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PORTABLE EDITION

by **Stephan Bodian**



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From 1984 to 1994 he was editor-in-chief of *Yoga Journal*, an award-winning magazine devoted to yoga, meditation, and holistic health. His books include *Timeless Visions, Healing Voices*, a collection of interviews of prominent visionaries and healers; *Living Yoga* (with Georg Feuerstein), an anthology of articles from *Yoga Journal*; and *Buddhism For Dummies* (with Jon Landaw), a comprehensive, user-friendly introduction to one of the world's great spiritual traditions.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the great meditation masters and teachers in every culture and age, who continue to show us the way through their wise and compassionate example. And to you, dear reader. May the practice of meditation bring you the peace, health, and happiness you seek!

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at <http://dummies.custhelp.com>. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

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Introduction

Everyone seems to want to know how to meditate these days. Whether you're seeking greater focus to get your job done more efficiently, less stress and more peace of mind, or a deeper appreciation of the beauty and richness of life, the simple practice of sitting down and turning your attention inward can do wonders for your body and your mind.

The truth is, you can learn the basics of meditation in five minutes. Just sit in a comfortable position, straighten your back, breathe deeply, and follow your breath. It's as simple as that!

Simple though it may be, meditation also has tremendous subtlety and depth, if you're interested in pursuing it further. In meditation, as in art, you can keep it simple – just get up every day and sit quietly for five or ten minutes – or you can explore the subtleties to your heart's content. It all depends on your needs, your intentions, and your level of interest and passion.

About This Book

As a teacher of meditation, I've always been hard-pressed to come up with a single book that teaches the basics, provides a comprehensive overview of techniques and practices, and offers guidance in going deeper.

Unlike any other book I've come across, this one covers all the bases. If you're looking for simple, easy-to-follow meditation instructions, you'll find state-of-the-art guidance here, filled with helpful tips from seasoned meditators and time-honored wisdom from the great teachers of old. If you want to get an overview of the meditation field before you zero in on a particular method of teaching, you'll catch a glimpse of the primary approaches available these days. If you've been meditating in a particular way and want to expand your horizons to include other techniques, you'll be pleased to discover that this book features dozens of different meditations for a variety of purposes, drawn from a range of sources and traditions. And if

you just want to understand why other people meditate – your partner, your friends, the guy in the office next to yours – jump onboard! You’ll discover whole chapters on why people meditate and how you can benefit from meditation, too.

This book is many things at once: an instructional manual, a survey course, and a guidebook for deeper exploration. Feel free to read it from cover to cover if you want, or just browse until you find the chapters that appeal to you. Throughout the book, you’ll find meditations and exercises you can experiment with and enjoy.

The best thing about this book, in my humble estimation, is that it’s fun to read. Meditation doesn’t have to be a dull or somber affair. Quite the contrary: The whole point of meditating in the first place is to lighten up and experience more peace and joy in your life. So forget those stereotypes of the uptight Zen monk or the reclusive navel-gazer! You can find out everything you ever wanted to know about meditation and enjoy yourself in the process.

Conventions Used in This Book

I use a few conventions in this book to help your reading go smoothly:

- ✔ When I want to make a topic crystal clear, I break the essential points down into bulleted lists (like this one), so you can follow them easily without getting lost in a sea of excess verbiage.
- ✔ Just as a piece of music may begin with a few opening phrases known as a *prelude*, most meditation instructions in this book begin with a similar directive – to sit quietly, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. When you’re accustomed to this prelude, you can naturally begin with it each time you meditate.
- ✔ The first time unfamiliar terms and phrases appear, they’re set in *italics* and accompanied by a brief definition.
- ✔ Web addresses and email addresses are set in `monofont`, so you can easily spot them.

What You're Not to Read

Here and there throughout this book I've sprinkled sidebars (text in gray boxes), which offer extra information, such as stories, examples, explanations, and assorted meditations. Though they're fun to read and intended to spice up the book, they're not essential. So if you're in a hurry to get to the meat of the matter (or the yogurt, if you're a vegetarian), feel free to skip over them – and come back later if you're so inclined.

Foolish Assumptions

When I wrote this book, I made a few assumptions about you, dear reader, that I thought I should share with you before we begin:

- ✔ You're intrigued enough by the topic of meditation to pick up this book, but you haven't yet discovered how to meditate – or if you have, you still feel the need for more guidance.
- ✔ You want less stress and more happiness and peace of mind, and you're willing to devote a little of your precious time to achieve it.
- ✔ Because you can't afford to spend long hours meditating in a monastery or ashram, you want instruction that you can put to use right now, at home or at work.
- ✔ You don't live on a desert island or in some isolated part of the globe; instead, you inhabit the ordinary world and confront the usual stresses, pressures, and responsibilities that most of us face.

If these assumptions apply to you, then you're definitely in the right place!

How This Book Is Organized

Although I designed this book so you can read it cover to cover – some people still do that, don't they? – I also made

sure that you can find what you're looking for easily and quickly. Each part covers a different phase of your encounter with meditation.

Part I: Getting Acquainted

If you don't know a thing about meditation, you'll probably want to start here. You'll discover what meditation is (and isn't) and how to prepare your mind for your meditation practice.

Part II: Getting Started

Here's where you actually find out how to sit down and work with your mind (and heart)! Just in case you're intimidated by the prospect of being quiet and turning inward, I provide easy-to-follow instructions that lead you through the process gently, step by step. I include a separate chapter on all the little details that most meditation books take for granted – such as how to keep your back (more or less) straight without getting uptight and what to do with your eyes and hands – and a chapter on stretching and preparing your body for sitting. You can even meditate lying down, if you prefer.

Part III: Troubleshooting and Fine-Tuning

After you start meditating regularly, you'll find that questions and even problems arise from time to time. You may wonder how to put all the pieces together in a way that's uniquely suited to your needs. Or you may encounter distractions you don't know how to deal with, like recurring fantasies or difficult emotions (for example, 'How can I possibly get my mind to stop playing the same Beastie Boys tune over and over?'). This part covers the fine points and hot spots of practice.

Part IV: Meditation in Action

It's one thing to calm your mind and open your heart in the privacy of your room, but quite another to practice meditation

throughout your day, with your boss (or your clients), your partner, your children, and the person in the car in front of you. This part shows you how to extend the benefits of meditation to every area of your life, from sex to stress-reduction to spirituality. If you're primarily interested in healing your body or mind or performing more effectively at work or play, you'll find a chapter that shows you exactly what you need to know.

Part V: The Part of Tens

I tend to gravitate to the end of a book first, which is why I love lists like these. In this part, you find answers to the most frequently asked questions about meditation, a distillation of the best all-purpose meditations, and compelling scientific evidence of the healing power of meditation.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, I use icons in the margins to draw your attention to particular kinds of information. Here's a key to what those icons mean:



When you see this icon, prepare to stop what you're doing, take a few deep breaths, and start meditating. It's your chance to savor the real thing!



If I haven't said it before, I should have – it's important information that bears repeating.



This wise guy shows you where to look for musings of a more philosophical nature.



If you want your meditations to be easier and more effective, follow this tidbit of insider advice.



People have been meditating for thousands of years. Here's some of the cool stuff they've discovered, in the form of an anecdote or story.

Where To Go from Here

Remember that you don't have to read the book sequentially, from cover to cover – you can pick it up anywhere your interests lead you. I've written it intentionally with just such an approach in mind.

As you read and react, I would love to hear from you. To get in touch with me, check out my website at www.stephanbodian.org.