



DOORWAYS TO PEACE

Healing Practice For Everyday Life

Handbook

Andy Hobson

Meditation Is Life

Welcome!

As part of integrating the course into your daily life, I recommend getting a meditation timer app on your phone to remind you to pause and check in several times a day.
Just for a minute or so.

The Insight Timer or the Plum Village Apps are great options

My timer chimes every hour and is set to start from 7:30am and end at 8pm.





“You get a gods-eye view of things . . . up there,
A different world . . . a world, vast, clean and fair.
No, not a different world; a different view
And all accustomed things seemed changed and new”

Gods Eye View

By Don Blanding.

Part One: Being Enough and The Art of Letting Go

When you were born you were perfect. You are still perfect. But since birth you have been moulded by experiences, society, key people in your life, significant events, and the rest. All these things come together to create a 'you'. That 'you' doesn't always want to be 'you' and often wants things to be different than how they are. And therein lies our work.

All our anxieties, fears, self-doubts and so on come from life experiences that often weren't given the care and reflection space they needed. And we live in a troubled world, internalising a lot of what we witness, see, and hear about. These experiences and events create imprints that travel with us through life. They can be triggered again at any time.

A spiritual path is essentially about turning towards these imprints with care and kindness, giving them room to breathe and letting them pass in their own time. There is some work and commitment involved in transforming all that we carry. This work can be challenging at times as we meet our darkest parts but it can also be joyful, magical and beautiful. Let's see how we go.



"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are"

Anais Nin





Who Am I?



One of the most important questions we can ask on a spiritual path is 'who am I?'. Who is this 'you'? Who is really in there having these experiences? And are you the thoughts and feelings that you have or are you the one who is aware of those thoughts and feelings? Well, we actually have two selves. Our self-made self, conditioned by society. And our true self, our consciousness or presence running like a river underneath our thoughts, body sensations and emotions.

A baby doesn't have a sense of who they are and they believe they are not separate from their mother. It is in this relationship with their parent/carer that they begin to make sense of the world. When a child learns the words 'me' and 'mine', they begin to feel like a separate entity with likes and dislikes. Then along comes their persona, something to be projected out in order to fit into the collective identity of society. Then we spend the rest of our life trying to hold it together on the inside, while trying to project what the world wants us to be.

In meditation this strong sense of identity can dissolve as we begin to rest as our true self (not all the time mind). A self that doesn't need a persona to hold everything together and one that feels part of something bigger. In truth, every moment of our day is an opportunity to reconnect with this sense of presence and connectedness. It is not something we do but something that we already are. But most of the time we choose to remain seated in our conditioned, worried selves.



You Are Enough

Just like the question 'who am I', the words 'I am enough' can be used to invite in a sense of presence that rests beyond the conditioned self. It's an invitation to feel planted and welcome on this planet, just as we are.

When we truly feel that we don't need to add anything to ourselves to belong, we untangle ourselves from our story and begin to connect to life in new and wonderful ways. We become curious about what life is and what we're here for. We also become more aware of what triggers us, what we block each day, and our patterns that repeat in daily life. Then we can begin to work with these.

"No need to hide. Be the puzzle that you are. Every piece has it's place amongst the stars"

Andy Hobson

Daily Practice

It can be helpful to pause and reflect on a few of the following:

- How am I meeting this moment? (Am I with or against it?)
- What's here in terms of emotions? (Just connect to your body)
- Who is in there experiencing this?
- What is lacking in this moment?
- What do I need?



Now be aware that you are conscious. You are in there. Look around and bring presence to what you see. Smile at the fact you are here witnessing. Smile that nothing needs to be done to make this moment anything else. Let thoughts come and go. Let emotions run through.

If you are lost in yourself, ask the question 'Who am I'? Feel into your consciousness again and smile. Let the universe fill you with confidence and ease because you don't know. Nothing is solid and everything is possible. Now continue along your merry way...

"When you realize that nothing is lacking, the whole world belongs to you." Lao Tzu.

Enough

by David Whyte

Enough. These few words are enough.

If not these words, this breath.

If not this breath, this sitting here.

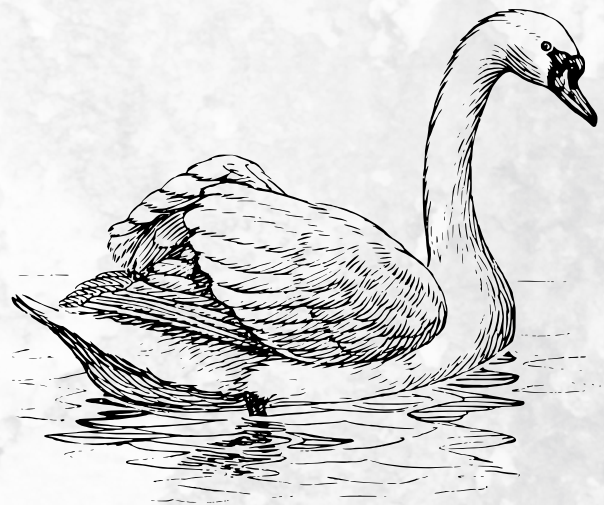
This opening to the life

we have refused

again and again

until now

until now



Recommended Reading

Illusions: The Adventures Of
A Reluctant Messiah
By Richard Bach (easy read)



Ending The Search:
By Dorothy Hunt (a bit harder)



Be As You Are:
The Teachings Of
Sri Ramana Maharshi (Read slowly)



Part Two: Choosing Peace



In Buddhism there are Four Noble Truths. The first is that we suffer, the second is that our suffering is caused by clinging or being attached to what happens. The third is that there is an end to suffering through the process of purifying and letting go. The 4th is the Eightfold Path itself, which I won't go into here. Look, an Eightfold Path breakdown has no place in a workshop handbook. You'll lose focus—I promise.

We suffer when we get what we don't want and when we get what we want. We cling to good experiences and push away the ones we don't like. A wonderful Buddhist teacher once told me that everything is made of poo and we're just moving poo around to feel happy. When we stop trying to make the universe fit our narrow window for happiness, it transforms from poo into simply life unfolding for us. Then we no longer cling to what happens; everything just is.


But this is something we have to remember and choose again and again and again. To choose peace often means that our sense of self feels diminished in some way. But, in fact, the opposite happens. We get closer to who we truly are.

Letting Everything Be Just As It Is



To transform suffering, you need to be your own alchemist. You need to turn pain to paint. This means letting experiences (good and bad) guide you back to yourself. It needn't be complicated. Just become aware of the times when you feel that you're against life and then soften to it. It's not easy, especially with deeply worn in imprints, but a powerful practice—one that begins with connecting with your vulnerability with kindness. Self-kindness is a key to healing yourself and others.

Try this:

1. Notice where you feel vulnerability right now.
2. Feel the emotions underneath. Breathe into them deeply.
3. Now let yourself be those emotions. Breathe with them.
4. Fall into whatever you're feeling right now. Let go. Breathe. Surrender.
5. Notice any other emotions that arise now. Invite them in. Breathe alongside them
6. Place your hand on your heart. Let it all be as it is. More breathing.
7. Feel depleted, small, insignificant, a failure, fearful, anxious. Greet it all with understanding.
8. Feel at ease, peaceful, joyful, spacious. Notice other emotions trying to topple those feelings.
9. Let go of trying. Let go of fixing. Let it all be just as it is.
10. Make 



The Little Voice In Your Head

We all have a voice in our head that likes to talk to us about what is happening at any given moment. It's like a parrot on our shoulder giving its unique version of events. This voice creates wild stories about our whole life that shape how we see ourselves and the world around us. If you've been around for a few years, you'll know that this voice is a troublemaker.

If we're honest, we're a bit addicted to this voice. It pretty much validates our existence. Who are we without thinking? A beautiful being witnessing the unfolding of the universe is the right answer. Maybe you had a different one.

At the deepest level, life is felt. Our emotions, sadness, anger, longing. It's not a narrative but a feeling, a sense of life itself. Our bond with the soil we stand on, the people that enter and leave our lives. Birth of a new relationship, a life and death, an ending, a transition.

Life Is Not Personal

What happens in our life doesn't belong to us—it belongs to the moment. Life is just happening and we are witnessing it. What happens isn't a personal message to you. It could easily be someone else's story. The universe will continue to unfold whether you're there or not.

When we take life less personally, everything that happens becomes the adventure. We show up with gratitude for the moments of awe and meet the challenges, as best we can, with an open heart.

Against the odds, we've arrived in a place where there is life and abundance. A whole universe which is 99.9% space and we landed ourselves a planet. But we put all our energy into complaining and trying to make good things happen and bad things stay away, as if we have any control. It's like trying to stop the sun from going down at night using a rope and trying to blow the rain clouds away with our breath. I think we can all agree that this is a silly thing to try.



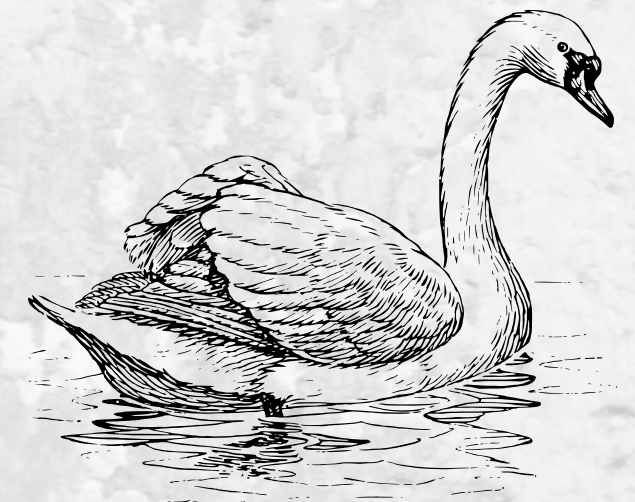
What if your job is just to experience life unfolding?

And eat
good cake

Daily Practices

1. Find a routine activity that you find a challenge and begin to experiment with softening to it. When you notice that you're against that moment say to yourself 'soften'. Physically relax your body and sense your own consciousness. Smile into what is happening if you like (if that feels appropriate). Be playful - like when you're a kid and you've got the grumps and someone is trying to cheer you up and you accidentally smile because you're trying so hard to be grumpy. Create space around suffering with this kind of energy.

2. If you're feeling stressed and vulnerable, you can place your hand on heart. Making physical contact with yourself is very grounding. Then say the words - 'I am here, it's ok'. Or your own mantra. Connect with that vulnerability and cradle it. Let go as best you can. No need to fix.



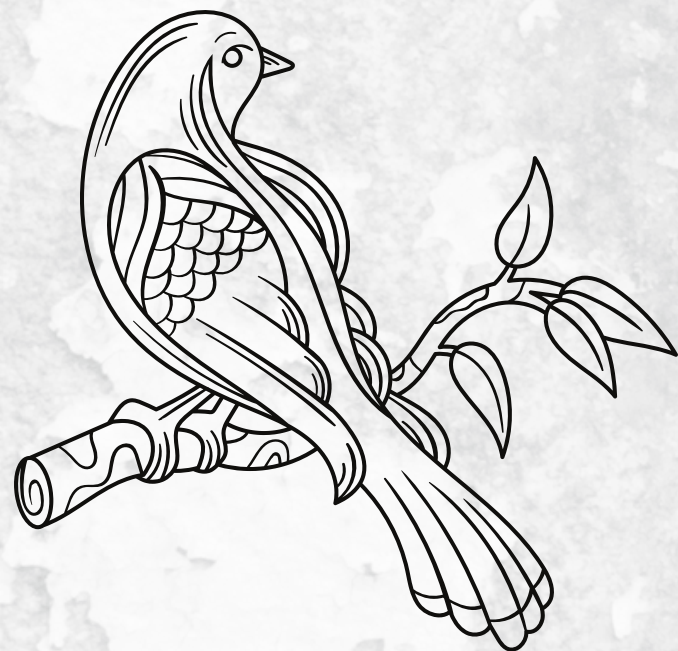
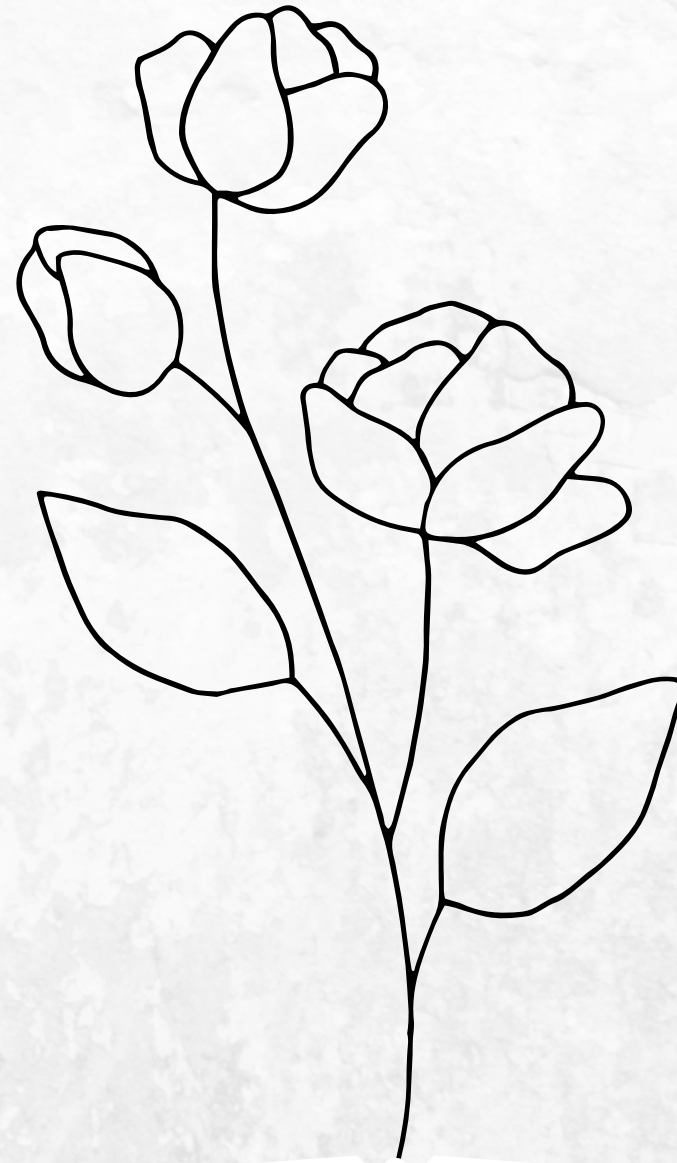
Daily Practices

3. For physical/ emotional pain. Again, connect with the vulnerability you feel. Perhaps helplessness. Let yourself fall into it. Let your body drop into it. You can say to yourself "It is here. I am here. It's unbearable. But I am here." Feel into the vulnerability, fear, sadness, loss. Soften to yourself. Soften. Soften. Feeling into consciousness.

Reflective questions:

- What is lost if I leave this moment just as it is?
- What is lost if I don't follow my thoughts?
- What is lost if I don't know what's going to happen next?
- What is left beyond presence?





"Plant yourself in the ground
Connect with the unseen
Be with not knowing
Smile into space
Just because
You are here"

Andy Hobson

Recommended Reading

The Untethered Soul:
Michael Singer

Tao Te Ching:
Lao Tzu

Self Love:
Nisargadatta Maharaj
(it's a big read but worth it)

The Wisdom Of No Escape:
Pema Chodron

The Bhagavad Gita:
Stephen Mitchell Translation



Part Three: Becoming Nobody

"When I was born I donned a spacesuit for living on this plane. It was this body, my spacesuit, and it had a steering mechanism which is my pre-frontal lobe and all the brain that helps with coordinating and stuff.

And then you get rewarded with little stars, kisses and all kinds of things when you learn how to use your spacesuit. You get so good at it that you can't differentiate yourself from your spacesuit. You walk down the street and you're somebody; you dress like somebody; your face looks like somebody. Everybody is reinforcing their structure of the universe over and over again and you meet [each other] like two huge things meeting. We enter into these conspiracies. You say, I'll make believe you are who you think you are if you make believe I am who I think I am.

Your entire life is a curriculum. Everything you've got on your plate is where the stuff for your enlightenment is. It's breathtaking when you see the beauty of this design. When you take off your mask, it's easier for everyone else to do it"

Ram Dass



Our Work



Everything that happens in our life is an invitation to remove a layer of our spacesuit. To wake up. To become nobody. The grit and flowers laid on the path of our life are an invitation to let go, to become lighter until we see who we were are. **And when all stripped away, all that is left is love.** We've not nothing else. It's a series of tiny deaths and rebirths.

The secret of life is to “die before you die” Eckhart Tolle

Feel for yourself:

- Just sit quietly for a few moments. And become aware of yourself. Become aware of whoever is in there.
- Connect with your heart. Put your hand there. Sense your vulnerability as well as your sense of being alive. Just here as you are.
- Smile at that character you've created. They really don't have a clue do they?
- Go a little deeper. What's under all this? Let emotions arise
- Now just let go completely. As if this is your last moment on earth in this body.
- What is left? No need to force a thing. Nothing to get right here at all. Let that be as it is. Breathe. Rest in not knowing.



"Dying every day to everything that we know is to love. Otherwise, one cannot love. Love is not something to be cultivated. Like humility, the moment you cultivate it, it is a cloak of vanity. Only when you die to every experience you have had, are you living. Living is a new, innocent movement, every minute of the day fresh. To die to the past is to live totally in altogether a different dimension".

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Public Talk in Ojai, California, 6 November 1966

jkrishnamurti.org

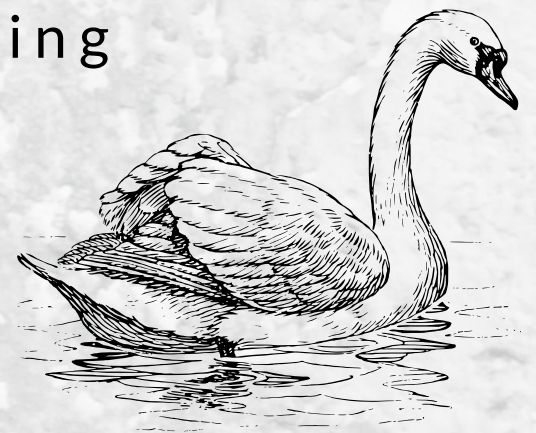


Our Purpose

“Our purpose in this life is to help and be helped. This means that if it makes your heart sing, someone else’s heart will sing along. Then you receive their song back with that same open heart.” Andy Hobson

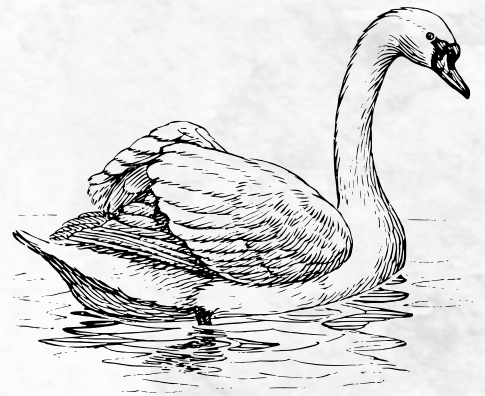
We're not here to serve our endless needs. If you've been alive for enough years, you'll know that this doesn't bring happiness. When we get everything we want, it quickly becomes empty. We are here to offer our heart to anyone who needs it. But it is essential that we accept the hearts of others. Kindness is a two-way street. If we can't accept help then we burn out. There is always a balance. When we help, our sense of self dissolves and we connect to something beautiful that can't really be named.

Simple acts of kindness each day will fill up your heart like nothing else. Giving is a spiritual practice in itself. It de-centres us from the 'little me' into a sense of being connected to everything - and loved.





Kindness



Kindness doesn't have to mean doing something or giving anything away. Kindness is being present with someone without judging them. Kindness is accepting someone for who they are. Kindness is celebrating that we are here together.

Here is an example that I'd like to share:

I once went to get a car wing mirror fixed at a local garage in London. The place was run by a Greek father and son. As I walked in, the father arrived with some red peppers he'd bought from a market. He came over and showed me the peppers with a huge smile his face. He'd never met me before, but resonated such presence and openness. I immediately let go of the frustration I had about having to visit the garage for the repair and just enjoyed the experience. I almost forgot why I was there! His son came over to have a look at the prize produce and we all talked about how we like to cook peppers. It was a lovely interaction that I will always remember. Nothing big. Nothing heroic. Just authenticity and kindness for no reason other than because. I left with so much more than a repaired wing mirror. This is true kindness.

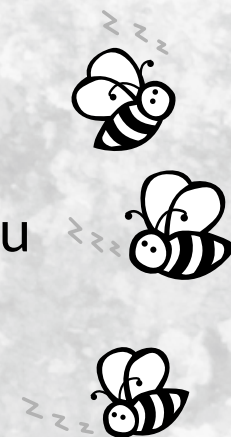
Daily Practice

1. Say hello to yourself in the morning in the bathroom mirror. With a smile that welcomes you into the new day. If you're feeling terrible, your smile is one of compassion and perhaps a touch of humour—because life is ridiculous. And gloriously bonkers.

2. Pause in the day to be in wonder. No need to wait for a sunset. Just stop and be there. Feel into your own sense of presence with curiosity, as if you've just arrived in this body. Then ask yourself, “What really matters?” Just feel where that question goes. No need to answer it. (I get a shiver down my spine when I do this. But everyone is different and I might just have a cold house)

3. Consciously do the kindest thing for yourself and others. That means just being present and giving yourself permission to exist just as you are. Self-judging thoughts and all! So, I mean always tell yourself that you're doing great even if you're absolutely not.

How could you



today?



Key Teachings To Remember

1. Life isn't personal. Things that happen belong to the moment. Tread lightly. Let it go.
2. When in doubt connect with your heart. Always your heart. Your smiling heart.
3. Be vulnerable—that is your superpower. It connects you to every atom of this universe.
4. Know that fear, anxiety, self-judgment are invitations for self-kindness. Respond to them as you would for a dear friend or family member.
5. Be still. Everything can be known and held in stillness.
6. Surrender as much as you can. You lose nothing but gain everything.
7. You've created a beautiful character to interact with the world but they are secondary. There is something deeper, infinite. You are the seer and the seen. You are a light shining out at the world.
8. There is no more noble a spiritual path than helping others and allowing yourself to be helped.
9. You are enough. You have arrived.



Recommended Reading

Walking Each Other Home:
Ram Dass

Mindfulness Meditation For
Everyday Life:
Jon Kabat Zinn

Stillness Speaks:
Eckhart Tolle



Our Calling

By Andy Hobson

Every cloud is a call, every plane a reminder
Every bird sees, every blade of grass knows
A river of unease flows in the background
No code, just rhythm moving closer
Peace, no peace, peace again
Shouting our madness
Lost in distraction
Heart calling back
Open or giving up?
Whole or numb?
Cling to nothing
I don't know
I'm nothing
Nobody
A body
Being
This?
love
I am



Thank you so much for being part of this journey.

I hope that these practices and teachings have connected you to the wonder and awe in your own life. I hope that what you have learned will permeate into your days and brighten up the lives of others along the way.

Now go enjoy your adventure!

