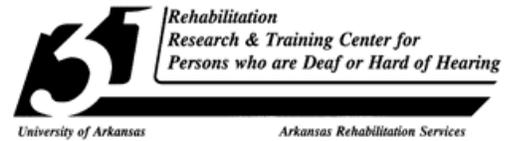




Selected Proceedings of ALDAcon 2005



MEDITATION CAROLYN PIPER

My qualifications for giving this workshop are really that I'm a human being. Because I'm deaf, I've never really taken any course in meditation. I'm a reader from way back. I use reading to compensate for my lack of hearing in classes, so I have read a lot on meditation. I have practiced it myself and I find it a great benefit to myself. And I have come to believe, that you can take a thousand classes but it's really up to each person individually to do what we call practice to learn to meditate.

I got started myself because in my 30s, I lost my functional hearing. I had a husband and two kids who are hearing. I live in a hearing world and, I was going nuts with stress. I was becoming depressed, and I'm not saying I'm in perfect mental health now, but I'm saying meditation has been a very good tool for me to get my life back on track. I remember one professor in college who said to my class, "You are under stress? You've got to ask yourself, ask your mind, who is in charge here?" And so I did that. And with the help of meditation I began to regain charge of my life from my emotions.

What we're going to talk about today is taking charge of your mind. We're going to talk about one of the hardest things that human beings do, that is, taking charge of our minds and not letting it run wild and ruin our lives. Someone might say, well, there are harder things in life like being a physicist or a neurosurgeon. Those occupations are easy. Easy, easy, compared to taking charge of your mind because the brightest person in the world, in the most difficult situation in the world is still dealing with mind demons that are common to us all. I call them "the admirals on the bridge."

There is an admiral on my mind bridge who is constantly saying, "Look out, look out, look out, steer left, steer right, go ahead." And in full cry or not this admiral can drive me straight away from the things that are really important in life—stealing my ability to focus on what I truly want in life—peace of mind, as free from stress as I can get, both of which enable me to enjoy life.

So we all know about our minds. We all have one. You've probably heard the voice of your own admiral, as he bellows out fears and thoughts, which can paralyze. And these fears and thoughts are like a little obnoxious dog yapping at your heels, and they play the same record over and over and over again. Our job here is to learn how to turn that record off, or at least change the tune.

Human life is very stressful in and of itself but when you are a person with a significant hearing loss in a hearing world, that adds to your stress big time. I know when I go into a situation where I have to cope with hearing people, I can feel my whole body tightening up and my mind admirals begin to go crazy. I would say that dealing with hearing loss in our world is very much like Betty Davis said about aging. Being deaf in a hearing world is not for Sissies any more than getting old is. It's tough, tough, tough work. But the good news is that we can learn. We can learn to cope with our minds and achieve a greater level of peace with meditation.

I'm first going to go through definitions of what meditation is and how you do it, some pointers, and then give you some examples of how you might want to meditate yourself, or begin to try.

Stress? Has anybody not heard about what stress does to our bodies? You've all heard of stress hormones. When we are upset or frightened the stress hormones in our body ramp up. The admirals on the bridge go crazy. When that happens it has a negative overall impact on both our emotional and our physical health. It's self-perpetuating. You are perpetuating a habit of mind and body when you are reacting to something that is stressful for you.

When we let stress take over our life, it has a huge overall impact on us physically--ranging from depression, cardiovascular problems, depression of the immune system, panic disorder, on and on and on. Stress not only makes us miserable, it can kill us. The one factor that scientists have found, other than our genetic predisposition, that impacts our health negatively, is stress.

In meditation, what we learn to do is to purposely slow down the endless, endless, loops of noise in our minds. That noise in our minds is what paralyzes us and leaves us believing that we are helpless. Keep in mind that word, helpless. Link it with control. We all know how much better we feel when we feel ourselves to be in control of a situation. This is especially true with hearing loss when we are so often stressed trying to deal with communication issues. For example, when I went to a rental car dealer yesterday, I felt very stressed, and my mind had no problem keeping me aware of that fact. I found, though, I could understand one person better than the other. When I had to deal with the man, I was out of control. The admirals were screaming. What I had to do was take control back. In that case, it meant, "I'm sorry, sir, can I talk to the lady because I can understand her better?" So there are many ways of taking control.

To show you how stress can affect you, here is a famous experiment with rats. Two groups of rats were shocked. One group were shocked at random at any time with varying regularity and allowed no control. The other group was taught methods of turning off the shocks. Now rats are bright animals. They have been around for millions of years. The second group, having learned how to turn off the shock by turning a wheel showed markedly less negative effects to the shocks they received. The first bunch got more ulcers, and had more health problems. The second group, because they had that control and could turn the shock off, were in better health. They developed ulcers at half the rate and half the size than in the control group. This brings to my mind my husband who is a real New Englander, very blunt, very matter of fact. "Lyn," he says—for that is what my family calls me, "nothing's half as bad as you think. It is your mind set." And it is. If we can learn to control that mindset our stress levels, as well as our physiological reactions, markedly decrease.

Remember, we are creating our environment all the time. Nothing is as bad as you think it might be. We can't change the fact that life is very stressful, especially if we are deaf. What we can change is our attitude toward life.

I have talked about how important control is. Now, I've got to flip it over. While some control is good: I'm asking the guy at the car rental, "Can I talk to the woman instead?" That's okay. However, when we try to control every situation, that makes more stress. Thus, control has the flip side of being a stressor in itself.

Think about one example of this: Bluffing. Have any of you ever bluffed when you didn't understand? I still do it. I know I should not, but I do it. Bluffing is an example of trying to gain control of a stressful situation. And it almost always causes more stress because when you bluff once, you are going to have to continue to do so, and the stress goes up and up and up. And before you know it your admirals are in full panic mode—crying to the heavens that all is lost.

Meditation helps us to learn to cope with our panic mode admirals. It is a way of learning to accept and control the mind. The Japanese have a saying that it is the bamboo that survives the bad windstorm. I don't know if you have ever seen a bamboo. It is very flexible. When the wind blows, a bamboo shoot simply bends with the wind because they are flexible. A maple tree, by contrast is rigid. Get a bad windstorm and something is going to break, if not the tree itself, the branches.

Meditation teaches you bamboo flexibility. Your mind and your thoughts are the wind. And It is up to us to become bamboo shoots and not maple trees.

This flexibility comes by staying in what is called "the now." Right now I am here. I am talking to you. I'm comfortable talking to you now. But inside my head my admiral is saying, "Oh, when it comes to page 9, that's more difficult, or, what will happen if somebody asks a question that you can't answer?" That endless loop of dire possibilities is playing. There is a saying that I use in my daily life to help me when I am

not actively meditating to relieve stress. “This is my precious moment.” And really meditation is about staying in the moment and valuing life. This, right now, here, us together, is our precious moment. We don't have to listen to those admirals about page 9, 10 or 11 or what's going to happen at the next workshop. We're here, now. This is your precious moment.

Keeping your attention focused. Let's think about that for a moment. We all have had a time when we are hot and bothered. Have you ever been that way and suddenly your mind drifts off to a better place? You start daydreaming. Maybe you look at a tree and you just look at the clouds and you enter that precious moment. When your stressor enters that reality of the world, the stressor tends to recede, and we can begin to feel more comfortable and at ease.

This too is a form of meditation, we have surrendered to the moment. I can't stress that enough. You can formally meditate maybe for 15 to 20 minutes a day, but you are still awake the rest of the time. So stress reduction through meditation is a tool that can be used in many ways that can be used in many ways throughout the day—and remembering that you only have one precious moment at a time is one of those ways. Surrender to it. I found out last year planning the Vermont Con. that it's a big job, but I have never felt so calm. Why? Even though problems were coming at me from every side, I could only deal with one problem at a time. Because of that, I was very focused. My mind was not wandering off in ten different directions. I was focusing on one problem, one moment at a time. I have to say, that that time, busy as it was, hard work as it was, was a real eye opener for me. It made me realize just how good it was to focus on one thing at a time.

Before we get into actual techniques, I want to talk briefly about preliminaries that you need to start to practice.

First of all, motivation. In my own case that motivation first came years ago when I had a newborn and a toddler. Everyone else is hearing. I had just lost my job. There was no ADA back then, I was simply just kicked out of my job. I knew I had to do something or I would not be able to be a good mother to my kids, which was my biggest motivation. If I'm coming apart, how are they going to grow up with any degree of calm and self-assurance? So I started reading about meditation.

My motivation meant that I really, really, really wanted to do this—to learn how to function in the face of what seemed insurmountable problems. Learning to control the mind is one of the hardest things you will ever even attempt to do, and to do it you have to WANT to do it. That is a big key. There is nobody else in the world that can make you do this. You are quite free to simply go as crazy as you want, be as stressed as you want. It's up to you. That is the bad news.

The good news is that old saying that makes many of us cringe: problems are opportunities. I agree with that. It was the problems in my life that made me want to find a solution—a way to be calmer and more focused.

Second, and this is the bad news of sorts, you need the initiative to change. Effort. You need to be willing to put in the work to practice—that is develop a daily regime of meditation methods and mindsets—such as being in the now. The effort that you need to put into practice is practice. There is no getting around it. Every meditation, no matter what technique you choose, is going to be hard work and require effort. If you live to be 100 years old, and you meditate every day without fail, you will always, always, always, baring sudden onset of sainthood be in the same situation and on the same path. Following what you know needs to be done is not easy in our daily lives. A good practice should be 20 minutes every day.

I try to do it. At home, I usually do it. Here at the Con, since I got here Friday, forget it. I'm usually stressed from lack of sleep. I have not been able to make myself meditate. But ideally, when you get home and you are back in your routine, you will take that 10 to 20 minutes a day just to get the hang of it. As you do more, very often you find yourself wanting to do more and that increases the time.

The third thing you need to start a good meditation practice is determination or discipline. I read a really neat way to define discipline. Discipline is doing what does not come naturally. The admirals do not want to sit back in the chair and calmly watch the boat proceed. They want to take over and do what they want to do. What my admiral says, “Hey, hey you. What's this about discipline? We are on vacation here. Here at the Con.” And he is back in the wheelhouse in charge and my usual practice is gone. In one-way or another those of us who are not masters of meditation fight this battle against distractions every day.

If you do persevere, you can make inroads. What we're going to do is take control, in the good sense of the word, to teach your mind to surrender despite the fact that it is using every trick in the book to get you to stop this, being-quiet nonsense. It's going to take strength, discipline and determination to do win this never-ending battle. My all-time favorite advertising slogan is “Just Do It.” Quite simply put, you don't have to like it—you just have to do it.

In the face of discouragement, when nothing seems to work, you have to tell your mind, “This is not boring. This is not a waste of time. This is time I'm spending on myself.” You are worth it. You are worth having the quiet time. The effects are cumulative. Remember always, don't judge. Every meditation is what it is. It is your precious moment. Just do it. Don't judge it. Maybe tomorrow's meditation will be better or worse. It does not matter. It is what it is. The point is to create new habits and a new flow within your life.

Now, we get to the easy part: finding a place to be peaceful. This can be anywhere where we feel comfortable and won't be interrupted. Like some people, you may light candles or incense. You may like it dark. Light may not bother you. It's totally up to you. What it has to be is a place where you know you have a set period of time when you won't be interrupted.

That brings us to time. Everybody is going to decide when is the best time for him or her to practice. I'm a morning person. I get up between 4 and 5 in the morning and I'm down by 8 at night. Other people are just the opposite. If other family members are around at this time, clue them in. Tell them, "It's my time. I will be happy to help you deal with whatever is going on in a bit, but this half hour every day is mine."

Again, talking about judgment, please, don't fall into the mind trap that you are not worthy of having that time to yourself. You are worth it. You will be able to contribute far more to other people's lives if you take time for yourself. So make the time.

Positioning. People say that lying down is not a good way to do it. You might fall back asleep. I like to lie down but to fool my mind from falling asleep. I do not meditate lying on the bed. I lie on the floor, flat on the floor. That position tells my body, that this is not sleep time. If I were on the bed, I would get relaxed enough and drift off, but, again, that's up to you. Eyes open, eyes closed, again, that's up to you. I like to close my eyes. I find it easier to relax with my eyes closed.

Initiating relaxation. You can't just lie down, or sit down, and drift off right away into a relaxed meditative state. You are human. You can't do that. You first need to obtain a basic level of relaxation. One of techniques we'll be talking about more in a minute, is body scan. Properly done, this is a technique that will put you right to sleep even lying on the floor. In fact, if any of you have trouble falling asleep, body scan is a good technique at night, quite apart from meditation.

The other thing is, when you sit down or lie down, imagine yourself relaxing, muscle group by muscle group, scalp, forehead, eyes, cheeks, jaws. Jaws. That's important. Think about how often we clench our jaws. We want to relax so we have to relax our muscles. Go down to the shoulders. Try to melt into whatever position you are in. Think of yourself as a pot of butter and you are gradually melting.

Another good one technique amazed me when I tried it. You probably have all seen pictures of saints who seem to be gazing up to heaven. The technique that I found very helpful is that saintly gaze. Look up and see your forehead. Strain those eye muscles. Hold it for as long as you want and ignore the little voice in your mind that is saying, "Hey, I don't like this. I don't like this. Stop, stop." After a minute or so, gradually bring your eyes down to a closed or half-closed position, whichever you prefer. Relax your forehead, feel the relaxation just traveling all the way down in your body from your forehead to your eyes to your face and jaw and on downward body part by body part.

It can also be helpful to identify the place in our body that we always tense up. I think we all have a point in our body that tends to tense up. When I'm meditating, my thumbs tend to tense up and migrate to my palms. And when I realize that I stop and relax them and that relaxation spreads. For other people, it may be the shoulders, forehead, and toes. Everybody is different. Be aware of your body and scan just briefly. What part of your body, when you are not lying down and trying to relax, is not cooperating? I find, if I can bring my thumbs out and relax them. For me this makes all the difference in the world.

At no point when you are doing this initial relaxation or meditation should you worry about how you are doing. You are not being graded. Teachers are not in the front of the room. The point is getting to know yourself and your body and how to best respond to encourage yourself and your body to relax. In the bibliography, you will find a lot more of these techniques that you can use for initial relaxation.

Now, how to meditate. What I'd like to do is for you to just sit still. I'm going to time you, so sit still and be quiet for about two minutes, try to calm your mind. And when the time is up, I will touch one on each side and you can touch each other, open your eyes. If you want to do it with your eyes open, you can do it that way. I find it most calming with my eyes shut. So let's try this. Everybody, peace, quiet, calm. Go.

Everybody's eyes open? Okay, great. Did any of you manage to keep your minds clear for those two minutes? Some of you? You are amazing. You are amazing. It's very, very difficult to keep thoughts out of our mind, just for that precious moment. Meditation techniques help you to do that. There is a very calming method of staying in the moment meditating: breathing. You all heard of breathing?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm always looking at the gifts from my hearing loss or my hearing challenge. I wear a cochlear implant and I simply take it off because then I'm in total silence and then it's a real gift. If I'm on a busy expressway or in a noisy restaurant by myself, I find silence very calming. It's like having a gift from your loss that hearing people can never experience.

CAROLYN PIPER: I could not agree with you more. In many ways, I consider being deaf a gift because I can turn off the world, the hearing. That really helps to focus. But we are lucky that we can have an automatic on-off button to tune out at least part of the world. When I meditate, I'm not going to worry about the phone ringing because I never hear it. I never wear my CI when I meditate. That's a good stress reducer right there.

Getting back to breathing. One of the ways to decrease the muscle tension are various breathing techniques in which you focus your attention on your breath and not on you're your mind or your body as a whole.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I like what you said, you took off your CI, and I turned off my hearing aid. Then, I was going through all the muscle groups in the two minutes and I

was breathing through each muscle group, so I was aware of my breathing as well as the muscle group together as a combination to relax.

CAROLYN PIPER: Absolutely. Absolutely good comment. And in the handout I gave you on the body scan, that's exactly what they tell you to do, to breathe through muscle or body points.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When we are doing the meditation, I can hear the static through the FM. So in my mind, I change the static to a water fall with the pond at the bottom. I picture the pond at the bottom and that was very relaxing.

CAROLYN PIPER: I envy you being able to do that. That is actually what I do with my tinnitus, as we will talk about in a bit.

So we all breathe. Think back to your precious moments. The precious moment is in your breath. Think about how you breathe. Most of us breathe from our chest, which is very shallow breathing. When you get stressed, that becomes even more so. We breathe faster and shallower. And in conjunction with this our heart speeds up from the exerting of that. In contrast, a relaxing breathing is abdominal breathing. What you do is you start your breath from below our diaphragm, which is about here, almost on stomach level. As you begin the in breath you expand your abdomen. Feel that breath, see it, feel it, be aware of it and gradually bring it up to inflate the chest.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can this be done with your mouth closed and going through your nose only?

CAROLYN PIPER: We all have various preferences. I am miserable if I'm breathing through my mouth. I'm a nose breather. Others are the opposite. However you get the air through your body is an individual thing. The key is to focus on the breath itself, to see it and feel it as it rises from your abdomen up through. Then hold it for a few seconds and then very slowly release it. Release it in just the opposite way, chest, stomach, slow. Remember, when you stress, when you are upset, your breathing speeds up. You do just the opposite to achieve calmness.

Some meditation teachers advocate counting the breath. You may do this by breathing in to the count of one and then out to the count of two. Over and over again. You may also find it helpful to breath into a fuller count. Breathe in to the count of 4, hold it to a count of 2, release to a count of 4. Over and over and over and over again.

Any and/or all of these breathing techniques will help to focus you in the moment—and quiet the noise in your mind.

Again, the books I'm going to recommend will give you some more information. The idea is to get a calm rhythm.

When you do any kind of meditation, your mind may start dreaming. One of the traps that your mind is going to set for you is that it is going to start arguing with you. You're going to fall right into that trap if you argue back. The mind is going to say, "Oh, I have to pick up so and so at such a time. I wonder what time it is." Before you know it, you've got an argument going with your invisible companion in your head. When that kicks in, simply, tell your self, "Later,"

AUDIENCE MEMBER: When you started talking about meditation, I thought it was going to be sort of like thinking about pleasant things, but it seems like it's just the opposite, think about nothing and my question is what is your definition of meditation?

CAROLYN PIPER: Meditation is any technique you can use to stay in the present moment. The discipline of meditation, started in the Far East. The traditional definition is to stop the mind. I think you are equally meditating if you allow your mind to drift on pleasant things. For example, if you look at the sky and just observe the clouds, that is both pleasant, and serves to stop your mind's endless loop of worrying thoughts. So that technique does indeed have value. What you want to do is fill your mind with whatever is in the present moment, whatever is best, whatever works best for you. I'm more focusing here on more traditional eastern disciplines. However, there is no reason why you can't do that. Also, here is another thing that can be very helpful that is not a traditional eastern method. When you are happy, when something good has happened, maybe your kids or grandkids are there, take a moment and say, "Hey, this is really good." Experience the moment right there. Moments of meditation flicker throughout the day that you can take advantage of. Seize them, experience them fully with gratitude.

Again, this leads back to the topic of judgment. Here goal is to quiet the mind and if someone can meditate just by thinking pleasant thoughts, that's fine. Somebody else, like myself, likes to have quiet time use other techniques to shut the mind noise down. Whatever works for you is fine. Just don't judge either the meditation or yourself. Shut that mind-judge off and take control from him. Accept the present, precious moment.

I talked a bit already about the body scan technique. Basically, when this lady (audience member) said she was breathing through her muscles groups, one after the other, that's the body scan. And this technique can work beautifully to produce relaxation and calmness. First, relax yourself and then breathe through each joint at a time. Full directions for it can be found in Jon Kabat Zinn's very excellent book which I strongly recommend to you, [Full Catastrophe Living](#). The body scan usually takes about 45 minutes. If I'm using it at night to go to sleep, I'm usually asleep in ten minutes. So it can be helpful as a sleep technique, or you can do it at more length during the day.

Visualizing. When the gentleman (audience member) talked about thinking pleasant thoughts, that links to visualizing. We have things that give us great pleasure in life. If you just become calm and relax, visual things, pleasant things come into your mind. This is a great meditation and stress reducer. I had one really rough point in my life where I could not sleep at all because my mind was replaying endless loops of a very

hurtful happening in my life. Finally in desperation, what I did at night was begin to visualize my mind as a blank white board. Every time my mind started replaying the hurt I had experience I decided that I would visualize an eraser going over the thought. And I did this over and over and over again. It is not easy to take control in this way, but it really did bear fruit for me, and because I was doing this at night, I was able to make myself go to sleep after a lot of erasing. I also noticed that, after a week or so that these stressful thoughts were also retreating from my daytime thoughts. I was calmer.

Now you can be very creative with visualization. You can visualize anything that provides calm in any way that speaks to you personally. You can build yourself a perfect room, a perfect, peaceful room, and put whatever you want in that room. For me, I might be at a beach with a waterfall. For you, it may be something else. Build yourself the perfect place that gives you peace. Visualize it in your mind and just be there. Be there, at a precious moment, with a quiet mind as you breathe calmly in and out. Slowly and purposely.

Okay. Let's take tinnitus since that already came up. I have pretty bad tinnitus. You learn to tune it out. I think all of us who have tinnitus have learned to do that. One day when I was feeling very stressed and my tinnitus was really bad, I realized that if I had to live with tinnitus that perhaps I could learn to use it in a positive way. So I sat down and I said, "Okay, you got tinnitus. Let's listen to it. This is your precious moment right now. I can't turn it off. I have no control over it. So let's see what happens if I just use it as a focus point just as I use breathing" So I sat down and I just concentrated, focused on my tinnitus. Instead of focusing on my breathing, I focused on my tinnitus. That was my precious moment. I might not have been happy with that precious moment, but there it was, and I had a choice to make as to how I could use it—or let it use me.

Now, we all know your tinnitus gets worse when you get upset, right? That day mine was just spiraling out of control. But when I sat quietly and gave it my full attention a funny thing happened—it decreased. And the key is I suspect that I was concentrating on my tinnitus in that moment—rather than the misery I had been feeling having to listen to the endless buzz in my head. And when I made this change I took positive control and my perception of both the experience and the moment changed. Stress went down and as stress decreased the tinnitus itself decreased. It became manageable. And it became a gift. Just as we discussed previously.

I find, no matter what kind of meditation I do, even if it's one moment, one precious moment, like taking a deep breath while waiting in an endless line at the bank, I can feel my stress go down.

Walking. Walking is another good way to achieve calm. Any of you ever seen a labyrinth? They are usually circles with inter-connected paths within the circle. You start on the outside, walking very slowly, and follow the path until you get to the center. In the center, you leave by another path and very slowly, follow it back out. These were

designed in medieval times for religious contemplation, but the fact is, this is just another word for meditation. They allow you to focus on your feet, your walking, the path. It does not matter where you are going. You simply are focusing on a precious moment. A local church where I live got a group together and built a labyrinth in a field beyond the church, and whenever I go to Burlington, I stop by and walk through a maze. You may find one near you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Colleges will put one up, too. A couple of years ago, Boston College had one on their campus that anybody could go to. So I would read the newspapers and see if there is one in your area.

CAROLYN PIPER: You are absolutely right. Now, you don't have to have access to a labyrinth, any attentive walking can also provide stress reduction. You may jog for exercise and then allow extra time to just walk slowly, and in doing so concentrate now on where you are going, not on how fast you are going to get there or where you have been, but just in the experience itself. Walk slowly. Look at the ground.

CAROLYN PIPER: There are many, many other techniques, which we don't have the time to go into in depth, but they are all ways of staying in the precious moment. Yoga and Tai-Chi is a good one. I took classes in that and found within it a way to stop the world—and my mind! People have come up to me saying, “I can't take the class in that, I can't hear.” Well, you can. You tell your instructor you are deaf. You tell them, “I might be a little off in terms of timing. It's because I have to watch what you are doing and then do it. I can't just hear and do it.” I have taken classes in both Tai Chi and Yoga and this works fine. I just look at what they are doing and then do the pose, or whatever it is. Once you learn enough, then you can continue on your own at home.

One-minute breaks can also work. Standing in the grocery line. People are in front of you, you are tense, want to get out. “My gosh, what time is it, what's going to happen here?” You tell that admiral, “Be quiet.” Turn him off. Take that one-minute break while you are waiting and just let your body go loose. Clear your mind. Breathe. If you want to concentrate on one really nice box of cookies that you are looking forward to, that's a pleasant thought, too. Whatever can help you focus in a precious moment. All you really have is this moment--now. So instead of spending your energy worrying about time, relax, take control back from the situation and use that time and just clear your mind and concentrate on now.

Mantras. A mantra is a phrase you repeat over and over again. It's usually done one part on the in breath and one part on the out breath. It can be anything that is calming and meaningful to you. There is a traditional eastern mantra, which is where that word comes from, but a mantra can be anything. Saying your child's name. I have a kid named Joel. You can go, “Jo...” in breath, “el...” out breath.” Whatever. You can use a short prayer if that's what you want. Again, what you are doing is attempting to focus your mind. One of the books that are on the list I am handing out, I think by Joan Barysenko, gives specific examples of how to use mantras.

Let's go over some of these books, the ones that have been most meaningful to me. First of all, one of my all-time favorite books is How to Want What You Have by Timothy Mellow. This is not a traditional book on meditation. But the crux of it is that if you are in the moment, you want what you have. You have what you want. And when you are content with what you have at any one moment stress is drastically reduced. This book really provided a turning point for me both psychologically and in dealing with my day-to-day personal life. It's excellent. Full Catastrophe Living, which I have already mentioned, has a lot of relaxation techniques. The author is head of the Mind, Body, Stress Reduction Clinic in Boston. So I would recommend this one.

Minding the Body, Mending the Mind by Joan Barysenko is also excellent. Any of the books by Dr. Herbert Benson are also well worth reading. He is the grandfather of western meditation and he gives a lot of examples of mantras or phrases you might repeat with your breathing. He was the first medical doctor to pinpoint the relationship of stress, meditation and stress reduction.

Now before we close I want to take a minute to read you a poem by Pablo Neruda, which exemplifies calmness and being in your moment. Here is how it goes.

Now we will count to twelve and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth,
let's not speak in any language:
Let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines;
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.

Fisherman in the cold sea
would not harm whale
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victories with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes,
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade doing nothing.
What I want would not be confused
With total inactivity.
Life would be about what it is about.

I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single minded
About keeping our lives moving.,
And for once could do nothing,
Perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness
Of never understanding ourselves
And of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us
As when everything seems dead
And later proves to be alive.

And now I'll count to twelve
And you keep quiet and I will go.

Precious moment, now. This is what counts no matter how you choose to find it.

Bibliography

Below you will find a short list of resource books. These are but the tip of the iceberg and I would encourage you to both explore others in your library or on line or in a local bookstore. No one book is right for everyone, and I have included some comments to help you find a starting point that might be right for you.

Books by Dr Herbert Benson:

Dr Benson is the western pioneer on the benefits of meditation. He is the founding President of the Mind/Body Medical Institute and the Mind/Body Medical Institute Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School.

A graduate of Wesleyan University and the Harvard Medical School, Dr Benson is the author or co-author of more than 170 scientific publications and ten books:

- *The Relaxation Response*, 1975
- *The Mind/Body Effect*, 1979
- *Beyond the Relaxation Response*, 1984
- *Your Maximum Mind*, 1987
- *The Wellness Book*, 1992
- *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief*, 1996
- *The Relaxation Response—Updated and Expanded (25th Anniversary Edition)*, 2000
- *The Breakout Principle*, 2003
- *Mind Over Menopause (in press)*

- *Mind Your Heart (in press)*

His books tend toward the scientific “this is how it works” side but are very readily understandable and an excellent starting point in the exploration of the subject.

How to Want What You Have by Timothy Miller

This is one of my personal favorites as it looks at the mind in terms of what feeds our constant treadmill that the mind has all of us on. He postulates that as solution to this is not only being in the present moment, as we try to do with meditation, but also learning to accept and be grateful for what we have. This one I reread at least once a year. It is out of print now but still available on line at such places as www.amazon.com.

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness by Jon Kabat Zinn

This book offers up within its covers the complete eight week mind body stress reduction program at The University of Massachusetts Medical Center. I have found it to be an excellent resource—and another book, which I find myself rereading periodically. Dr Zinn is also the author of *Wherever You Go There You*. A small book full of common sense truths that I found very enjoyable.

Minding the Body, Mending the Mind by Joan Borysenko

Along with the Kabat Zinn and Benson books this one is the best for westerners.

How to Meditate by John Novak

This book is a short how-to book, which is definitely well worth a look for the beginner.

Healing with Mind Power by Richard Shames and Chuck Sterin

Out of print but available on line at www.amazon.com. Another book which I continue to find helpful. Here meditation is called self-hypnosis. Fear not, the two are interchangeable really and no loss of control is possible. Peace is.

Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness by Sharon Salzberg

A very approachable author who is the founder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, MA. This book provides many exercises and suggestions for achieving peace of mind, compassion and relaxation.

The Meditative Mind: The Varieties of Meditative Experience by Daniel Golen Tarcher This book covers the psychology of meditation as well as its links to many different spiritual traditions both western and eastern. It is somewhat complex but helpful for the truly curious.

Peace in Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life by Thich Nhat Hanh

The author is a Vietnamese Buddhist Monk who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. His focus in this book is on extending compassionate mindfulness to every moment in life. There are many who were born within the eastern tradition of meditation that have written very helpful and accessible material for the westerner. Be curious! Explore!

Meditation for Dummies by Stephan Bodian and Dean Ornish

I admit to being a Dummy book fan. There are times when a good beginner 1-2-3 book is extremely helpful to get you started on a new subject—whether it is on computers or animals—or meditation. This one has some very good resources included.

The Wooden Bowl: Simple Meditation for Everyday Life by Clark Strand

This book is more focused on more advanced information than the elementary texts, but it does provide a good balance between the simple how-tos and the deeper whys of meditation practice.

Breath by Breath: The Liberating Practice of Insight Meditation by Larry Rosenberg and David Guy

More Buddhist oriented than the others and not for beginners or for those who prefer to “just do it” versus exploring primary sources. An enjoyable text if you find yourself wanting to explore more deeply.

Turning the Mind Into an Ally by Sakyoung Mipham

Contains simple how-tos as well as deeper questioning. A book that can be read for the how-to chapters to begin with and for the other more philosophically aimed chapters at a later date.

Richard Hittleman's Yoga: 28-Day Exercise Plan by Richard Hittleman. I first found this book some 30 years ago. While I never got within shouting distance of day 28, I use it still. Yoga in one form or another is an excellent prelude to meditation.

The above are but some of the texts I have in my own home library. You do not NEED any book. If you want to read up on the subject, though, you can use one of these or browse through a WWW resource such as Amazon. Relax and enjoy the journey of discovery plotting your own path.

Carolyn Piper has a busy a mind that needs calming as anyone else. A long time member of ALDA she lives in rural Vermont, was planning chair for the 2004 ALDAcon that was held in Burlington, Vermont, and was Program chair for the 2005 ALDAcon.