



Aeson Knight

Master Psychic



YEAR AND A DAY WICCA SECOND PORGRAM
LESSON I

Creating A Magical Environment in Your Home

Start simply, often just working on one room is enough to get the ball rolling. It can be your kitchen, bedroom, living room, any room that you spend a decent amount of time in. It is not necessary to do a huge cleaning and wear yourself out, doing a little bit here and there can make a substantial improvement over time and you'll be a lot more likely to continue maintaining your home instead of getting worn out and giving up.

Putting Housecleaning in a New Perspective

When you work a spell or perform a ritual, the first thing on the agenda involves the specifications of the project. This is true for a spiritual housecleaning as well. To continue this project, you will need some 3x5 one for each room.

Standing in the middle of your home close your eyes and ask yourself what energy you want in your home.

Then on top of all the card write over all: love, joy, peace what the whole house energy is.

Now take the card for that room and go into it and ask yourself what energy you want this room to be.

Example living room, peace. Bedroom Love, Bathroom release.

1. How that energy would feel to you if you could touch it. You might say, soft, warm, loving, etc.
2. What color that energy brings to your mind.
4. What symbol you would associate with that energy.
5. Write the element which you feel corresponds to that energy.

Now comes the hard part. After you had gone through the whole house seat down and ask yourself how you feel walking thought the house.

How do you feel? How does your energy feel?

Now flip each card over and again go from room to room on the back of the card write what that room needs (new pillow to bring in orange into your living room because you want passion in the living room) have you been putting off buy new items for your

office/dining room? Do you hate the way your bedroom feels as it does not bring you peace because it so messy?

Include the broken items that need to move on. Things that need new homes or to return home.

These are your task to bring that room and part of your mind into balance. First complete this step before moving on to the next.

All-Purpose Disinfectant Spray/Wash

I use this for almost everything. I mix up 10 parts warm water with one-part white vinegar and a few drops of essential oil OR I let the vinegar water sit with fresh or dried herbs in it for about a week before using it to clean. The herbs you use here can change depending on what your space needs. For example, I use lavender for protection, purification, and peacefulness. Basil draws wealth and soothes tempers between lovers. Orange is good for luck and wealth (though NOT good for cats so if you have kitties stay away from orange oil!). And mint is good for healing. This is great for wiping down counters, cleaning windows and mopping.

Shower Cleaner

Cleaning showers is one of my least favorite tasks and trying to do it with safe cleaning products can be a nightmare, but I have got a solution that does the trick. This is not so much a magical cleaning product (though I'm sure you could turn it into one) but it's certainly a handy one to have around. Mix one-part warm white vinegar with one part liquid dish soap in a spray bottle. It does require a bit of scrubbing if your shower is bad but compared to every other DIY shower cleaner, I've tried it's a miracle.

Magical Floors

Sweeping has long been used by witches as a method of cleansing our homes magically and while a lot of sources will tell you to reserve a broom for the task and to sweep just above the floor to properly cleanse the area, I just do it all at once. Who has time to sweep twice? I can do the same magical task with a little intent and focus while I am also cleaning up crumbs and cat hair.

Vacuuming is perhaps a less common way to tidy up the energy of a room, but I find it works just as well as sweeping does! I make sure that when I empty a vacuum bag or dustpan I do it in the can outside to make sure I am not just shuffling energy around in my house.

Mopping is another excellent mundane cleaning task for witches, especially when it comes to entryways and exits to the house. In addition to picking grime up from your floor, your mop water can be charged and used to lay down spells. I like using herbs for my mop water usually but once a year in the spring I mop with sun charged water to bring the vibrant spring/summer energy into my house and once a year in the fall I mop with moon charged water to welcome the introspective fall/winter energy in.

Doors & Windows

Doors and windows are important, they both protect our homes from the unwanted and welcome us in every day. When I make a magical wash for my doors and windows, I like to use cinnamon, for protection, healing and enhancing my craft or, if I feel like I need a serious boost on my home protection or I need to break a curse I use chili pepper, which has the added bonus of strengthening love ties. In addition, both are bug repellent.

One suggestion I would make is when you are cleaning your house you should try to have windows open. This allows fresh air to circulate into your home and it allows an outlet for all the stagnant energy that you'll be stirring up. Doors can be left ajar as well if you are not worried about pets taking themselves outdoors. Obviously, this is not something you can do all the time, extremely hot or very cold weather would put a lot of strain on your heating/AC bill and it's always best not to let the rain in.

Immediately after cleaning is an excellent time to place sigils on doors and windows as well. I like to use my Binding Chalk to make a line just in front of doors and windows, it works very similarly to having a line of salt in the same place.

Bedrooms

Bedrooms can be a lovely place to do magic. If you share a bedroom with a lover, spells to enhance your relationship are favored. Tucking away herbal pillows or lighting candles can draw honesty and good communication for you and your partner or you could try something a tad spicier and use spells intended to ignite a little passion between the two of you.

If your bedroom is a solitary place, it can be an excellent place to do dreaming magic, to meditate, and to do spells for self-improvement.

In a child's bedroom, protective magic or sweet dream spells would be a good idea. A lot of small children have a fear of monsters and when I was little my parents would use "monster spray" every night to help me sleep. I know now that it was just water but

infuse the water with lavender and it could easily double as a sleep-aid and protective spell.

A Few More Magical Home Ideas

- Enchant the mirrors in your house to give everyone who looks into them a boost in their self-esteem/body image.
- Place a candle on the stove to symbolize the traditional hearth fire.
- Make a magic welcome mat that draws in good company and keeps away the bad
- Pay close attention to the sort of energy your decor creates and adjust it to help create the energy you want in your home.
- Is the TV the center of your home? Electronics can drastically change the feel of a space, try moving it to a less central spot and focus your rooms on something else.
- Playing music and changing the scent in a room can suffice for a quick energetic shift. Try setting a small pot of water with cranberries, orange peel, cinnamon, or mint on the stove to simmer.
- Get rid of stuff! Your belongings hang onto energy. Gifts from people you don't like. Stop being polite and letting their energy invade your house. Chuck it. Anything that reminds you of past relationships can go. In fact, cleaning house post-breakup is super important! Get rid of any lingering reminders, wash their smell out of everything and clean your mattress thoroughly.
- If it is broken do away with it. I know, I know, you are planning to get around to fixing it eventually. How often do you actually do that though? If you aren't willing to sit down right now to fix it, you probably won't ever get to it. Throw it away or give it to someone who will have a use for it.
- If you have not used it in the last year, chances are you won't use it in the next year either. Get rid of it.
- Make a habit of de-cluttering in small ways every day. Do not let the mail pile up, clean up dishes left in odd rooms, pick up laundry, and just generally put things back where they belong. This goes a long way toward keeping the energy flow moving through your home smoothly.
- Put bells on your doors. Bells help to clear energy, every time you open a door that room gets a little cleansing boost.

- Cleaning your house can be turned into more than just house magic. You can visualize yourself sweeping away worries or scrubbing old habits that are not serving you away as well.
- Bake bread. This really falls more under the heading of kitchen witchcraft but the smell of baking bread (or cookies!) wafting through your home can alter the energy in lovely ways and it is also great for bringing prosperity to the house.

Hopefully, this gives you guys some ideas and motivation to start making your home a little more magical. Remember not to overdo it, making a home is a constant, gradual process, not a marathon!

So, we have our home/temple clean physically now time to set the energy in your home.

You will need incense, a bell, a candle, and holy water (altar water with 3 blades of salt blessed by your own hands)

First take the incense throw the house moving it in and out and around the room and think/ say I cleanse this area removing anything that still here that does not aid me.

Second take the bell and begin ring in the room repeating that one word of the energy you wanted to fill, i.e., ringing the bell and chanting love, love

Then take the candle and repeat the same as you did with the bell. Then take the holy water and as you walk past the door, winds, stop dip your finger into the water and make a mark and say I seal you and lock you. So, Mote it be.

Repeat this anytime you feel that your temple needs to change to fit you.

Caring for the most important tool

Why Take a Ritual Bath?

Sometimes you just have an awful day. You are stressed and tired and all you feel is negativity. At this stage, one of the best things you can do is to take a ritual bath to purify the bad energy you are feeling and turn it into positive energy. Bonus, it is also really relaxing and if you use an essential oil like lavender, it's also extremely calming.

Live your best life by having a ritual bath if you're feeling stressed.

Even If you haven't had a bad day, but want to try some complicated spell work, you should consider a bath to purify anything unwanted that has crept in throughout the day.

While I don't have a ritual bath every time, I perform a ritual or cast a spell, I do tend to think they make a difference. I'll try to have a bath, or a purifying shower, whenever I can before magickal practices.

A ritual bath acts to cleanse not only the body but also the soul. It helps to clear your mind, re-center you and make your focus stronger and clearer. The use of certain herbs is wonderful too. Take some time and study a few of our herb guides like this guide to herbs for protection or this one on herbs for self-love. Choose herbs which match your intention i.e., for a love spell choose love herbs. Make sure that any herbs you use are safe for consumption and don't cause skin irritations!

We all know that hot water, a little space to ourselves and some peace and quiet can work absolute wonders. There is a reason movie so often show people relaxing in a bath. The hot water relaxes sore and strained muscles which gives your mind space to focus on things other than physical discomforts. Enjoy the relaxation of a bath while cleansing yourself energetically for your spell work. What's not to love?

Self-care baby!

RITUAL BATH

|

+-----+

The purpose of a ritual bath is to cleanse Yourself from the inside and out, of negative energies and prepare your Physical, Mental and Spiritual Self for Circle. A ritual bath is a rite in and of itself. The rite is ideally. Done just prior to Circle, but this is not always the case. [An example of such is if you have to travel to the meeting place.] After the rite is completed and you must travel to another place for Circle, try to keep your mind in a Spiritual frame as this will aid you in Circle.

The bath water should be infused with salts, herbs oils.
and colors that are harmonious with the work to be done in
Circle. To prepare for the bath:

Select the Herbs, [it is best to have your herbs in a

satchel for easier clean-up] oils and salts [of the same color as the candle] that you will be using.

Have a censer and charcoal block ready to burn a corresponding incense on.

Anoint a candle of appropriate color [Possibly using the same oil as you are using in the bath water.] If you have a shrine set up in your bathroom there should be a Goddess and God candle present.

Have some Holy Water ready? [Holy Water is made from: 1/3 sea-water {river-water with sea-salt added will do if seawater is unavailable}; 1/3 river-water; 1/3 spring-water {store bought is OK}.]

Have a tape recorder with meditation music in the bathroom with you, as its aid to visualization and meditation is invaluable. [Be cautious to have the tape recorder far away from any water and DO NOT TOUCH IT WHILE YOU ARE STILL WET.]

A glass of wine is also needed for consumption upon completion of the rite. And your libation dish for the libation to the Gods.

To begin turn out the lights and light the candle(s) and incense, turn on tape, fill the tub with warm water and

add herbs, oils, salts and a cup or so of Holy Water. With your Athame draw and visualize a Water or Banishing Pentagram over the bath water. All of these tools represent the four Elements; Air/the incense and the scents from the bath, Fire/the heat of the bath, Water/the bath and Holy Water and, Earth/the herbs and oils.

Lower yourself into the water and visualize it cleansing you of all negativity. Know that these energies are flowing from your Physical, Mental and Spiritual Self into the water. Relax and enjoy the warmth of the water, the scents in the air and the feeling of being cleansed of all negativity, let yourself drift. Now concentrate and visualize on the purpose of the coming ritual and know that you are truly prepared. When you feel you are ready? pull the plug and stay in the tub until all the water has drained. As the water is draining visualize and know that the negative energies that are now in the water are going into the Earth and are grounded.

Rise up out of the tub and do a Self-Blessing like the following:

Anoint each area while saying aloud:

Blessed be my Mind, that learns of Your ways.

[anointing your forehead]

Blessed be my eyes, that have seen this day.

Blessed be my lips,

That utter Your names and keep Your secrets.

Blessed be my breast(s), formed in strength (Beauty).

Blessed be the phallus (Womb),

For without which I would not be.

Blessed be my knees, that shall kneel at thy Sacred Altar.

Blessed be my feet, that have brought me in these ways.

Pour a libation to the Gods and drink the wine. When?
dried, robe, clean-up the bathroom and take the libation
outside to return it to the Earth. The rite is ended.

So, Mote it Be!

My Top 11 Tips and Tricks for Ritual Bathing

1. Having a ritual bath allows you to stop for a minute and think things through, and then lets you wash the negative things away along with the bathwater. When you are having a ritual bath, really sit and focus on the things you want to get rid of. Is this a bad habit or are you thinking about trying a habit-breaking spell? Are you filled with negative thoughts which you want to release so you can replace them with positive ones? Did you have a bad day which you need to wash away? All these things can be helped with a bath as you are literally washing away anything you want to be rid of when you release the water.
2. It's important to set the mood whenever you want to do any spell work. The same goes for a ritual bath. What makes you feel relaxed and good? Do you have a favorite essential oil? Take your diffuser into the bathroom and put in some relaxing oils. I particularly like lavender but will also use a little peppermint sometimes if I'm feeling too sleepy.
3. Make sure that you have undisturbed peace and quiet to take your bath. Do you have housemates who need to get ready for a night out and might bang on the door? Kids that need dinner. A dog that hasn't been for a walk? I know life is busy and there are always things on the go, but it's important that you set aside a little "me time" if you want this ritual bath to have the desired effect. Walk the dog before you get in the bath, tuck the kids into bed. Tell your housemates you had a hard day and need a relaxing bath and ask them to give you a little space.

This is not fun if you are trying to relax! If you feel like it, safely light a couple of candles. This gives you a much more relaxing light. I don't know about you, but my bathroom light definitely isn't the nicest and really doesn't make for a relaxing mood. Sometimes I take a small lamp with me or else I use some battery-powered fairy lights to make the bathroom a little cozier. If you are using candles, practice fire safety, please! There is nothing less relaxing than something accidentally catching fire. Also, keep all the lights and lamps AWAY from the water. Electrocution isn't very relaxing either.

6. If you choose to use a candle, make sure it's a candle that you don't plan on doing any magical work with. Candles absorb the energy of where they were lit, so if you have negative energy that you are ridding yourself of with a bath, the candle will pick up that energy and it might negatively affect the success of the spell you cast using that candle.

7. Is there music you like to listen to? Play something you love softly in the background in order to achieve peak relaxation. I wouldn't suggest heavy metal, I don't think this is going to provide you with the relaxed energy that you need, but you do you!

8. Make sure you have a nice fluffy towel waiting for you to wrap yourself up in. Use a bathrobe if you have one so that when you step out of the bath you feel like you are stepping into a warm hug.

9. Add some herbs to your bath. Protection herbs are nice, like rosemary or sage. You can use fresh herbs, essential oils, or dried herbs. I prefer fresh ones if I can get them but do whatever is easiest and best for you. I like to put mine into a small cheesecloth bag to contain them. While they look pretty floating around you, you don't want them clogging up your drain when you empty the water and causing you stress! If you want, you can hang them from the tap of your bathtub so that the water runs through them into the bathtub.

9. When you are ready, get into the bath. Allow yourself to sink into the water and feel the heat relaxing you. Settle into the feeling of warmth and let relaxation flow through your body. Imagine all of your muscles slowly releasing the tension of the day. Try and clear your mind.

10. When you are relaxed and feeling good, think about what it was that caused your bad day or negative energy. What do you need to cleanse away? Imagine the warm water teasing the negativity out of you and replacing it with relaxed and positive energy. Let the anger you have over something that went wrong go. Release it into the water. Really focus on this energy release. Imagine it as an invisible particle that each pore of your skin is releasing and let the water dilute and pull it away from you.

11. When you are ready and have tried to release all the stress and negativity you had built up, step out of the bathtub. Release the water and as you watch it swirl down

the drain, imagine all your negative energy swirling down the drain and away from you with the water. Feel the release of this detrimental energy and thank the water for cleansing you of it and the herbs for protecting and purifying you.

Hopefully, you feel this good when you exit your ritual bath!

What Herbs to Use in a Ritual Bath

You can really use whatever herbs you want for a cleansing bath. Pick something you like the smell of and enjoy using. As mentioned earlier, match your herbs to the intention of the spell you want to cast. Generally, I like to use protection herbs or self-love herbs as I always feel a little vulnerable when soaking in the tub.

My favorite Herbs for a Ritual Bath

- Anise
- Cinnamon
- Eucalyptus
- Fennel
- Juniper
- Lavender
- Rosemary
- Sage
- Witch Hazel

Are Ritual Showers a thing?

I know that not everyone has a bathtub, but don't worry, you can have a ritual shower instead! You can do everything we've just gone over in the shower too. Just make sure to hang your herb sachet about your showerhead so that the water is flowing over the herbs and over you before heading down the drain while taking your negative energy with it. If you are using essential oils, mix a little of these into a body wash or drip them onto your bar of soap.

Breath away the stress and negative energy. Showers also make good "Ritual Baths".

I'll leave you with a prayer for cleansing, you can say it before you get in the bath or after you finished your bathing ritual:

Prayer for Cleansing and Ritual Baths

"I cleanse myself of all resentment, critical thought and self-condemnation. I purify myself of selfishness, self-flagellation, and judgement of my fellow beings. I bathe myself in generosity, self-appreciation, praise, and acknowledgement of my own power. I bathe myself in self- acceptance and understanding of my fellow beings. So, Mote it Be."

While we are spiritual being we must maintain our physical self and our spiritual self without mental self.

Emptying your Brain and laying Down your worries.

Journaling is not a requirement but is essential in your spiritual journey.

Therefore many Wiccans keep a journal of some sort, whether it's a dream journal, a spell book, or a Book of Shadows.

When you journal, you keep notes of what you did, when you did it, and the results that came to be.

Being a witch, it can be spells, rituals, dreams, and astral traveling details that you've done. So journaling is a sort of record-keeping.

This is very important because we are witches and we are humans...and therefore, we forget.

You can cast a spell or perform a ritual and that's about it. You can stop at that. But if you jot down details of your experience, you will be clear on the details even the next day, the next week, even after months have passed.

Journaling will help you see what went wrong if something went wrong. And eventually, you will get better at your craft.

It also helps you avoid thinking that something happened when it didn't, and it also makes you identify amazing results that you find later on.

STARTING A JOURNAL

A lot of witches are put off just by the prospect of not knowing what to write. Remember, you are not in school anymore and no one is going to grade you for your penmanship and there are no right or wrong thoughts here.

You can start by writing down the date, day, time, place and what happened. If it's a Sabbat or an event, then write it down accordingly.

You can also add your correspondence charts for herbs, crystals, candle colors, what have you.

Let journaling become a practice and eventually you will find yourself adding more sections, charts, and graphs.

A lot of witches think, why not just type down thoughts to save? While that might be tempting, computers can crash, what's more, you cannot infuse what you're typing down with your intent. You also cannot bless what you've written on your computer.

Computers are a high-voltage thing that can mess with your magick. You can of course, print what you have typed down but the act of writing something infuses what you've written with your intent, making it stronger.

Think about this, when you are many years down the road of your practice, you can gain wisdom from looking back and seeing how far you have gone. But you cannot possibly remember every little thing because our memories are fallible.

Having a journal allows you to reminisce about past thoughts, feelings, and experiences you had and spells and rituals that you did. You can also see your realizations as a younger witch.

A journal is a tool for self-evaluation and self-improvement, allowing you to examine your life, for you come to know yourself through your journal.

It is an amazing experience. It's something that you shouldn't deprive yourself from having. Do not deprive yourself of having a treasure trove of a record of events, experiences, thoughts, feelings, spells, rituals, and realizations.

I promise you that if you keep journals and records, they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to your children, your grandchildren, and the next generation of witches.

What are you waiting for? Take the opportunity to journal while you can! :)

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

A brief explanation of the practice.

How do you learn to meditate? In mindfulness meditation, we're learning how to pay attention to the breath as it goes in and out, and notice when the mind wanders from this task. This practice of returning to the breath builds the muscles of attention and mindfulness.

When we pay attention to our breath, we are learning how to return to, and remain in, the present moment—to anchor ourselves in the here and now on purpose, without judgement.

The idea behind mindfulness seems simple—the practice takes patience. Indeed, renowned meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg recounts that her first experience with meditation showed her how quickly the mind gets caught up in other tasks. “I thought, okay, what will it be, like, 800 breaths before my mind starts to wander? And to my absolute amazement, it was one breath, and I'd be gone,” says Salzberg.

Why Learn to Meditate?

A selection of benefits that are associated with meditating.

While meditation isn't a cure-all, it can certainly provide some much-needed space in your life. Sometimes, that's all we need to make better choices for ourselves, our families, and our communities. And the most important tools you can bring with you to your meditation practice are a little patience, some kindness for yourself, and a comfortable place to sit.

When we meditate, we inject far-reaching and long-lasting benefits into our lives. And bonus: you don't need any extra gear or an expensive membership.

Here are five reasons to meditate:

1. Understanding your pain
2. Lower your stress.
3. Connect better.
4. Improve focus.
5. Reduce brain chatter.

How to Meditate

Meditation is something everyone can do, here's how.

Meditation is simpler (and harder) than most people think. Read these steps, make sure you're somewhere where you can relax into this process, set a timer, and give it a shot:

1) Take a seat

Find place to sit that feels calm and quiet to you.

2) Set a time limit

If you're just beginning, it can help to choose a short time, such as five or 10 minutes.

3) Notice your body

You can sit in a chair with your feet on the floor, you can sit loosely cross-legged, you can kneel—all are fine. Just make sure you are stable and in a position, you can stay in for a while.

4) Feel your breath

Follow the sensation of your breath as it goes in and as it goes out.

5) Notice when your mind has wandered

Inevitably, your attention will leave the breath and wander to other places. When you get around to noticing that your mind has wandered—in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes—simply return your attention to the breath.

6) Be kind to your wandering mind

Don't judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.

7) Close with kindness

When you're ready, gently lift your gaze (if your eyes are closed, open them). Take a moment and notice any sounds in the environment. Notice how your body feels right now. Notice your thoughts and emotions.

That's it! That's the practice. You go away, you come back, and you try to do it as kindly as possible.

How Much Should I Meditate?

Meditation is no more complicated than what we've described above. It is that simple ... and that challenging. It's also powerful and worth it. The key is to commit to sit every day, even if it's for five minutes. Meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg says: "One of my meditation teachers said that the most important moment in your meditation practice is the moment you sit down to do it. Because right then you're saying to yourself that you believe in change, you believe in caring for yourself, and you're making it real. You're not just holding some value like mindfulness or compassion in the abstract, but really making it real."

Meditation Tips and Techniques

We've gone over the basic breath meditation so far, but there are other mindfulness techniques that use different focal points than the breath to anchor our attention—external objects like a sound in the room, or something broader, such as noticing spontaneous things that come into your awareness during an aimless wandering practice. But all of these practices have one thing in common: We notice that our minds ARE running the show a lot of the time. It's true. We think thoughts, typically, and then we act. But here are some helpful strategies to change that up:

How to Make Mindfulness a Habit

It's estimated that 95% of our behavior runs on autopilot. That's because neural networks underlie all of our habits, reducing our millions of sensory inputs per second into manageable shortcuts so we can function in this crazy world. These default brain signals are so efficient that they often cause us to relapse into old behaviors before we remember what we meant to do instead.

Mindfulness is the exact opposite of these default processes. It's executive control rather than autopilot, and enables intentional actions, willpower, and decisions. But that takes *practice*. The more we activate the intentional brain, the stronger it gets. Every time we do something deliberate and new, we stimulate neuroplasticity, activating our grey matter, which is full of newly sprouted neurons that have not yet been groomed for "autopilot" brain.

But here's the problem. While our intentional brain knows what is best for us, our autopilot brain causes us to shortcut our way through life. So how can we trigger ourselves to be mindful when we need it most? This is where the notion of "behavior design" comes in. It's a way to put your intentional brain in the driver's seat. There are

two ways to do that—first, slowing down the autopilot brain by putting obstacles in its way, and second, removing obstacles in the path of the intentional brain, so it can gain control.

Shifting the balance to give your intentional brain more power takes some work, though. Here are some ways to get started.

- **Put meditation reminders around you.** If you intend to do some yoga or to meditate, put your yoga mat or your meditation cushion in the middle of your floor so you can't miss it as you walk by.
- **Refresh your reminders regularly.** Say you decide to use sticky notes to remind yourself of a new intention. That might work for about a week, but then your autopilot brain and old habits take over again. Try writing new notes to yourself; add variety or make them funny. That way they'll stick with you longer.
- **Create new patterns.** You could try a series of "If this, then that" messages to create easy reminders to shift into the intentional brain. For instance, you might come up with, "If office door, then deep breath," as a way to shift into mindfulness as you are about to start your workday. Or "If phone rings, take a breath before answering." Each intentional action to shift into mindfulness will strengthen your intentional brain.

Some Basic Meditations

These are some meditation practices to get you going.

A Basic Meditation for Beginners

The first thing to clarify: What we're doing here is aiming for mindfulness, not some process that magically wipes your mind clear of the countless and endless thoughts that erupt and ping constantly in our brains. We're just practicing bringing our attention to our breath, and then back to the breath when we notice our attention has wandered.

- **Get comfortable and prepare to sit still for a few minutes.** After you stop reading this, you're going to simply focus on your own natural inhaling and exhaling of breath.
- **Focus on your breath.** Where do you feel your breath most? In your belly? In your nose? Try to keep your attention on your inhale and exhale.
- **Follow your breath for two minutes.** Take a deep inhale, expanding your belly, and then exhale slowly, elongating the out-breath as your belly contracts.

Welcome back. What happened? How long was it before your mind wandered away from your breath? Did notice how busy your mind was even without your consciously directing it to think about anything in particular? Did you notice yourself getting caught up in thoughts before you came back to reading this? We often have little narratives running in our minds that we didn't choose to put there, like: "Why DOES my boss want to meet with me tomorrow?" "I should have gone to the gym yesterday." "I've got to pay some bills" or (the classic) "I don't have time to sit still, I've got stuff to do."

If you experienced these sorts of distractions (and we all do), you've made an important discovery: simply put, that's the opposite of mindfulness. It's when we live in our heads, on automatic pilot, letting our thoughts go here and there, exploring, say, the future or the past, and essentially, not being present in the moment. But that's where most of us live most of the time—and pretty uncomfortably, if we're being honest, right? But it doesn't have to be that way.

We "practice" mindfulness so we can learn how to recognize when our minds are doing their normal everyday acrobatics, and maybe take a pause from that for just a little while so we can choose what we'd like to focus on. In a nutshell, meditation helps us have a much healthier relationship with ourselves (and, by extension, with others).

Guided Meditations for Beginners

Guided meditations are an excellent tool for beginners, as they provide a focal point and gentle instruction to help you connect and let go of self-judgment.

A short practice for settling the mind, intended for doing in the middle of the day, wherever you are out in the world.

A longer practice that explores meditation posture, breathing techniques, and working with thoughts and emotions as they surface during mindfulness practice.

A practice that explores sitting in formal meditation for longer periods of time.

More Styles of Mindfulness Meditation

Once you have explored a basic seated meditation practice, you might want to consider other forms of meditation including walking and lying down. Whereas the previous meditations used the breath as a focal point for practice, these meditations below focus on different parts of the body.

Introduction to the Body Scan Meditation

Try this: feel your feet on the ground right now. In your shoes or without, it doesn't matter. Then track or scan over your whole body, bit by bit—slowly—all the way up to the crown of your head. The point of this practice is to check in with your whole body: Fingertips to shoulders, butt to big toe. Only rules are: No judging, no wondering, no worrying (all activities your mind may want to do); just check in with the physical feeling of being in your body. Aches and pains are fine. You don't have to do anything about anything here. You're just noticing.

A brief body awareness practice for tuning in to sensations, head-to-toe.

Begin to focus your attention on different parts of your body. You can spotlight one particular area or go through a sequence like this: toes, feet (sole, heel, top of foot), through the legs, pelvis, abdomen, lower back, upper back, chest shoulders, arms down to the fingers, shoulders, neck, different parts of the face, and head. For each part of the body, linger for a few moments and notice the different sensations as you focus.

The moment you notice that your mind has wandered, return your attention to the part of the body you last remember.

If you fall asleep during this body-scan practice, that's okay. When you realize you've been nodding off, take a deep breath to help you reawaken and perhaps reposition your body (which will also help wake it up). When you're ready, return your attention to the part of the body you last remember focusing on.

Introduction to the Walking Meditation

Fact: Most of us live pretty sedentary lives, leaving us to build extra-curricular physical activity into our days to counteract all that. Point is: Mindfulness doesn't have to feel like another thing on your to-do list. It can be injected into some of the activities you're already doing. Here's how to integrate a mindful walking practice into your day.

A mindful movement practice for bringing awareness to what we feel with each step.

As you begin, walk at a natural pace. Place your hands wherever comfortable: on your belly, behind your back, or at your sides.

- If you find it useful, **you can count steps up to 10**, and then start back at one again. If you're in a small space, as you reach ten, pause, and with intention, choose a moment to turn around.
- With each step, **pay attention to the lifting and falling of your foot**. Notice movement in your legs and the rest of your body. Notice any shifting of your body from side to side.
- Whatever else captures your attention, **come back to the sensation of walking**. Your mind will wander, so without frustration, guide it back again as many times as you need.
- Particularly outdoors, **maintain a larger sense of the environment around you**, taking it all in, staying safe and aware.

Explore this practice to extend compassion to yourself, those around you, and the larger world.

This loving-kindness practice involves silently repeating phrases that offer good qualities to oneself and to others.

1. **You can start by taking delight in your own goodness**—calling to mind things you have done out of good-heartedness and rejoicing in those memories to celebrate the potential for goodness we all share.
2. **Silently recite phrases** that reflect what we wish most deeply for ourselves in an enduring way. Traditional phrases are:
 - May I live in safety.
 - May I have mental happiness (peace, joy).
 - May I have physical happiness (health, freedom from pain).
 - May I live with ease.
3. **Repeat the phrases** with enough space and silence between so they fall into a rhythm that is pleasing to you. Direct your attention to one phrase at a time.
4. **Each time you notice your attention has wandered, be kind to yourself** and let go of the distraction. Come back to repeating the phrases without judging or disparaging yourself.
5. **After some time, visualize yourself in the center of a circle** composed of those who have been kind to you, or have inspired you because of their love. Perhaps you've met them, or read about them; perhaps they live now, or have

existed historically or even mythically. That is the circle. As you visualize yourself in the center of it, experience yourself as the recipient of their love and attention. Keep gently repeating the phrases of loving-kindness for yourself.

6. **To close the session, let go of the visualization**, and simply keep repeating the phrases for a few more minutes. Each time you do so, you are transforming your old, hurtful relationship to yourself, and are moving forward, sustained by the force of kindness.

Beyond the Beginning

What to know and where to go when you've started.

Frequently Asked Questions About Mindfulness Meditation, Answered

When you're new to meditation, it's natural for questions to pop up often. These answers may ease your mind.

1) If I have an itch, can I scratch it?

Yes—however, first try scratching it with your mind before using your fingers.

2) Should I breathe fast or slow or in between?

Only worry if you've stopped breathing. Otherwise, you're doing fine. Breathe in whatever way feels comfortable to you.

3) Should my eyes be open or closed?

No hard-and-fast rules. Try both. If open, not too wide, and with a soft, slightly downward gaze, not focusing on anything in particular. If closed, not too hard, and not imagining anything in particular in your mind's eye.

4) Is it possible I'm someone who just CANNOT meditate?

When you find yourself asking that question, your meditation has officially begun. Everyone wonders that. Notice it. Escort your attention back to your object of focus (the breath). When you're lost and questioning again, come back to the breath again. That's the practice. There's no limit to the number of times you can be distracted and come back to the breath. Meditating is not a race to perfection—It's returning again and again to the breath.

5) Is it better to practice in a group or by myself?

Both are great! It's enormously supportive to meditate with others. And practicing on your own builds discipline.

6) What's the best time of day to meditate? Whatever works. Consider your circumstances: children, pets, work. Experiment. But watch out. If you always choose the most convenient time, it will usually be tomorrow.

7) What if I get sexually (and physically) aroused by thoughts in my head?
No big deal. Meditation stokes the imagination. In time, every thought and sensation will pop up (so to speak). And come back. Same old story. Release the thought, bring awareness and receptivity to body sensations, bring attention back to your chosen object (the breath, in this case). Repeat.

8) Do you have any tips on integrating pets into meditation practice?
While meditating, we don't have to fight off distractions like a knight slaying dragon. If your dog or cat comes into the room and barks and meows and brushes up against you or settles down on a part of your cushion, no big deal. Let it be. What works less well is to interrupt your session to relate to them. If that's what's going to happen, try to find a way to avoid their interrupting your practice.

SMUDGING: HOW TO DO IT--HOW NOT TO DO IT

~~~

I came across an interesting article from "Shaman's Drum" which was reprinted for Vision Quest Bookstore. I will attempt to convey the gist of it, along with my views, as a student of the Ways of the Tenah, about it. Smudging is a way of using the smoke from burning herbs as a way to cleanse the body, an object, or a given area of negative influences. I myself use smudging to "cleanse" crystals before using them in jewelry projects I may do, and for protecting me home from some recent "bad vibe"-producing events. (landlord troubles!) I imagine that the skillful use of the proper herbs could help in awarding and banishing ceremonies as well, if used properly and with reverence. The three most used plant material for smudging are sage of all types, cedar, and sweetgrass.

Sage

~~~~

There are two major genii and several varieties of each genus of Sage that are used for smudging. Salvia, or the herb sage used for cooking, comes in two major varieties: *S. Officinalis*, commonly known as Garden Sage, and *S. Apiana*, commonly known as White Sage. Salvia varieties have long been acknowledged as healing herbs, reflected in the fact that its genus name comes from the Latin root word **salvare**, which is the verb "to heal" or "to save." Artemisia is the genus commonly.

considered "Sagebrush", and is more common in the wilds out here in California. There are two major varieties to the *Artemisia* genus: A. *Californica*, or Common Sagebrush, and A. *Vulgaris*, or Mugwort. There are many other varieties of both *Salvia* and *Artemisia*, and all are effective in smudging. Sage is burned in smudging ceremonies to drive out evil spirits, negative thoughts and feelings, and to keep Gan'n (negative entities) away from areas where ceremonials take place. In the Plains Sweat lodge, the floor of the structure is strewn with sage leaves for the participants to rub on their bodies during the sweat. Sage is also used in keeping sacred objects like pipes or Peyote wands safe from negative influence. In the Sioux nation, the Sacred Pipe is kept in a bundle with sage boughs. I would think special crystals could be so protected this way as well.

Cedar

~~~~~

True cedar is of the *Thuja* and *Libocedrus* genii. Some Junipers (*Juniperus* genus) are also called "cedar", thus complicating things some. Some Juniper varieties ARE cleansing herbs, especially J. *Monosperma*, or Desert White Cedar. But for smudging, the best is Western Red Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) and California Incense Cedar (*Libocedrus descurrens*). Cedar is burnt while praying to the Great Spirit (Usen', the Source--also known to Plain's nations as Wakan Tanka) in meditation, and also to bless a house before moving in as is the tradition in the Northwest and Western Canada. It works both as a purifier and as a way to attract GOOD energy in your direction. It is generally available in herb stores

in chipped form, which must be sprinkled over a charcoal in a brazier.

I like a piece of charcoaled mesquite for this purpose, rather than the commercial charcoal cakes.

### Sweetgrass

~~~~~

Very important to the Sioux and Cherokee nations, its botanical name is Hierochloa Odorata. In these tribes, the sweetgrass is braided like hair braids. It could be burnt by lighting the end of it, or (more economically) by shaving little bits of it onto charcoal in a brazier. Again, use charcoaled Mesquite (I believe it comes packaged for barbecue use under the brand name "Red Arrow") to burn it, not pressed charcoal tablets. Sweetgrass is burnt after smudging with sage, to welcome in good influences after the bad had been driven out. Sweetgrass is very rare today, and traditional Plains people have been attempting to protect the last of it. Myself, I believe that Cedar, which is not endangered, can safely be used this way. Also, Pinon pine needles (used more frequently by the Southwest Teneh, like the Navajo and Apache as well as the Pueblo people and the Zuni) and Copal (used by the Yaqui and in ancient times by the Azteca and the Maya) have similar effect. The three mentioned here are readily available either through gathering yourself or, in the case of copal resin, from any good herb shop.

Using Smudging

~~~~~ ~~~~~

Burn clippings of the herb in a brazier...not a shell as some "new age" shamanic circles do...it is an insult to White Painted Woman (The Goddess) to do this, especially with the abalone shell which is especially sacred to Her. If the herb is bundled in a "wand", you can also light the end of the wand that isn't woody and use that. I like the latter way. Direct the smoke with your hands or with a Peyote (feather) wand over the person or thing you wish to smudge. If you can see auras, look for discolored places in the aura and direct the healing smoke towards those places on the patient's body. For cleansing a house, first offer cedar smoke to the four directions outside the house. Then, take a sage bough and go throughout the inside of the house, making sure, the smoke penetrates every nook and cranny of the house. It might help also, if you have a power animal, to visualize your animal doing these things, to also dance your animal, and if you have a power song, to sing that too. Then finally, run through the house with a white candle that is well protected, to "light up" the house. Careful not to burn it down when you do it!!!

### Final Thoughts

~~~~~ ~~~~~

Smudging should be done with care, with reverence, and in an attitude of LOVE. Show your respect and honor to the plants that Usen' has given us for our healing, and they will return the favor by keeping us well and free from disease and negative energy. Aloe Vera plants,

though not to be burnt, are good for the cleansing angle as well. Keep one or more potted Aloe Veras in the house (modern varieties are too tender to plant in anything but full shade outside) in organic (wood or ceramic, never plastic or metal) pots. To honor the plant when you transplant it, sprinkle the roots with corn meal and smudge it with cedar once it is transplanted. The spirit of Aloe Vera is a good protective spirit, and if you burn yourself, can also be used to heal your skin. BE SURE TO ASK THE PLANT'S PERMISSION before cutting part of the leaf off for the healing juice. If you don't, the protective power of the plant will cease, and you will be left with but an inert houseplant...and perhaps some bad karma to boot.

Hi-dicho, it is finished....ENJU!

Michelle Chihacou White Puma Klein-Hass

