asleep at the wheel in other ways, too, neglecting relationships or failing to notice and act on what's really important to us. We miss a great deal because our attention is distracted or because we're so sure that we already know what's going on that we don't even look for new, important information.

Meditation teaches us to focus and to pay clear attention to our experiences and responses as they arise, and to observe them without judging them. That allows us to detect harmful habits of mind that were previously invisible to us. For example, we may sometimes base our actions on unexamined ideas (*I*

What Is Meditation?

don't deserve love, you just can't reason with people, I'm not capable of dealing with tough situations) that keep us stuck in unproductive patterns. Once we notice these reflexive responses and how they undermine our ability to pay attention to the present moment, then we can make better, more informed choices. And we can respond to others more compassionately and authentically, in a more creative way.