

Your Guide to Resilience & Healing Meditations



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Version 4

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Meet Michelle:

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Biography

Michelle Luehman has been teaching and practicing Meditation for 20 years. She has studied with Masters from different disciplines: Buddhism, Hindu, Osho, and New Age. She resides in Australia. She lived in Lao for 13 years and she is the only female, foreigner, and non Monastery Resident who has been granted by the Buddhist Council of Lao, the right to teach Meditation in Monasteries within Lao. She is considered by the Buddhist Community and her students as a Meditation Master and a Master Meditation Teacher.

She teaches a non-denominational practice of Meditation and Spirituality. She is available for distance learning: connect@souljourneyacademy.live



Four Pillars of Successful Meditation Practice.

In the following pages, we will work through each of the four foundations to help you establish your meditation practice. This is a general guideline and you will find my approach is practical, relaxed, and informative. Meditation should be an enjoyable experience. One which encourages discipline in practice and rewards effort. So that you look forward to your meditation practice and consider it one of life's pleasures.

Quiet the Mind

1. Create the mind association of relaxation and ritual as preparation for meditation.
2. Teaching the mind and the body to be comfortable with silence and stillness

Reward through Discipline.

3. Learning to be consistent in maintaining your practice
4. Releasing expectations so that you can enjoy the experience at face value every time.



Symbolism of the Lotus Flower

The lotus flower is a symbol of Buddhist Practice - Dharma. It is shared with the Hindu belief that the flower represents renewal, beauty, and purity.

In Lao, Buddha almost always sits on a lotus alter.

The flower itself, has its roots in the silty mud of a small pond and it grows through the water towards the sun, opening up its delicate petals to reveal all of its glory. With sunset, it gently closes up the petals awaiting its reawakening with the sun.

Photo: Temple Door Panel. Wat Xiang Thong, Luang Prabang.

Simple words of wisdom.

Meditation is the simple art of sitting peacefully with a quiet mind and a relaxed body. Be comfortable, be relaxed and be open to the experience. All will be revealed when the time is right.

Like everything, meditation can be difficult. to learn when you first start. The reality is that the practice is simple, it is the discipline that is difficult. It requires you to sit peacefully with yourself, without distraction, without conscious thought and to enjoy the pleasure of just being you. The real you, without an audience. It can be and should be relaxing and highly enjoyable. It is the path to wisdom in that it gives you the time to process all that you know, and you know a great deal. I believe it is the process of moving information to knowledge and knowledge to understanding. When we understand something then we can apply it directly or extrapolate it to greater understanding and application. This is Wisdom.

To begin your journey, see it as a holiday from thought, from pressure, from your to do list and worries. Allow yourself the luxury of 20 minutes of 'you' time. No pressure, no immediate gratification or transformation. Just 20 minutes to be with yourself in harmony. We will begin the meditation with mindfulness and end with awareness. The "journey" you take, it is self discovery.

To Begin

Foundation 1: Create the mind association of ritual for preparation for meditation.

We are creatures of habit, some habits are good, and some are bad. The mind does not differentiate, the body and spirit do. It helps to create a ritual of preparation and execution for meditation. It primes the mind, body, and spirit to prepare for the experience.

The creation of an altar, a special place is part of a positive habit. It creates triggers that will automatically prepare your body for meditation. It can be multi-sensory: incense, oils, flowers, scarf, candles, images, or statues. It should be comfortable. Too much discomfort will only distract you. You should try to go through the same preparation steps every time you set up your altar or meditation space.

Altars can be permanent or simply a space you set up each time you meditate and pack away again when you finish. They should have meaning for you, so make it simple, make it elaborate, it does not matter, just make it meaningful full for you.

As you set up your space be mindful of what you are doing. Be aware of how you light your candle or incense. Take time to enjoy the light and scent; greet your statue or images; admire your flowers. Take care to place your mats where you want them.

I use the word mindfulness in the Buddhist sense, which is to bring your full attention to whatever you are doing. Do not just set it all up in a quick 5 seconds. Doing this sets up your mind with a do it quickly and get it over with mentality. Not bring yourself, mind, body, and spirit to the meditation

In the beginning use music as your timer. Track 1 is your set up and get-ready track. Use this time to prepare yourself and your space. Have different music, 20 minutes for the main meditation, and then a lighter more energetic tune or silence that signals the end of the session. Please, please do not use a timer, for most of us, timers and alarms are used to manage our work day. If you are trying to relax, for most of us, time pressure, signified by alarms is not calming.



My Ritual Set Up: the scarf, (Hindu) bowl (Tibetan), candles (universal) & offering (Lao), and pillows for comfort. I honor each step in the setup process.

Sitting Hints

Being comfortable is the only rule. Not everyone can sit in the lotus position. It takes time and practice to learn to sit in this position. You can lie down, sit in a chair or sit on cushions. The only thing I ask you to do is not to put your feet towards any Buddhist or Hindu deity. To sit comfortably on the ground, place your legs cross-legged, you can place one foot into the crease of your inner knee or two. You can sit with your legs bent to one side.

It is more comfortable to have your bottom up higher than your legs. even if you sit in the lotus position. You can do this by placing extra support under your bottom, towards the back, supporting the spine, and having your legs, resting down lower than your hips. This is very comfortable and will stop any back pain. A yoga mat or small pillow works well. Some people sit upon a triangular pillow, legs on either side.

Lying down, please place a rolled pillow or yoga mat under your knees, and let the knees fall out away from each other. Have your heels close together and let your feet fall away from the heels. If your lower back is sore, place a small folded cloth in the center of your back, near the hip line and curve of your buttock. Arms by your side or on your chest.

If your legs fall asleep a gentle massage and flexing will bring them slowly back to life. If you fall asleep, do not worry, you need the extra minute's sleep. When you catch up on your sleep you will stay awake for the meditation.

The lotus position is named after the flower, it is because in silhouette you resemble the flower. It also refers to the silhouette of the hand when you place your thumb and fingers tips together palm up on your knees. The lotus position is typically Hindu, with the Buddhist mediation position being open-palmed and one hand resting on the other. Signifying that you must first universally love yourself and give love to yourself before giving love to the world. If you are confused with the word love, then replace it with respect and acceptance.





Foundation 2: Teaching the mind and body to be comfortable with silence and stillness

When you have finished preparing the space and settling yourself it is time to begin focussing on your breath to relax your mind and body. Focusing on the breath is the path to a quiet mind and a relaxed body. In our daily life, we are not aware of the sensations of the breath or our breathing rhythm. We are born with a natural rhythm that many of us have lost with our daily schedules. Meditation is the process of getting back in touch with the essence of who we are. Our natural rhythm and filling the body with oxygen.

To begin, close your eyes and settle your body. Feel the cushion or mat you sit on, and allow yourself to feel the comfort of simply sitting. Become aware of small things, the feeling of your clothing on your skin. The sounds of the music.

Slowly and with purpose, bring your mind to your breathing. Take one deep breath in through the nose and allow your mind or your imagination to follow the breath as it enters your nose. Notice how this feels. Then breathe out and notice the difference in movement and temperature of the air you breathe.

Now follow the breath as it enters the body. Keep the sensation of following the breath as long as you can. Exhale deeply and completely, again following the breath. Focus your mind on the breath. Feel the movement of your body with the breath. Notice how your body moves with your breath. Lifting with the breathing coming in and settling with the breathing moving out,

Complete this deep breathing through your nose 10 times, consciously following the breath enter, pass through, and out of your body. Follow the breath as it moves through your body.

Once you start to follow the breath, you begin to take deeper breaths, slowing down the movement and the body starts to relax, once the body starts to relax, the mind will follow. So just breathe and permit yourself to relax. Forget about how you are sitting, it is not important if your back is straight, or if you are leaning forward, just breathe.

Now you simply but with purpose allow yourself to breathe. Allow your body to find its natural rhythm. Allow the sound of the music to wash over you. Allow it to enter your mind, not to make sense of the words or the music, but to allow the mind to engage and follow the rhythm. Do not worry if you find yourself starting to involuntarily move, it is natural for some. Just let it happen.

The Myth of the Still Mind

When you first begin meditation, the aim is not to have a still mind, but a quiet mind, you will still have thoughts and there will be sounds around you. The music acts like a blanket of white noise to stop sudden sounds startlingly you, but the mind, of the mind, likes to think. Focusing on the breath and following the movement of the breath, will distract the conscious mind, but you will still have thoughts. This is all ok, just let the thought and the sounds float in your mind. Do not start a conversation with your thoughts. And if you feel that you are distracted. Return to the breathe and take 10 deep breaths. Congratulate yourself if you forget to count. Counting is a tool, not a requirement.



Foundation 3: Learning to be consistent and maintain your practice

There will be times when you feel are too tired, too busy, or too distracted to meditate. These are illusions of the mind. You will sit and twitch Huff and puff, perhaps even be angry at your inability to meditate, Just sit breathe and preserve. Please meditate at least every 2nd day for 20 minutes when you are first starting.

The discipline is to start each meditation session with the focus and intent of enjoying the 20 minutes of freedom. This is a gift of time to you. This is why the music and the ritual are there. It sets your mind into the routine of meditation, it gives you time to prepare yourself. Meditation is about enjoying the journey, who knows where it will take you? It is not an end in itself it is a discovery of self, a building of self, developing your understanding of yourself and how you interact with the world. It is not a linear process, there is no end, it is a continuous movement of self-discovery and self-mastery.

It is also essential that you enjoy yourself. I watch too many serious faces pushing themselves to reach an awareness. Place a smile on your face, even when you feel tired or hassled. Focus on the simple acts of the ritual. Do not hurry, take your time and focus. If you miss a day of meditation, do it later, do it another time, but do it. Get up the next day and take the time.

Every time you meditate it is an adventure for the mind. It is always a new beginning; it is rarely the same experience. Freedom of the mind can be a strange experience. Allow it to be your own experience and do not compare it to anyone else's experience or the time before or the time after. Just let it be what it was at the time and enjoy the bare minimum of 20 minutes of relaxing and energizing the body and the mind with oxygen.

Just each one of us has our natural rhythm of breath, we have our internal clocks and rhythms and the reality of our lives. Commitments will eat into our time. Commit yourself to take the 20 minutes and explore which time of the day is best for your meditation. It is up to you for some people like the morning, some people like the evening.

Some of us like groups, some of us like privacy, experimenting and choosing what works for us, or just mixing it up.

Practise Hints

We choose how we see and interact with the world. We are designed to hear sounds and to have thoughts. It is our choice if the sound is sound or noise. In meditation choose to hear sounds, acknowledge and go back to breathing. Conscious thought, creating thought is in the context of mediation noise. So if you start constructing thoughts, usually about things on your to-do list, do not engage with the thought. Do not listen. Release and go back to breathing. Simply identify it, acknowledge, name it and dismiss it. Go back to consciously following the breath. Refocus.

You may have thoughts, just let them come and go, do not hold on to them, and let your mind float.

Breathe in the path

The breath is the path. It is the first and greatest discipline to master with your meditation practice. It is the key to unlocking your higher self, greater awareness, and your chakras. Every time you are aware that you are distracted, go back to your breathing exercises of Fun nation 2.

Foundation 4: To manage your expectations and enjoy your experience for what it is – peace.

What can I expect? What does meditation feel like? What will I experience?

Meditation is about the unification of you, mind, body, and spirit, the public with the private, the spoken with the unspoken. It allows you to dream unfettered dreams and feelings of deep contentment. When you start your meditation, set your intent. The intent is to begin the journey, not to arrive at the end. Set your mind and heart to feel peace.

Allow your body and mind to become one. Meditation is a process of revelation. Each stage of deepening consciousness away from the superficial conscious mind of distraction is a step toward a more balanced centered 'you'. It can be and should be a relaxing, rejuvenating process of simply being, with no distractions allowed to penetrate the mind.



(Meditating in Lao. 2018)

Each session may be very different, you may see colors, experience sensations and feelings, and have moments of clarity and insights. See images that are almost dream-like or have a perfect state of simple being everything and nothing at the same time. Whatever the experience is, it is exactly right. This is a conversation with your inner self. Don't let anyone tell you, you are not doing it right, if you are having an enjoyable 20 minutes, congratulations.

Common Blockages

1. Frustration. Everyone's experience is different, and people expect what meditation will feel like. The first time, you start you will have moments of disengagement from your conscious mind. Congratulations. Rarely do you have a whole session where you are completely unaware of your conscious mind or body?
2. False Expectations. Your experience was not like you expected. Let go of preconceived ideas or other people's statements of experience. Your experience is completely valid, it is yours. Let go and just enjoy your experience. Do not compare.
3. I have voices in my head and my mind will not go still. This is perfectly natural, even in the deepest moments of meditation where your mind and body stop being so important to you, you can still have mental notes, voices, and ideas, but they will be a lot more singular in nature. Not a steady stream of critique, worries, or front-of-mind thinking. It is perfectly ok to have thoughts, just let them float and do not engage with them.. too much.
4. I start engaging with my thoughts. Perfectly natural, you are intelligent, and we are normally totally engaged with thoughts or some other distraction like music, books, or tv. As soon as you notice you are talking to your thoughts, then stop and go back to noticing and becoming aware of your body moving with the breath
5. I am too uncomfortable. If you are uncomfortable, move around until you become comfortable, and if you need to lie down, lie down, if you need to uncross your legs do so. It is not a problem, find a comfortable position and then use this position. Use pillows, and cushions, sit in a chair and lean against a wall. It takes practice to sit in any of the lotus positions. So until you learn to sit you will always be uncomfortable. My advice is, do not sit this way unless you have the flexibility and find it comfortable.
6. My legs go to sleep. They can and they will, just massage them.
7. I just get into a meditative state and it is time to stop. Do not worry, you will get better, and quicker and it will become easier to fall into a meditative state as you practice.
8. I feel like I am falling asleep, so I wake myself up. I do not worry if my clients or students fall asleep. I figure they are tired and need it, otherwise they will be awake. But remember, that the conscious mind is designed to make sense of the world and you in it. If you have never meditated before the mind does not know what this sensation feels like. To make sense of the sensation, the brain is experiencing it references the sensations to what it understands. All brains understand falling asleep and this is probably your closest experience to meditation. So the brain lets you know you are falling asleep. Most of the time you are not. Trust and go with the sensation, even if you do fall asleep, better than constantly waking yourself up.

9. I get short of breath. People often replace following the breath with a focus on the breath. Focussing on the breath is not the right process. Focus is engagement, Meditation is the disengagement of the conscious mind. So you follow the breath, choosing a sensation, a feeling to notice and explore. Not to make notes, but to notice and muse over.
10. I lose track of the music or your voice. Do not worry if the music fades in or out or if you lose track of the moderator's voice. It is not a focusing exercise, it is a floating exercise, where you let go and you just become aware of the voice when it is there and if you lose it, just let it go, and pick up again, naturally later.
11. I lost track of time. Congratulations, consider yourself to have had a meditation experience.
12. I do not remember anything important. Nor do you need to, sometimes, what you do is a simple relaxation and letting go, so nothing comes into your mind. That is great and a legitimate experience. Never doubt the truth of your experience.
13. Sometimes it is easier than others. yes, that is often true when we are learning, we might get it straight off and then next time it gets harder. Often this is because you are trying too hard to replicate the first experience or perhaps the experience you had in a group or with a teacher. This is a new experience for you, you will have some great sessions, some ok sessions, and some good sessions. It will even out with practice to a good session most of the time and a great session a lot of time.
14. I am not regular in my sessions. Forgive yourself, that is also perfectly ok, just do it when you have time or schedule time to do the session.
15. I find I am too busy in the mornings to meditate. If you are not in a monastery, find a time that works for you and meditate then.

Relax, enjoy, let go, and repeat.