

“In a hands-on style, this book effectively cuts through
common obstacles to the practice.”

—Sharon Salzberg, author of *New York Times* best seller *Real Happiness*



Mindfulness Meditation Made Simple

Your Guide to Finding True Inner Peace



The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice

Foreword by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana
best-selling author of *Mindfulness in Plain English*

Charles A. Francis



INTRODUCTION

*Greater than the tread of mighty armies
is an idea whose time has come.*

~ VICTOR HUGO

Chapter Highlights

- Why All the Confusion?
- What Is Mindfulness Meditation?
- Why Practice Mindfulness Meditation?
- The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice
- How to Use This Book
- How to Stay Focused and Committed to Your Practice
- The Courage to Change
- Exercises for Getting Started

WE ARE AT A CRITICAL POINT in history, where two opposing trends are influencing the direction of mankind, trends that will determine the course of evolution in human consciousness. On the one hand, people are caught up in an ever increasing fast-paced life, fueled by advances in technology designed to help make their lives easier, and more meaningful. And on the other hand, some are on a spiritual quest to help them find relief from the pressures of daily life, and to understand the true nature of their existence. Both trends are intended to bring order out of chaos, but while some are searching for happiness, others are in search of true inner peace.

Over the last few years, interest in mindfulness meditation has surged. Almost every week, I hear about innovative ways people are using the practice in everyday life, not just to deal with physical and psychological problems, but also to help them reach their highest potential.

Mindfulness meditation is becoming so widely accepted that it is now being taught in schools, corporations, and in government. Even celebrities, such as Oprah Winfrey and Arianna Huffington, are promoting the practice. All indications are that this trend is only going to continue. We are in the midst of a revolution—the Mindfulness Revolution.

One of the reasons mindfulness meditation has become so popular is that scientists have been conducting a tremendous amount of research on the practice. They are confirming the benefits that practitioners have advocated for many years, and they're continuing to make breakthroughs every day.

Researchers have discovered that mindfulness meditation helps people overcome many health problems, such as stress, high blood pressure, heart disease, substance abuse, depression, PTSD, and much more. It even slows the aging process, and helps people prevent chronic illnesses, which cost millions of dollars in health care—not to mention all the pain

and suffering. This is particularly relevant in a time when health care costs are spiraling out of control.

Researchers have also found that the practice helps people enhance their mental capabilities, such as abstract thinking, memory, and creativity. It even helps people improve their leadership and social skills. Organizations are now including mindfulness training in their leadership training programs, as well as their health and wellness programs. This will create a new generation of more mindful leaders in both the public and private sectors.

Recent studies have shown that mindfulness meditation improves workplace productivity, in addition to lowering health care costs. This is good news for private organizations that want to increase profitability, while at the same time being responsible stewards of their community and the environment. It is also good news for public organizations that want to increase government efficiency, and make better use of taxpayer dollars.

Mindfulness meditation has been around for over 2,500 years, and it has proven itself in the lives of millions of people as an effective vehicle for achieving freedom from their suffering, and realizing true inner peace. However, it has been only recently that Westerners have become interested in the practice. Today, conditions are just right for the practice to become widely accepted in the West:

- **Changes in the social and political environment.** During the Cold War, there was a great deal of mistrust between Eastern and Western societies. The end of the Cold War has enabled more interaction between these cultures.
- **Advances in communication technology.** The rise of the Internet and other communication technologies have made communication between cultures much easier.
- **Prominent figures active in diffusing the practice.** Most notably, the Dalai Lama and Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh

have been quite active in engaging the West. Interestingly, much of the Dalai Lama's interaction has been with the scientific community, to encourage scientists to conduct research on the practice.

- **Compatibility with Western values.** Since mindfulness meditation is a practice, and not a religion, practitioners don't have to abandon their current spiritual faith in order to avail themselves of the benefits of the practice.
- **Effectiveness of the practice.** Mindfulness meditation is proving to be extremely effective for all-around personal development, as well as health improvement. Practitioners are finding that the practice enables them to function at optimal levels physically, mentally, and emotionally.

There is also a growing trend toward non-religious forms of spirituality. In recent years, we've seen a growing number of Americans identifying themselves as spiritual but not religious. Many of them are no longer satisfied with accepting a predetermined spiritual doctrine, and want to search for the truth for themselves. Mindfulness meditation is an ideal alternative for these spiritual seekers.

While it is encouraging that more people are interested in mindfulness meditation, there is still a great deal of confusion about the practice. Meditation is a foreign concept to many people, and there are many misconceptions about it, so beginners are often unsure about how to get started in their practice.

Unless you have a straightforward manner of learning the practice, it will take you several years to learn effective meditation techniques, and make significant progress in your spiritual development. This is one of the main reasons why many people simply give up before they realize any results. I learned the hard way, but you don't have to.

Meditation isn't as complicated as you might think, and this book presents the mindfulness meditation practice in a manner that is easy

to understand, so you can implement the techniques and begin making noticeable progress immediately. I have developed an easy-to-follow twelve-step approach to learning mindfulness meditation that will give you a solid foundation of the practice as quickly as possible. This new approach will save you years of effort trying to figure it out on your own, like I did. You'll see for yourself that it's a myth that it takes years of meditation to find inner peace.

While there are indeed many benefits to the practice, the Buddha's original goal was to put an end to human suffering. Through mindful leadership, we can help others achieve freedom from their suffering. But in order for us to be effective, we must be an example for others to follow. Therefore, the primary focus of this book will be on how to achieve freedom from our own suffering through personal transformation. We'll begin by examining some of the common problems people encounter early in their meditation practice.

Why All the Confusion?

I had such a hard time learning how to meditate when I first started. Each time I asked someone how to do it, I got a different answer, and a vague one at that. I was confused for a long time, but didn't want to admit it. Years later, I realized that I wasn't the only one having a hard time.

The main reason for the confusion about meditation is that there are many different forms of meditation, and too many choices lead to confusion. When confronted with too many choices, we either try as many as we can, or none at all. Either way, we get nowhere.

If we're always trying different forms of meditation, we never become proficient with any of them. It's like trying to learn to play a different musical instrument every week. You'll never learn to play music that way, so why would you expect to learn how to meditate using the same approach? Doesn't it make more sense to choose a well-established form of meditation, and practice it until you become proficient with it? Then you'll have a basis for evaluating other forms.

What Is Mindfulness Meditation?

Mindfulness meditation is a secular form of meditation that has its roots in Vipassana, the oldest form of meditation the Buddha originally taught over 2,500 years ago. The main goal is to attain freedom from suffering. You see, our suffering is the result of our unwholesome emotions, thoughts, and actions, which are triggered by our inaccurate views of the world and ourselves. Through mindfulness meditation, we can develop greater awareness, or mindfulness, which will enable us to make better decisions in our life. In other words, mindfulness meditation is the practice that leads to the development of mindfulness.

“We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves.”

~ DALAI LAMA

When we were growing up, many of us learned that to achieve happiness, we had to indulge in pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant emotions—sometimes at any cost—and that cost was often at other people's expense. So we often ended up compromising the harmony within ourselves, and with the people around us.

Our cultures usually tell us how to find happiness. In Western societies, we learn to find happiness and fulfillment through a successful career, marriage, children, and material belongings. This is the American dream. So we spend our whole lives chasing after these things, and some of them do bring us joy, such as our spouse and our children. But there are a couple of problems with depending on these things to bring us happiness:

We have no control over things outside of us. Many of the sources of our happiness are outside of us and beyond our control, and we often have difficulty accepting this fact. So when we don't get our way, we sometimes become angry and frightened. Then we become controlling and manipulative in order to keep from losing our cherished possessions. We can also become overwhelmed and stressed out when it seems like we're losing control.

All things are impermanent. Many of us have the illusion that we'll live happily ever after, once we get all the things we want. We think that our lives will then be complete. But when we finally reach that point, we begin to worry about them slipping away. Do you ever worry about losing your job, your wealth, or your good health? Sure you do. We worry because life has an uncanny way of forcing the truth on us—that all of these things are impermanent.

Just as an athlete trains his body, a meditator trains his mind.

So how can we find happiness when all the things we cherish will one day be gone? The answer is to look for happiness within ourselves. By looking within, we'll begin to see that we're much more than we think. We'll see that we're connected with a consciousness much greater than our own. In other words, we're not alone in this world—and this is a tremendous comfort.

With mindfulness meditation, you'll develop an awareness of the true nature of reality. By observing what is happening within your mind, body, and the world around you, you'll begin to lift the veil of illusion that creates the suffering in your life. This is essentially what a spiritual awakening is.

The foundation of your practice will be the development of concentration and mindfulness. These are your primary tools of observation. By developing them, you'll be able to look deeply into the true nature of reality. The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice outlined in this book will guide you through the process step-by-step.

Why Practice Mindfulness Meditation?

As I mentioned above, the ultimate goal of practicing mindfulness meditation is to attain freedom from our suffering, or inner peace. Now that may sound rather abstract, so it might be a good idea to talk about how your life will change through the practice.

Probably the best way to illustrate what mindfulness meditation

can do for you is to share my own experience with the practice. When I was in my early 20s, I was a very frightened young man. I was afraid of just about everyone and everything.

I was afraid to talk to people because my self-esteem was so low that I couldn't see why people would waste their time talking to me. I felt I had nothing to offer them. I thought I was dull and uninteresting. The sad irony was that I probably was. As a result, I was unable to form meaningful relationships.

I started on a spiritual path by reading books about spirituality, and getting involved in different groups where we'd talk about applying spiritual principles to our lives. Some of the people in the groups practiced meditation, but I had no idea what it was about, or how to practice it. I intuitively discovered that I could relieve stress by going to the park and sitting quietly and contemplating the things that were happening in my life. This also helped me stay motivated in following a spiritual path.

After about 11 years of practicing this way, I felt like I needed something more. I had always been skeptical about the existence of a Supreme Being, but I was caught in the difficult position of wanting to attain a higher level of spirituality and not knowing how to reach it. Many of the people I was practicing with eventually reached a plateau, and most of them were content with it. But, I wasn't.

One spring day in 1996, as I sat quietly at my desk at home contemplating the direction of my life, I slipped into what seemed like an altered state of consciousness. I had the distinct feeling that time had come to a complete stop, and I was seeing the essence of who I really was.

When I came back to normal consciousness, everything looked surreal and I felt an incredible peace that I had never felt before, as if all my troubles had simply vanished. Suddenly, I could see everything clearly. My entire life now made complete sense. I realized that even though I felt lost much of my life, I was never lost at all. Instead, all my pain and suffering had served an important purpose. The confusion was gone.

I also felt wide awake, as if I had been asleep my whole life. I now had an awareness, or a sense, that I didn't have before. I began to understand the true nature of my suffering, especially how deeply it penetrated my psyche.

I realized that the root cause of my suffering had been just plain ignorance, or unmindfulness. Since I didn't understand how the world worked, I unknowingly created my own suffering by making poor decisions. But now, with my ability to see more clearly, it became possible to overcome my suffering. Then it became apparent that the way I had found this inner peace was by following a spiritual path.

After this experience, I began to learn more about meditation. It was a slow process because I didn't know anyone who understood it well enough to teach me. I read several books on meditation, but could never really understand how to implement the practice. It took me years to figure out what worked, and what didn't.

I tried various forms of meditation over the next few years. The main problem I encountered was trying to stay awake, and nobody ever taught me how to deal with this problem—or any other problems, such as a racing mind. Then I tried mindfulness meditation, and was absolutely amazed at how well it worked. I began to grow once again, and the results were immediate and profound.

What I liked about mindfulness meditation was that it gave me some very powerful tools—something I didn't find in other forms of meditation. I could adapt the practice to my changing needs as I continued growing. The main reason I now practice mindfulness meditation exclusively is that it really works, and I continue to see results. Mindfulness meditation helped speed up my development significantly. Here is a small sample of what my life is like today:

- I have a self-confidence that is unshakable.
- I rarely get angry.
- Fear has dissipated significantly.

- I am no longer haunted by painful memories of the past.
- Difficult situations no longer cause me stress or anxiety.
- My relationships with people have improved tremendously.
- Even my mental abilities have improved—including memory.

The one change in my life that I'm probably the most grateful for is that I never feel lonely. When I was young, loneliness was the predominant emotion in my life. Today, I am free from all that pain and suffering.

These are just some of the changes I've gone through, which you too can expect. Imagine the possibilities. Mindfulness meditation will change your life in countless ways:

- **Tap into your inner strength.** Without your fears holding you back, you'll unlock your true potential, so you can pursue your dreams like never before.
- **Unleash your creativity.** Even if you're not a creative person, you'll be amazed at how the practice will stimulate your creativity. You'll discover many hidden talents.
- **Reprogram your subconscious.** You will finally overcome stubborn habits, such as smoking and overeating. The practice will help you reach your ideal weight.
- **Look and feel younger.** Research has shown that mindfulness meditation slows the aging process. People who meditate regularly tend to look and feel much younger than their actual age.
- **Improve your health.** Hundreds of studies in recent years have confirmed that mindfulness meditation has a wide range of health benefits, such as stress reduction, lower blood pressure, decreased risk of heart disease, overcoming depression and substance abuse, improved immune system, pain management, and many more.

As scientists continue making breakthroughs in mindfulness research, they're finding that mindfulness meditation can improve just about every area of our lives. In essence, the practice will help you discover a new you, and the great news is that you'll achieve results in just a week or two of practice. Others will see a tremendous difference in you.

The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice

The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice is a unique approach that I developed especially for you, the spiritual seeker, to help

Mindfulness meditation is a practice, and not a religion, so it is compatible with most spiritual traditions.

you learn the practice as quickly as possible—while helping you avoid the pitfalls. It gives beginning and experienced practitioners a step-by-step format that is easy to follow—and if you have the *Quick Start to Mindfulness Meditation* CD, you'll have a couple of ready-made meditations you can follow.

You'll learn the basic techniques so you can begin practicing right away. They will also take you to an intermediate level, so you can speed up your development even more. With this new approach, you will:

- Develop a solid foundation of the mindfulness meditation practice.
- Find out how to avoid the most common pitfalls.
- Save time and effort.
- Achieve immediate and noticeable results.

When you learn to practice mindfulness meditation using this approach, you will achieve an inner peace that you never imagined possible. And since mindfulness meditation is a practice, and not a religion, it is compatible with most other spiritual traditions.

Most of us had our beginnings in a particular spiritual tradition

for good reasons, so you don't need to abandon your Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or other faith. In fact, most spiritual traditions incorporate meditation into their practice. Mindfulness meditation will actually help you gain a much deeper understanding of your current spiritual faith.

The benefits that meditation has to offer are almost limitless, for those who are willing to put in the effort. By dwelling in the three main sources of spiritual nourishment: our True Nature, the spiritual principles, and our spiritual community,

*“The future
begins today.”*

~ WAYNE GERARD
TROTMAN

we learn to live mindfully in the present moment. These are the steps we follow in order to achieve freedom from our suffering:

Step 1—“We became aware of the pain and suffering created by unmindful thoughts, speech, and actions.” Step 1 teaches you some important concepts to help you understand the practice. In this step, we'll talk about the Four Noble Truths, which deal with suffering and how to overcome it. We will also talk about the Five Hindrances, which deal with things that get in the way of your meditation and spiritual development.

Step 2—“We learned how to develop our primary tools of observation: concentration and mindfulness.” Here you will learn how to use your two most important tools of observation. If we want to understand ourselves, and our relationships with others, then we need to learn how to observe the world with unbiased clarity.

We often make quick judgments based on preconceived ideas, because it's easier than examining situations further, and often less painful in the short-run. That is, we jump to conclusions without having many of the facts. So, to observe reality without bias, we need to develop our skills of observation. Like a journalist, we're trying to get at the truth.

Step 3—“We sought to eliminate the things that agitate our mind, and prevent us from achieving inner peace and serenity.” A common

challenge for beginners is dealing with a racing mind. We're often unaware that many of our daily activities are agitating our mind. In this step, I'll show you how to identify and eliminate the sources of agitation. I'll also give you some effective tools for calming your mind.

Step 4—“We learned how to structure our meditation session for maximum effectiveness, and to fit our lifestyle.” In Step 4, we discuss our meditation environment. There is no best time or place that applies to everyone, because we all have different commitments and living situations. I'll give you some guidelines for choosing the best time and place for you. We'll also talk about sitting position and how long to meditate.

Step 5—“In order to enhance our spiritual evolution, we made mindfulness meditation a regular practice.” This step deals with the actual mechanics of meditation. You'll learn exactly what to do during your meditation sessions. I'll give you different formats, so you can choose the one that's most suitable for your needs, and I will even guide you through a typical meditation session.

Step 6—“We remained vigilant in our meditation practice, so that we continued making steady progress.” In Step 6, you'll learn how to track your progress by keeping a meditation journal. This will help you stay grounded in proper techniques by establishing goals and measuring your progress. It will also help you stay motivated.

Step 7—“We became aware that other people can provide us with the spiritual nourishment vital to our development.” Other people can be invaluable sources of spiritual nourishment that will dramatically speed up your development. I will show you how to connect with them, so that you not only enhance your own spiritual development, but also that of others.

Step 8—“We sought to cultivate peace and harmony in our relationships and interactions with others by practicing deep listening, mindful speech, non-judging, and forgiveness.” In this step, we'll

examine how our behavior impacts our spiritual development and our relationships, and I'll share with you some powerful tools for improving them.

Step 9—“We sought to dwell deeply in our spiritual community in order to enhance our development, and that of others.” In Step

9, I'll show you how to avail yourself of the healing power of your spiritual community.

I will introduce you to some more useful tools for enhancing your practice, including loving-kindness meditation, and a new meditation technique we've developed—writing meditation. You will also learn about the most powerful tool of all—the mindfulness meditation retreat.

The most powerful tool of our practice is the mindfulness meditation retreat

Step 10—“We became aware of how unmindful consumption perpetuates our suffering, and prevents us from achieving true inner peace.” In this step, we'll discuss how your consumption of

nutrients and other substances can either enhance or hinder your spiritual development. As you progress in your practice, you'll develop the wisdom and inner strength to make healthier choices.

Step 11—“With the strength, courage, and mindfulness we attained through our meditation practice, we confronted and over-

came the wounds from our past.” Many of us have wounds from long ago that have never healed. These are serious obstacles to our development. In Step 11, I will show you how to use your emerging mindfulness to overcome them, so you can be free of them once and for all.

Step 12—“Having found freedom from our suffering through mindfulness meditation, we shared this practice with others, and

continued dwelling deeply in the present moment through mindful living.” One of the great gifts you will receive from your practice is a deep sense of caring and compassion for other people. In this step, you'll

learn how to help others achieve inner peace as you have, and how your mindful leadership can help create a more mindful society. You'll also learn how to apply mindfulness to all your daily activities, so that you continue making progress.

With these steps, you will learn: (1) the basic techniques of mindfulness meditation, (2) techniques for enhancing your practice, (3) how to eliminate obstacles that slow your progress, and (4) how teaching others the practice will benefit you, the student, and society as a whole. Once you get through all 12 Steps, the chapter "Staying the Course" will give you some invaluable tips for staying engaged in your practice, and for getting back on track when you get distracted by changes in your life.

The 12 Steps are not all there is to mindfulness meditation, but they're enough to give you a solid foundation of the practice. Once you've developed some proficiency with your observation skills, you'll be ready for more advanced techniques, such as the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. As you can see, there is practically no limit to how far you can grow with mindfulness meditation.

How to Use This Book

To get the most out of this book, I recommend that you immediately begin applying the principles you learn in each step as you go along. At the end of each chapter, you'll find a set of exercises to help you put into practice the techniques you just learned. It is easier to put them into practice while they're fresh in your mind, than if you wait until you finish the book. With some of the later steps, you may not be able to implement them right away, but that's OK because this book will serve as a reference for your continued practice.

If you're interested in learning the mindfulness meditation practice even faster, I recommend *The Mindfulness Meditation Workbook*. The exercises in there will go more in-depth to help you develop a deeper understanding of the principles behind the 12 Steps. You can find more information about it on our website.

When you finish reading this book, I suggest that you read it again—this time paying closer attention to the explanations of the techniques. Remember, the whole idea is to learn the proper meditation techniques, and make them the foundation of your practice because it is the proper use of the techniques that will enable you to get the most benefit from your efforts. If you begin to stray from using proper techniques, your progress will suffer.

Next, I recommend that you review the 12 Steps periodically, such as every other month for a while. This will help you avoid developing unwanted habits. As you gain some experience, the explanations will begin to make more sense, and certain nuances of the practice will become apparent.

You can also form a study group, or meditation group, so you can share different perspectives with other practitioners. We've made starting a group very easy with our free group starter kit, which you can download from our website.

I will refer to our website throughout the book because it contains valuable resources and printable copies of various materials you'll need for your practice. I will also address some of the most common issues regarding the practice. Go to <http://www.MindfulnessMeditationInstitute.org> and bookmark it, so it is readily available for you.

There is one more important point I would like to make: to get the most from your mindfulness meditation practice, it's important that you apply all 12 Steps, because neglecting any of them will hinder your progress. The good news is that you don't have to do it all at once. You can take it one step at a time, starting with Step 1.

I realize that some techniques might take you out of your comfort zone, but the result will be a happier and more fulfilling life. Your life will change in ways you never imagined. I know that once you get some experience with the Steps, you'll learn to enjoy them as much as I have.

How to Stay Focused and Committed to Your Practice

I know that sometimes staying committed to a new practice can be a challenge. I want to share with you a couple of tricks I've learned that will help you stay committed to your meditation practice:

1. Set a goal to learn how to meditate, and write it down. It doesn't have to be a long statement, but be specific. For example, you may set a goal to learn how to meditate in thirty, sixty, or ninety days. Whatever the case, phrase it in your own words and write it down. There is something very powerful about writing down your goals that will help you tremendously in achieving them. Once you learn the basics of the mindfulness meditation practice, set another goal, such as learning one or more of the techniques for enhancing your practice.
2. Once you've written your initial goal of learning how to meditate, choose two or three people you know and respect, who would most likely support you in your practice. Your meditation group would be great. Share with them the following two things, (1) your goals of learning how to meditate, and (2) how you're learning the practice.

Then periodically mention to them how you're progressing. By openly declaring your commitment, you trigger a powerful mechanism in your mind that helps you follow through on your commitment. You are now accountable to other people, and this makes it harder to go back on your word. In my case, by writing this book I've essentially declared to the world that I practice mindfulness meditation. There's no going back now, which suits me just fine.

The Courage to Change

One of the greatest obstacles to our spiritual growth is self-deception. It is often difficult to confront the truth of who we are. We all would like to believe that we are kind, loving, and compassionate, and that our

intentions are always noble. On the other hand, we sometimes think the worst of ourselves, that we're no-good rotten scoundrels. The truth lies somewhere in between.

If we are going to grow, then we must be willing to face the truth about ourselves. We must be willing to look at ourselves objectively, and let go of our beliefs, no matter how long we've had them. We must have the courage to let go of our old self, if we want our True Nature to shine through. So, are you willing to do what it takes to grow?



The Mindfulness Revolution is a movement whose time has come. Every day, more and more people just like you are taking up the practice. Mindfulness meditation is gaining ever wider acceptance, as scientific research confirms the benefits to all areas of our personal lives. The practice is also transforming just about every area of our society, including health care, education, the economy, and even politics.

If you want to
change the world,
you must first
change yourself.

If you are new to mindfulness meditation, you're about to venture on a journey that will transform your life in ways you never imagined possible. You will experience better health, more stable emotions, and higher self-esteem. Your practice will not only enrich your own life, but also the lives of people around you.

The 12 Steps of the Mindfulness Meditation Practice will give you a solid foundation of the practice as quickly as possible. You will learn how to develop mental discipline, and deep insights into the nature of the human condition. As you implement these techniques, you'll discover for yourself that true inner peace is well within your reach, no matter how restless your mind may be.

Once you begin this spiritual journey, you will no longer be a spectator. You will become a leader in the evolution of human consciousness, and a pioneer in the Mindfulness Revolution. As you realize inner peace,

you will naturally want to share the practice with others. The innate wisdom that is within you will be revealed, and will need to express itself through service to mankind. How you serve is entirely up to you. But always remember this: if you want to change the world, you must first change yourself.

Exercises for Getting Started

I know you're eager to get started. In order to get the most from your practice, it's important to understand the reasons for the specific techniques. However, you can still benefit tremendously by starting the practice right now. Then as you study each Step, you'll begin to understand the practice better. Follow these simple exercises and you'll be off to a good start.

1. Setting Your Goals. As described earlier, write down your goals for learning mindfulness meditation. Be specific. For example, set a goal to learn how to meditate in thirty, sixty, or ninety days, and commit to practicing every day; then choose two or three people you know and respect, and who will likely support you in your practice. Tell them about your goals, and how you're learning meditation.

I would also suggest posting your goal statement some place where you'll see it every day. Your computer monitor and mirror are ideal places. If you need help writing it, you can download the goal statement exercise from the Resources page of our website. I have also included it in the appendix.

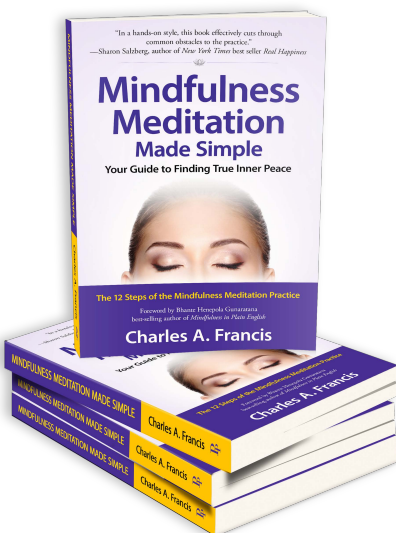
2. Sitting Meditation. Find a quiet time and place where you will not be disturbed for about twenty minutes. Get in a comfortable sitting position, and gently close your eyes. Begin following your breathing. Use the counting technique to help you stay focused. During your meditation, count your breaths one through five silently in your mind. When you get to five, simply start over again.

Keep your attention focused on the air passing through the tip of your nose. It's OK if you get distracted. Simply bring your attention back to your breath, and keep counting. The purpose of this is to help you develop your ability to concentrate.

After a few minutes, stop counting, but continue observing your breath. However, this time instead of counting each one, simply observe the entire breathing process mindfully. Observe it gently without forcing yourself like you did with the concentration meditation. When distracting thoughts arise, gently bring your attention back to your breath.

You can start with 10-15 minutes of total meditation time daily. Then work your way up to thirty minutes or more. Later in the book, I'll explain in more detail the purpose of concentration and mindfulness.

3. Writing Meditation. From the appendix, take the loving-kindness writing meditation exercise and spend about 10-15 minutes each day writing it out by hand. I generally write two verses each day right before my sitting meditation session, but any time of the day will work. This will help you stay focused and committed to your practice. For your convenience, you'll find printable versions of this exercise in the Resources section of our website.



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