

hamlyn

meditation solutions



Guided meditations for health
and peace of mind

Paul Roland

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for health and peace of mind

This book is affectionately dedicated to
Noreen Emmans, counsellor, teacher and
friend, for generously sharing her insights
into the human condition.

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Disclaimer

The meditation and visualization exercises included in this book
are designed for relaxation and for developing self-awareness.
However, anyone who has emotional or mental problems, or
who has had problems of this nature in the past, should seek
professional medical advice before attempting any of these
exercises. The author and the publisher accept no
responsibility for any harm caused by or to anyone as a result
of the misuse of these exercises.

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Introduction

This book is not just another course describing the many benefits and techniques of meditation, but a menu consisting of over 100 original exercises for exploring, understanding and improving specific aspects of mind, body and spirit. The exercises employ both visualizations and affirmations. In the first, the imagination is used to imprint an image on the unconscious, and, in the second, positive assertions are imprinted while in the meditative state. It is aimed at people with busy, stressful lives who are looking for an effective method of relaxation, and also for those who wish to develop their self-awareness. The meditations should take between 10 and 30 minutes – 10 for the basic ones, 20 for the average, and 30 for the most complex. It is not advisable to spend more than 30 minutes each day in meditation, otherwise you risk becoming a 'bliss junkie', ignoring your responsibilities and putting your relationships at risk.



What is meditation?

Whenever we become completely absorbed in an activity involving either physical effort or passive contemplation, we enter an altered state of consciousness similar to that sought in meditation. Yet, at such times, the sense of detachment and heightened concentration is not sustained for long enough to produce a lasting effect. Meditation is the process of deliberately entering this altered state. When practised on a regular basis for 10–20 minutes a day, it can have a profound effect on our mental and emotional well-being, as well as improving and maintaining our physical health.

Meditation has been proven to have a significant therapeutic effect on certain physical and mental conditions. Its potential for enhancing self-awareness and promoting personal growth, however, is limitless. In its more advanced forms, it can help alter one's state of awareness, from the self-centred perspective of the physical world through an exploration of the symbolic landscape of the psyche to an acute awareness of the greater reality of which we are all a part.

Waking consciousness

This is our normal, everyday awareness of the physical dimension, the point from which we start a meditation and to which we return at the end, usually by counting down from ten to one. It may also be necessary to stamp our feet in order to 'ground' ourselves properly in the physical world.

What this book covers

The first section, Health and Healing, begins with basic breath control, mindfulness and visualization exercises for increasing body awareness, conserving energy, healing, revitalizing and deep relaxation. Then it goes deeper, describing more advanced techniques for self-diagnosis of the most common physical ailments, simple visualizations for pain relief and a script for self-hypnosis to alleviate psychosomatic symptoms and sleep disorders.

The second section, Emotions, includes exercises for overcoming nerves, getting a grip on fears and phobias, coming to terms with loss and channelling anger and hostility into creative energy. It concludes with several tried and tested techniques for improving relationships and letting go of emotional ties. These exercises suggest that if we illuminate our shadow self and face our fears we will become more authentic, complete and mature individuals, in control of our lives rather than at the mercy of circumstances.

The third section, Mind Matters, describes various visualizations for stress relief, increasing self-awareness, strengthening self-confidence, creating abundance, dispelling depression, dealing with addiction and resolving issues such as guilt, negative conditioning and forgiveness. The more you work with these techniques the more you will feel in control of your own life and the more confident you will become in being able to resolve your own issues.

The fourth section, Soul Searching, reveals the potential of meditation for probing the depths of the unconscious and seeking guidance from the Higher Self. It also includes visualizations for creating an inner sanctuary, exploring the symbolic landscape of the psyche and empowering the various complementary aspects of the personality, before offering a glimpse of the greater reality that will ultimately lead to enlightenment.

'The life which is
unexamined is
not worth living.'

Plato
Dialogues

1 Health and healing



Basic breath control for conserving energy

We tend to think of breathing as an automatic function that does not require any thought or conscious control, but the manner in which we breathe can determine our emotional response to stressful situations, our energy levels and even our general health. When we sleep or enter into a state of deep relaxation we drop down a gear, so to speak, breathing from the diaphragm, the muscular membrane that lies between the chest and abdominal cavities. When we are active, however, we take shallow breaths from the chest, which restricts the flow of oxygen to the lungs, creating a sense of anxiety and tension and also inhibiting the release of toxins which can poison the system. The following exercises will help you become aware of how you are breathing.

Breathing from the diaphragm

Lie on your back with one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.

Inhale while pushing your stomach out and exhale while drawing your stomach in. The hand that is on your chest should remain still. Breathing in this way automatically creates a sense of tranquillity and makes it difficult to indulge in negative emotions associated with a tension in the chest.

Now remove the hand from your stomach and breathe from your chest. Does this remind you of the way you feel when you are stressed or nervous?

feel the essence of your being expanding to fill the room . . .

'Whatever you
can do, or dream
you can, begin it.
Boldness has
genius, magic
and power in it.
Begin it now.'

Goethe

Breathing in the universal life force

This technique is simple but surprisingly effective. Sit with your back straight and take a deep breath from the diaphragm, as you did before, but this time draw the air from your diaphragm up into your chest and then further up into your lungs.

Establish a regular rhythm of breathing in and out, which should be slightly deeper than the way you breathe naturally, but it should never be laboured. You could try using a counting system (see page 49).



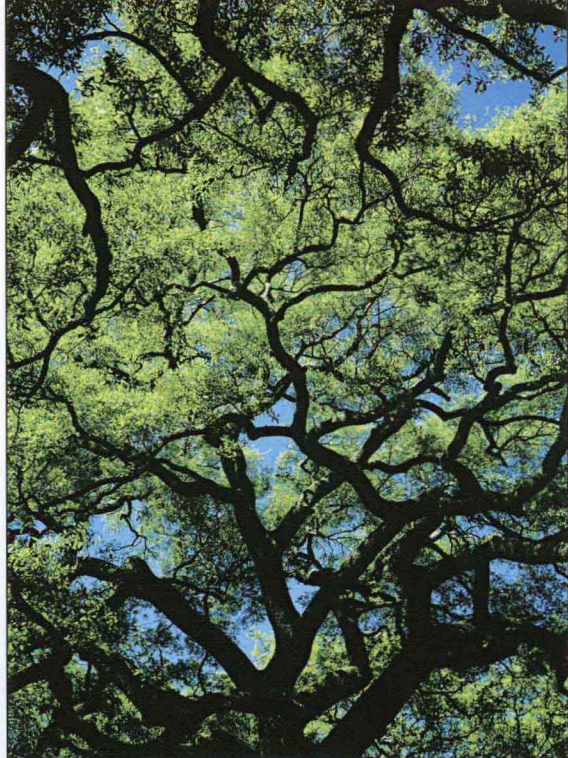
As you breathe in, imagine that you are inhaling the universal life force (see page 123) in the form of a radiant white light. Know that there is no limit to how much of this vital energy you can consume. It permeates your skin, your muscles and even your bones, saturating and revitalizing every cell of your being.

You now radiate energy like a sun. Feel the essence of your being expanding to fill the room with light as this infusion of energy stimulates the chakras (see page 16), which are the vortices of etheric energy at key points in the body. As these vortices spin, they release etheric energy which can be visualized as coloured light radiating outwards to form the aura, a multicoloured corona of light around the body. Keep this image in your mind for as long as you can, and enjoy the sense of unlimited energy that it creates.

When you are ready, close down and seal the energy within by running your hands from the crown of your head to your toes as if smoothing the energy field that now surrounds you. When you feel ready to return to waking consciousness, open your eyes and stamp your feet to ground yourself in the physical world.

Grounding meditation

One of the few possible negative 'side-effects' of meditation is that its pleasant sense of detachment can become addictive. For this reason, it is advisable for beginners to limit their exercises to between 20 and 30 minutes and include a grounding visualization such as the one described here, three to four times a week, to keep in contact with the physical world.



feel the power and majesty of the oak . . .

Preparation

I have set this visualization on a warm summer's afternoon, but you can vary the setting to another season or time of day if you wish. Such minor details can have a subtle but profound effect on the unconscious, altering the quality and nature of the experience. For example, you might find that imagining a moonlit autumn scene brings a greater sense of serenity and peace of mind, which might be beneficial if you are doing the exercise before going to sleep, whereas a crisp winter morning scene might prove more invigorating and therefore ideal for starting your day. In contrast, a spring scene can encourage a more positive outlook and prove fertile ground for new ideas, while summer helps to create an atmosphere of deep relaxation.

Make yourself comfortable in a straight-backed chair or armchair and begin by focusing on the breath.

Using your imagination

Relax into this visualization by imagining that you are seated on a soft grassy mound overlooking an unspoilt view of rolling hills and fields. Your back rests against the trunk of a massive oak tree, whose leaves shade you from the warmth of the sun. Snuggle into the trunk, which supports you, and begin to get a sense of the size and strength of this imposing oak.

As you drift into deeper relaxation, you lose your sense of self and become as one with this living manifestation of nature.

Visualize your legs intertwining with the enormous roots stretching deep into the earth, securing the trunk to the ground. Know that no storm could tear it from the soil. It has stood firm for a century and will stand for many more, drawing strength from deep within the earth, as you do now.

Now imagine stretching your arms to the sky, and see these too becoming blurred as they merge with the branches that are reaching heavenward.

Feel the power and majesty of the oak stretching towards the sun, and drawing the power of sunlight down to feed the leaves which rustle gently in the breeze. Soak up the sunlight into every cell of your being, and sense it melting into the energy you are drawing up from the earth. Feel the power, strength and security that being a channel for the celestial and terrestrial forces gives you.

When you are ready, sense the weight of your body resting against the trunk of the tree, and then return to waking consciousness by counting slowly down from ten to one.

After opening your eyes, stamp your feet to reaffirm your contact with the physical world.

'Your body is the
ground and
metaphor of your
life, the
expression of
your existence
... in the
marriage of flesh
and spirit divorce
is impossible.'

Gabrielle Roth

... soak up the sunlight into every cell of your being

Deep relaxation

When practising visualizations, it is usually enough to make yourself comfortable, closing your eyes and focusing on the breath, knowing that the body will relax as your conscious mind becomes detached from the physical world. If, however, you need deep physical relaxation to alleviate stress or physical ailments, you will have to become more in tune with your body and acutely aware of the mind's capacity for transferring tension to parts of the body.



Bodyscanning

This is a good exercise to do both in bed at night before drifting off to sleep and first thing in the morning to tone you up for the day. It should be performed lying down with your arms loose by your sides and your feet slightly apart. Alternatively, if you think there might be an emotional blockage to be dissolved, cup your hands together beneath the navel to focus energy at the solar plexus.

When you are relaxed and breathing in a regular rhythm, focus your attention on your toes. Do not just *think* about your toes, but try to shift your whole awareness to that area of your body.

This projection of consciousness is one of the most difficult disciplines to master, but it is also one of the most important. It will help you to target a particular area of the body more effectively when you are healing yourself or another person, and you will also find it easier to let go of many negative thoughts that might otherwise manifest as the physical symptoms of dis-ease (a state of imbalance in the psyche).

visualize yourself giving a perfect performance . . .

'If you don't take
care of your
body, where will
you live?'

Anonymous

Now curl your toes and hold that position for a moment before relaxing.

Continue this systematic tensing and relaxing technique all the way up your body, paying particular attention to your lower back, shoulders and face. Take your time and be thorough in giving your full attention to every muscle that can be moved.

Tensing each part in this way acknowledges the subtle stresses in the body of which we are often unconscious, but which combine to put a serious and sustained strain on our system.

Visualization

This exercise is very simple, but you should make it last at least ten minutes to get the full benefit and to impress the imagery on the unconscious.

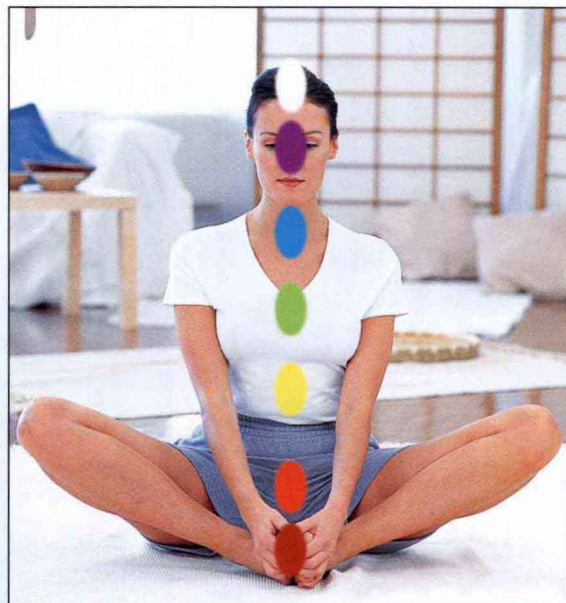
Make yourself comfortable and become aware of the weight and warmth of your body. Imagine yourself at the centre of this highly complex human creature that is strong and agile.

Now visualize yourself performing your daily tasks or something that you wish to improve upon, such as playing sport or practising a musical instrument. Observe your body movements, noting your posture and any unnecessary strain that could be inhibiting your performance.

Then visualize yourself giving a perfect performance and sense the pride and pleasure this gives you. Imprint this image on your body consciousness by imagining that you are filming the performance for posterity and tell yourself that this is how it should be done and that you will do it this way, effortlessly, every time from now on.

Increasing body awareness

An increasing number of people in the west are beginning to accept a concept shared by many esoteric traditions and the eastern philosophies, which envisage the physical body as an external shell within which is a second form of finer matter commonly known as the etheric, emotional or astral body. This matrix of energy forms the framework for its physical counterpart, animating the skeletal structure and muscles so that our essence – pure consciousness – can operate in and experience the physical world. This exercise is designed to heighten your awareness of this multidimensional aspect of your being and to introduce the chakras – the key energy centres.



The body of energy

When you have established a regular rhythm of breathing, externalize your point of view by visualizing yourself, sitting in a chair or lying down, from the other side of the room. As you observe your body from this objective perspective, see it being gradually drained of colour and substance, leaving your body looking like a glass mannequin.

Standing outside this transparent figure, you observe the seven vortices of energy spinning at the Crown Chakra above the head, the Brow or Third Eye Chakra in the middle of the forehead, the Throat Chakra, the Heart Chakra in the middle of the chest, the Solar Plexus Chakra at the stomach, the Sacral Chakra just below the navel, and the Root Chakra at the base of the spine. Each chakra