

# Welcome to Meditative Practices

Meditation and other meditative practices have been part of my daily routine since the 1980s. Even as a child, daydreaming, prayer, and creativity were regular practices that helped me calm my nervous system and tune into my inner world.

For the past few years, I have practiced pausing throughout the day rather than longer meditation sessions. I like pausing because it helps me return to myself and reset between work calls and playtime with my grandkids. It only takes a few minutes and can be done with eyes open or closed.

Let's define meditation as a way to clear your mind and listen. You may create space and then hear a dialogue running in the background of your mind, full of limitations and fear, or you may hear or feel a voice offering an answer to a question you have been pondering.

Meditation can be a traditional practice using a mantra or simply sitting in silence and stillness. There are also activities I call meditative practices. Different ways to clear your mind and listen.

## **Simple Meditative Practices help you:**

Wipe the slate clean  
Reset during your day  
Let go of limiting beliefs  
Listen to your inner voice  
Nourish your relationship with your intuition

In this PDF, I have shared a variety of practices for you to try. Notice which ones are already part of your day. Try something new. Reflect on how a practice adds value to your life.

## **Questions for Reflection:**

- Meditative practices help us to slow down and listen. What are some of the ways you create space to get quiet and listen?
- Write down the answer in a journal, in a Word document, or in an app.

# An Index of Practices

**WELCOME GRATITUDE .....3**  
**PAUSE.....4**  
**Mindful Yawning .....5**  
**Head, Body, Heart Check-in .....6**  
**Connect with Your Root Chakra .....8**  
**Clearing your Energy Field.....9**  
**Movement: Hippie Stretch and Butterfly ..... 11**  
**TEA Mind ..... 12**  
**Connect with the Elements ..... 14**  
**Listening: Developing Self-Trust and Inner Knowing with Andrea Hylen ..... 16**

# WELCOME GRATITUDE

This is a simple meditative practice by Sharon Salzberg, an author, teacher, and host of the podcast Mettahour, who writes about meditation and lovingkindness.

Sit or lie down on the floor in a relaxed, comfortable posture. Your eyes can be open or closed. Now bring to mind a pleasurable experience you had recently, one that carries a positive emotion such as happiness, joy, comfort, contentment, or gratitude.

Be present to what arises.

Take a moment to cherish whatever image comes to mind with the recollection of the pleasurable experience.

Now notice what emotions come up.

Notice what thoughts may be present as you bring to mind the positive.

End the meditation by simply sitting and being with the breath.

## Questions for Reflection:

- Try the simple practice and reflect or write about your experience.
- What are some of the ways you connect and feel gratitude?
- How does your body respond to the practice of welcoming gratitude?

# PAUSE

Introduce pauses into your daily routine by engaging in activities that help you stay grounded in the present moment. Pausing can help you notice signs you might otherwise miss.

## Here are a few ways to introduce pausing into your daily routine:

- Set a timer to stand up and stretch every hour. Stretch and look around the room. Look out the window.
- Sit by the window with a warm beverage and gaze at nature: the sky, a tree, a bird, or an animal. Breathe.
- Pause for a few seconds or minutes to create space for information to flow to you.
- Imagine that your mind is like a chalkboard. Feel yourself erasing everything that is on the chalkboard and starting with a blank canvas.
- As you walk down the street or enter a coffee shop, take a moment to observe your surroundings. Tune in to your senses. What do you see, hear, feel, smell, and sense?
- While driving, if you find yourself stuck in traffic or sitting at a red light, take a moment to look around at your surroundings.

## Questions for Reflection:

- Make a list of simple ways you can incorporate pausing into your daily life.
- Track your pausing practices for a day or a week, then write about how pausing affected your day and week.

# Mindful Yawning

*"You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf." - Jon Kabat-Zinn*

Yawning can increase alertness, stretch your muscles and joints, and help release anxiety. Pretend that you need to yawn and go through the motions by opening and stretching your mouth. You can also stretch your arms into the air as a way of inviting a yawn. Try this for a minute.

When you are not tired or bored, yawning can indicate that something is shifting and serve as a sign of emotional release. If you have ever had an energy session or listened to a guided meditation or tapping (EFT) and started to yawn, that is an example of release.

**From Real Simple Magazine, November 2022:**

**A Practice:** Mindful yawning.

Yawning increases cerebral blood flow and switches us from the brain's default mode network, which is activated when we're stuck in our heads, to the central executive network, which helps us focus on the present and our desired goal.

Close your eyes and yawn slowly, noticing where the yawn starts and what it feels like as you yawn. You might notice that you feel calmer.

Or if you're not in a place where you feel comfortable yawning - at the dinner table, for instance - another method is nurturing touch. Just lightly stroke your palm and arm. Really, really slowly, about four seconds for each inch. Try it now.

We tend to mirror other people's emotional states, but sometimes it's wiser to stay deeply relaxed and focused on a pleasurable feeling or thought.

## Questions for Reflection

- Play with the practice of yawning this week and reflect on your experience.

# Head, Body, Heart Check-in

*“Let the power come. Let ecstasy erupt. Allow your heart to expand and overflow with adoration for this magnificent creation and for the love, wisdom, and power that birthed it all. Rapture is needed now- rapture, reverence, and grace.”* **Ann Mortifee, In Love with the Mystery**

If you have ever felt your inner rebel or been overwhelmed by fighting and fierceness, this exercise can help you find a moment of peace and rest to recover. You can't push for change all the time without some respite.

**Here are two simple practices:**

## Head, Body, Heart Check-in

Take three full, gentle breaths, scanning one area of the body with each breath.

**First breath:** Scan the head, representing thoughts.

**Second breath:** Scan the body, representing emotions and sensations.

**Third breath:** Scan the heart, representing values and intentions.

Repeat this several times until you feel a calm, connection to yourself.

## Open Your Heart

Begin to imagine you are encircled by people who love you.

(Take a few breaths)

Receive the love of those who love you.

(Take a few breaths)

Notice how you feel when you receive love.

(Take a few breaths)

Open yourself up to receiving love.

(Take a few breaths)

Send loving care to the people in your circle.

(Take a few breaths)

~ Sharon Salzberg.

### **Questions for Reflection:**

- Try each of the exercises, then write about what you experienced.
- Are there other practices that you feel would help the Rebel release tension and return to love? Play with the practices and notice how you feel.

# Connect with Your Root Chakra

*“Let your inner child play. Reconnect your body to the earth by walking barefoot in a park or on the beach. Or just sit with your back against a tree to get grounded.” ~Kumiko Katharine Niwayama, Wellness Guide*

The Muladhara (root) chakra is connected to your inner child and the earth. It provides stability for your whole-body system and is located at the base of your spine. A strong root chakra helps you feel safe and protected. When your basic needs are met, your inner child can then navigate their world.

Practices to ground and support your root chakra are important for daily support. They help you stay connected to your body and the wisdom it provides.

## **Simple practices for connecting with your root chakra:**

1. Eat some raw or steamed root vegetables, such as turnips, rutabagas, carrots, sweet potatoes, and white potatoes. As you eat, feel yourself rooted and grounded in your body.
2. Focus on your root chakra as you breathe and close your eyes. Imagine a grounding cord or white light extending from your root chakra down into the Earth, a few feet or deeper. Tune in to the connection and stability of being rooted in Mother Earth.
3. Do something physical: Walk, run, or jump. Try Tai chi or Qi Gong. Sit with your back against a tree. Feel yourself rooted and present in your body.

## **Questions for Reflection**

- Try simple practices for rooting into your body, then write about your experience.
- How do you regulate your nervous system? Write about an experience of feeling safe and rooted.

# Clearing your Energy Field

*“Resilience is not just bouncing back to the original, it’s actually being able to grow from what happened.” Gabor Mate*

When I think of a somatic practice to support our nervous systems, I look to the Shadow Side for inspiration.

Words for the shadow of the Sage/Guide archetype are when, in their “wisdom,” they become too fixed or rigid in their ideas. The shadow can show up as living in your head, cutting off from body messages, and becoming isolated.

I’m listing a few practices to clear your physical energy field and tune into your body for support.

**Epsom salt baths:** Epsom salts are one way to detox your body of the energy you pick up throughout your day. It is a cleansing practice. You can add flower essences and oils that are pleasant to your senses. The key to this kind of bathing and showering is to be present in the moment. Stop thinking and feel.

**Sage:** Burning sage or incense in a room with the intention of clearing is also a powerful way to detox and clear. Light the sage or incense and place it in the middle of the room to cleanse the space. Alternatively, light it and walk around the room slowly, consciously, and respectfully. Call on benevolent spirits to clear the space as well.

**Chanting:** Drumming, singing, and playing music are all ways to clear energy and reconnect with your voice, throat, and body.

## **333 Somatic Practice:**

This is a practice for reducing or releasing anxiety and shifting your attention to the environment around you. It is something you can do right now, and it only takes a few minutes. It is a grounding technique that brings you into the present moment.

1. **Observe three things you see:** Look around the room and name three things in your head or out loud. I see a chair, the color of the walls, and a book on the shelf.

2. **Observe three things you hear:** Tune into your surroundings and either think or say what you hear. The humming of the refrigerator, a ringing in your ears, and birds chirping.

3. **Observe three things you can move or touch.** Move one part of your body at a time: turn your head, lift your arm, or tap your foot. You can also touch objects around you, including yourself. Touch the table where you are sitting. Touch your leg. Lift a glass or mug.

### **Questions for Reflection**

- Try the 333 techniques. Write down what you saw, heard, and touched. Write about the experience. You may want to set a timer and try it throughout the day.
- Try one of the clearing techniques with mindfulness and presence. How did it feel to pause and clear your space?

# Movement: Hippy Stretch and Butterfly

*“When you dance with the Africans, unless it is a ritual dance like a wedding or harvest or rain dance, there’s no right or wrong way to dance. There’s only movement. And the more you express your feelings as you move, the better you feel when you’re done...When I dance the African Way, I show my feelings with my body instead of hiding them in my heart. When I dance, I know I’m alive here and now. My body and soul are in harmony.” ~Maria Nhambu*

Focus on your physicality and acknowledge how your body stores memories and feelings. Move your body and let everything go.

**Here are two simple movements that you can modify and adapt.**

**Hippy stretch:** Stand up and bring your legs together with your feet flat on the ground. Slowly bend forward at your waist. With your feet flat on the ground, alternate bending one knee while keeping the other leg straight. Relax your head and neck, letting your head hang down. Release the tension. This is a slow, gentle movement you can do for a minute or less.

**Butterfly:** Sit on the ground or on your bed in what is called the Kindergarten or Butterfly position. Keep your back straight and bend your legs so the bottoms of your feet touch in front of you. Gently move your knees up and down like the gentle flapping of butterfly wings to stretch the inner part of your thighs. Experiment with moving your feet and legs in different ways to loosen your hips.

## Questions for Reflection

- Try each exercise and make modifications that suit your body. Write down what you experience.
- What other simple movement exercises can you do to move your body and release restless tension? An exercise ball, light hand weights, and seated in a chair.

# TEA Mind

*The phrase “tea mind” refers to the Zen-like qualities of awareness inspired by the Japanese art of tea - harmony and simplicity, a mind alert but at rest, clear attention to the moment. During the tea ceremony, attention focuses on the present, as we savor the subtle details of the occasion: the taste of the tea, the aroma of the incense, the sound of the whisk as the host mixes the green tea powder into a frothy brew. We slow down to appreciate the gracefulness of the movements, the silent communication, the simplicity of the room, the beauty of each tea object. The mind grows empty, and each movement becomes more full. Nestled in timelessness, attention wraps itself intimately around each moment. ~Tara Bennett-Goleman, Emotional Alchemy*

The tea ceremony is a wonderful practice for quieting the mind’s chatter, increasing attention, and slowing down in the present moment. Many daily activities can be turned into a “tea mind” practice. Slowing down. Maintaining clear attention to the moment. Feeling intimacy and timelessness.

## **Choose an activity.**

### **Some examples:**

A walk

Showering

Getting dressed

Morning face wash and skin care

Washing dishes

Cutting vegetables

Setting the table for a meal.

Preparing and drinking coffee or tea

Bring attention and reverence to the activity. If you choose an activity like getting dressed, lay out all the items before dressing. Then, get dressed in slow motion. Pause and feel the clothing. Notice the sensations as you place each item on your body.

Become aware of the timelessness and intimacy.

## **Questions for Reflection**

- Choose an everyday activity and add intention and reverence. Write about the experience.
- Reflect on how you can, as a practice, increase your attention to your daily activities.
- How did the “tea mind” practice change your day and affect your positive intelligence?

# Connect with the Elements

*"When life places stones in your path, be the water. A persistent drop of water will wear away even the hardest stone."*- Autumn Morning Star

One way to return to yourself after caring for and giving to others is to connect with nature's elements and create space to replenish and restore balance. Give to yourself so you can give to others. Give from the overflow whenever possible.

In this practice, take as much time as you want or need with each element. There is no need to rush. You can focus on one element for a few minutes, and that is enough. As you read the words, breathe.

**Here are some simple words from an article in Yoga Journal Spring 2022 by Rebecca Pacheco.**

**Earth:** Feel your bones - the source of the structure and solidity of your body-connect to the ground on which you sit or stand. Feel your spine lengthen.

**Air:** Notice your breath moving in and out. Feel the temperature and quality of the air on your skin.

**Fire:** Observe your body's warmth. You might consider your metabolic fire-are you hungry? What is it that you crave? Notice how quickly that thought arises and fades, like a weather system moving across your inner landscape.

**Water:** You might consider how your body is mostly water. Imagine the fluidity of your blood. Perhaps think about how you owe roughly every other breath you take to the ocean, no matter where you may live.

**Space:** Remember the spaciousness you contain. Experience the volume in your rib cage expanding as you breathe. Consider the emptiness in your nostrils and between your fingers and toes. Let your awareness open like a field.

**I am earth, I am air, I am fire, I am water, I am space.**

## **Questions for Reflection:**

- Which element do you feel most drawn to today?
- Write a reflection about one of the elements and the sensations you feel in your body.
- Breathe and Be with yourself.

# Listening: Developing Self-Trust and Inner Knowing with Andrea Hysten

At a time when information and other people's voices are at a peak, there is power in cultivating your inner voice. Listening to your body, heart, and mind is key. In this recording, Andrea will share ideas for creating listening spaces to build your connection to your inner knowing and self-trust, and we will practice together during the meeting.

<https://youtu.be/6P8pD-Yblg8?si=mzoDk9IPfPEgExBn>

Take the time to say hello to your inner world and ask for guidance. Build and rebuild a connection to your heart and your body. Use your imagination to create meditative practices that feel nourishing for you.

Live in the questions and create space for answers to emerge from within you and be mirrored back by the world around you.

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**Andrea Hylen** is a writer, coach, ancestral lineage healing practitioner, and psychopomp guide. She is the founder of Heal My Voice and The Incubator: An online coworking space for women creatives that supports the process. She is the mother of three adult daughters, one deceased son, and lives a house-free lifestyle with a mailbox in Los Angeles. This is her way of embodying the possibilities of a sharing economy.

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