

Practices



Knowledge alone isn't power.

It's what you do with your knowledge that gives you the power.

The following are the practices I use in my life, the intentions that I've found help me live consciously and wholeheartedly, and the techniques that I've found beneficial for working with physical and emotional stress. They are what works for me. I'm not suggesting you do everything I do, as everyone is different and what works for me might not work for you. But there might be some in here that resonate with you. If so, use them! Or feel free to play around with them, tweak them, adapt them, make them yours. Or create your own! Do what feels right for you. But do it! :)

Intentional Living

Intention is one of the most powerful tools of conscious living. If you set an intention with everything that you do, you approach it mindfully and with presence. Below are some intentions that have helped me shift my perspective to a more wholehearted approach to living.

Open to the World

Think about something in your life (music, painting, art, nature, dancing, etc.) that when you experience it, opens you up. **A divine experience in life that feeds your soul.**

Something that you absolutely love in life. That thing that when experienced, passes *unfiltered* without judgment through your open heart, and directly touches your soul.

Next time you have that experience, take note of how it feels, being completely open like that.

Then, imagine if you opened that way to every experience in life. Set the intention and practice it! Embrace the *fullness* of every experience.

The Ritual of Life

Every act that you do in life is a ritual that you are performing. Your body is the vessel for your spirit, and everything that your body performs has a corresponding act in your spirit. When you are cleaning, there is the underlying act of cleaning spiritually and emotionally. When you are cooking, it is a process of combining and creating for nourishment. When you are wiping the sweat off your yoga mat, you are honoring your labor and wiping your slate clean for the future. When your body is sick and purging itself of that which is not you, your spirit is purging itself of that which is not You. **These processes are going on unconsciously in everyone.** When held *inconscious intention and presence*, their effects are intensified and can be used as a means of transformation. Practice recognizing the ritual in *everything you do*.

Infuse Your Dedication with Enjoyment

If you're anything like me, when you dedicate yourself to a practice, you get very focused on it, because you want to take it seriously. Only in the seriousness of it, you forget to enjoy yourself!

Infuse your dedication with enjoyment.

You are doing what you have chosen to practice because you love yourself, so show that love.

Every time you dedicate yourself to your practice, carry with that a reminder to relax and enjoy. Be firm in your dedication, but gentle on your self. Allow joy in.

Meditations

Many people think that in order to do a meditation you have to find a quiet place, sit down, and devote an hour to it... so they end up not doing it! But it doesn't have to be that way at all! Got 30 seconds while you're waiting in line? Ground yourself by paying attention to your breath. Eating lunch alone? Do a mindful eating meditation. Extended meditation is incredibly beneficial, but even a few moments of awareness throughout the day make a huge difference in getting out of your head, getting into your body, and enabling you to consciously engage with the *experience* of life.

Below are the regular meditations that I use for mindfulness and to tune in to my Self. Please try them out, play around with them, tweak them. Do whatever works for you. If your Guidance tells you to do something else, then do that. But by all means, do it! There are as many paths to the Divine as there are hearts. *Walk yours.*

Chanting the AUM



AUM is sound of all that is. It is the vibration of the universe that exists in everything. It is constantly there, regardless of your voice, and by voicing it you are tuning yourself in to the vibration of everything. You are opening yourself up to become a conduit for the vibration of the Divine. As such, the AUM has been called "the bridge between God with form and God without form".

It is composed of the sounds A, U, and M, and then silence:

A - Waking Consciousness

U - Dream Consciousness

M - Deep Sleep, Divine Union

(silence) - Absolute Emptiness

Chanting the AUM is a ritual that continually draws us from waking consciousness, through sleep consciousness, down to deep sleep and divine union, to nothingness.

From ego, to unity, to the divine without form. In the moments after the AUM, there is the silence, the peace, the restfulness of nothingness.

Each time we chant we are tuning our *innerverse* with the universe. Focusing inward is the best way to access the universe because the body is the sensitive instrument which we experience existence. The more you tune in to yourself, the more you tune in with your Self.

Our natural state, our truest expression in life is love. AUM is all that exists, which is the Divine, which is love. AUM is love. Aum is bringing you, with each breath, from your self to your Self. From separateness to union.

Hold this in intention when you AUM.

Practicing Love

This is a powerful practice that I do multiple times a day. The purpose of this practice isn't to send love to someone else, or to receive love. If we focus on sending our love to someone, then they become the object of our practice. The purpose of this practice is instead to run the energy of love through the heart.

Focus your attention on your heart. When you focus your attention on a specific area of your body, you are sending it energy. With your attention on your heart, start to send the energy in your body to your heart. Don't worry about what your heart does with it. The heart is incredibly intelligent, and knows exactly what to do with that energy. Stay focused on sending energy to the heart. And stay present with it. The more intensely we focus energy on the heart, the more intense the experience can become. Relax and breathe, but stay focusing your energy on your heart. If an emotion comes up... send it to the heart. And stay focused.

You can do this for a few minutes, or for longer periods of time. Check in with your Guidance if you've gotten what serves you.

Each time you run love energy through your heart, it opens. It becomes stronger and it expands. The more you practice love, the more you'll notice its effects in the way you interact with the world, and in turn, how the world responds to you.

Opening the Heart

The heart can become constricted through emotions such as fear, hatred, and loneliness, and thoughts such as judgment, unworthiness, and isolation. It gets closed over time in reaction to pain from these, and it helps to consciously open it, facilitating our expression of the fullness of love that is our authentic Self. It is a process that takes constant effort. This practice is one that helps me to keep opening my heart every day. It can be done regardless of how your mood is, but I've found it to be particularly beneficial when consciously working through emotional pain.

Every time you feel pain in your heart, it is a new opening, and an opportunity to open up your heart more. Try using that pain as an entry point to pull open the wall around your heart.

Close your eyes. Sit in stillness, and relax. Allow your attention to rest on your heart. Observe it. If you pay attention closely enough, at any time regardless of your emotional state, there will be an area that is physically tender or sore. It will be a lot more apparent if you've just been through something painful, or you may have to go deeper to find a spot. With your attention focused on that exact area of pain, start to open into that area. Give your mind the image of your hands reaching into that exact spot, and pulling apart to open it. The heart may not be used to being exposed, so it might take a while to pull it open. When you've felt it open enough, observe your heart again, there will be other spots too. Repeat the process until your heart tells you it got what it needed. It may feel raw afterwards. That's a good sign.

Mindful Eating Meditation

Quite possibly the most enjoyable of all meditations - the epicurean in me *loves* this one 😊

Meditating is simply focusing your attention on something. You might be surprised to notice how often we eat without fully paying attention to what we're eating. Not only does this meditation focus your attention on something, but it focuses it in your body, and strengthens your awareness and appreciation of the sensual experience of being human.

Whenever you are eating, focus your attention on the food that you are eating : the smells, the flavors in your mouth, the textures, the experience of these senses. Keep your mind present in the experience... to the last bite. You'll find that you start to appreciate food so much more, because presence is like a turbo button on experience.

CAUTION: Practicing this for extended periods may turn you into a foodie ;)

By keeping the mind focused on what we're eating, we step into stronger awareness of the body, and a lot less distracted by the wandering thoughts of the mind. As such, you may start to hear your body telling you it has had enough sooner. A ways into the meal, start checking in with your body every few bites and ask if it's gotten what serves it... you might be surprised by what it tells you. Particularly in N. America, the portions are ridiculously huge, but we eat the whole thing because we may not listening to our body while eating most of the time, and because we're taught to eat what's there. Your body might want less than you give it. If so, listen to it.

Listening to Your Heart

This is a meditation best done in quiet. In essence you put your attention on your heart, and actively listen to hear it. Try to hear the pulse of it in you ears, and feel the beat of it in your chest. It's quite simple, but it takes stillness to achieve.

The purpose of this meditation is to put your attention in the body, and also to strengthen an awareness of, and connection to your heart. The process of *actively listening* also quiets the mind, and as such is a great method for creating calmness in a busy mind.

Mindful Breathing

This is a basic meditation, known as Ānāpānasati, where you sit in relaxed breathing, and pay attention to the sensation of your breath going in and out of your nostrils. That's it. It's sounds incredibly simple, though you may find it to be highly challenging to keep your *entire* attention on something as simple as a small sensation. Try it.

Thoughts will come in, but every time you notice your attention has shifted to your thoughts, just call your attention back to the sensation of your breath on your nostrils. As a challenge, try counting 5 breaths without focusing your attention on anything else but the sensation. (It can be hard!) Also, try seeing if you can stay with the sensation of breath after the exhale and before the inhale (it never stops).

This is an incredibly useful meditation, as it trains and sharpens the mind to **focus on one point**. Having a focused mind is essential for conscious living, which is a mindful journey. A clear and focused mind is also helpful for dialoguing with your Guidance.

This is a meditation that you can do pretty much anywhere for a few breaths or a few minutes. You can also do it for an hour if you want to really sharpen and clear your mind.

Techniques

Holding it with Love in your Heart

I've found this technique useful for when I'm feeling anxious or nervous (fear) about an impending event or interaction with someone.

Whenever you start feeling nervous or anxious, hold the image of that event or person in your mind and run love energy through your heart. This isn't to say that you have to love the person or thing, just hold your own *perception* of them in love.

Not only does this diffuse the current fear, and run love through the heart making us less fearful, but we are also *priming* ourself to feel love when that event actually comes or the person is present, therefore enabling us to move from a more relaxed place of love, with more authentic expression.

Breathing into the Tension/Pain

This technique is an adaptation of one that I learned in my yoga practice, but it is one that can be used independent of yoga to alleviate physical tension and pain. It uses the tide of the breath to direct energy (prana) to the afflicted area to relax the stress.

Get comfortable, and focus your attention on the area of tightness or tension or pain. Just observe how it is, and give it loving attention. There's no need to feel negative about it being tight or in pain. It just is, and it needs your loving attention.

On the inhale, breathe into the area, directing prana to that spot.

On the exhale, relax *into* the tension. Almost like you're leaning into it.

Continue to breathe into, and relax into the area. Get comfortable with it, and hold it with love in your heart. Observe any changes.

Psychosomatic Emotional Processing

This is a technique that is remarkably effective in helping to process intense emotions, such as fear, anxiety, and sorrow.

When experiencing a stressful emotion, either triggered by an incident that just happened, or by a mind replaying incidents from the past or anxiety about the future, the emotion can interfere with the mind's ability to think clearly. The less clearly the mind can think, the more likely it is to generate fear or grief-based thoughts which in turn generate more stressful emotions. It is a feedback loop which can continue causing unnecessary collateral stress.

Whenever you are feeling an intense emotion, focus your attention on your whole body. Keep your attention on your body, not one particular area, but the strong sensations that you are feeling all over. Your emotions cause physical sensations in your body. Hold your entire attention on those sensations. This diffuses the intensity of the emotions, while at the same time stopping the mind from creating more thoughts which generate more emotion.

When the intensity of the sensations start to subside, ask your mind what it is that you are feeling. Identify the emotion. Is it pain? Is it fear? Ask what kind of pain/fear it is. Identify the source. What is it that is causing you this emotion? Sit with the cause of the emotion, all the time holding the sensations of your body in your attention.

By consciously focusing our minds on our bodies when we are feeling stressful emotions, we can psychosomatically diffuse the emotional intensity into our bodies.

This short-circuits the feedback loop, and enables our minds to think more clearly, and get its bearings so that it can process whatever thoughts are triggering this emotion.

Other Intentional Practices

Judging others negatively closes us to the experience of life. **Practice noticing whenever you are judging someone else**, and respond to that by *consciously opening yourself up* to the full experience.

Try developing a practice that every time you check in with your guidance, **witness where you are** in the present moment.

Practice holding in consciousness that **everyone you see in the world is an expression of the Divine**. And when you recognize them as a unique expression of the Divine, let it be a reminder, a reflection back to you, that *you too are Divine*. Acknowledge their Divinity, as well as your own.

The Divine in me recognizes the Divine in food. You are eating life to live. It is also Divine. Practice holding that in intention.

Consciously approach everything you do in life with love in your heart.

When you say "namaste" and bow, let it be a reminder to you that *you are Divine*. Recognize your Self.