

Workshop: Meditation for Stress Relief

Presenter: Pasha Hogan, author of *Third Time Lucky: A Creative Recovery* & founder of Creative Recovery™

Getting Started - Demystifying Meditation:

Meditation practice is how we stop fighting with ourselves, how we stop struggling with circumstances, emotions or moods. It is not about accomplishing anything, it is not about winning or losing. It is about turning down the volume of the inner commentator, and getting off our own backs for a little while. If you know how to breathe – you can meditate! Even if you think you can't. The biggest obstacle is you *thinking that* you are not *doing* it good enough. It's an art than requires practice.

The Art of Resting:

Learning how to make friends with the present moment is making friends with life. Try these “Just for today” principles, carry them around with you and notice how you can interrupt any thought with a breath. You can start *responding* to stressful thoughts rather than *reacting* to them.

***YOUR BREATH IS THE KEY - ALLOWING YOUR BREATH TO BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR THOUGHTS - ENTERING WHEREVER YOU ARE**

Just for today



I am breathing in warmth & kindness towards myself



I am excessively gentle with myself



I am greeting my reflection with a softened gaze



I am giving myself permission to make beautiful mistakes



I am my own compassionate witness



Guidelines to Help Cultivate a Meditation Practice:

First and foremost there is **no one way** to meditate. In fact you probably unconsciously meditate already (and call it doing the dishes, gardening or walking etc). Developing a practice, is bringing consciousness into it, so you can reap the rewards of laying down the burden and resting in your heart. It is not about judging yourself – that only leads to more stress! It is the nature of the mind to wander. It is the beauty of the mind to notice. Then we can simply become the compassionate witness of our thoughts, not make it a big deal, and get back to breathing.

Some techniques to try out and choose from:

***Mindfulness meditation** – Increased awareness of body and flow of breath, observing thoughts without judging

***Mantra or Affirmation meditation** – Silently repeat a chosen word or phrase to help protect your mind from disturbing thoughts

***Guided meditation** – Using imagery and the senses to create a sense of well-being in the body and mind

***Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi gong** – Moving in a series of postures, with the breath leading the way, to promote balance and calm. **Walking works too!**

BREATHING EXERCISE :

It is important to remember, when we are starting to feel stressed by anything from information, to doctor visits, to leaping into the future, we can use our breath to **SLOW IT DOWN**. You don't have to go at anyone else's pace when your breath is leading the way.

Place one hand on heart and one hand on belly. Inhale to 4 - Hold - Exhale to 4. Keep your inhale at 4 and then exhale to 5, gradually increasing your exhale to 8 count. Stay here for 1-3 minutes (inhaling to 4 and exhaling to 8). Then keep the inhale at 4 count and gradually make your way back down to inhale 4 and exhale 4, balancing your breath. When you double the length of your exhale you automatically send a signal to the parasympathetic nervous system to relax. It's is difficult for the thoughts to race when you slow down your exhale.

Life gets better when we make friends with the now, whatever it looks like.

Namaste Sister, Love Pasha

Please visit www.pashahogan.com for more info and resources.

