

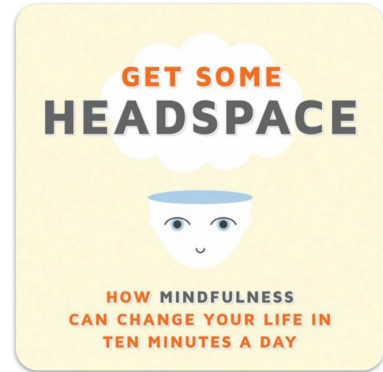
# Get Some Headspace

How mindfulness can change your life... (a summary by Pat Evert)

## - Introduction

Mind training incorporates three distinct aspects.

Traditionally, meditation students were taught first how to approach the technique, then how to practice it, before finally learning how to integrate the techniques into their everyday lives. **Mindfulness means to be present, in the moment, undistracted.** It implies resting the mind in its natural state of awareness, which is free of any bias or judgment. So mindfulness means to be present. It means being “in the moment,” experiencing life directly as it unfolds, rather than being distracted, caught up and lost in thought. It’s a way of stepping back and resting the mind in its natural state, free from the usual chaos. If mindfulness is the ability to be present, to rest in the moment whatever you’re doing, and meditation is the best way of learning that skill, then “headspace” could be considered the outcome. It can be experienced just as clearly in periods of sadness or anger as it can in times of excitement and laughter. **Essentially it’s “being okay” with** whatever thoughts you’re experiencing or emotions you’re feeling. If we become dependent on it for our happiness, then we’re trapped. This will allow you to live with a greater sense of freedom and ease, confident in where you’re heading in life and yet not so attached to the outcome that an unexpected obstacle or unfavorable outcome will result in heartbreak and loss. It is a subtle yet profound shift in perspective. The mind becomes softer, more malleable, easier to work with. For meditation to really work, to get the very best from the techniques, it’s vital that all three components are present.



The great thing about applying mindfulness to the rest of the day is that it doesn’t require you to take any more time out, or to change your schedule in some way. In fact, you can just keep on doing exactly what you had planned. The difference is not in the activity, but the way in which you direct your mind while doing those things.

## - The Approach

Meditation brings awareness, a clear and accurate reflection of how your mind behaves on a daily basis. The point is to get used to **‘holding your seat’ on the side of the road and watching the traffic go by without getting involved.** It might feel as if you are simply an observer, watching the thoughts go by. This is the process of meditation. What you need to ask yourself is how much of your thinking is helpful, productive. So by training your mind you’ll actually make more space for creative thoughts to arise. It is a process of giving up control, without becoming a slave to your mind. It is a stepping back, learning how to focus the attention in a passive way, while simply resting the mind

in its own natural awareness. It is allowing the mind to unwind in its own time and its own way that you will find a genuine sense of headspace. The underlying essence of the mind, like the blue sky, is unchanging, no matter how we feel. **The blue sky is headspace, and it's always here.** Imagine what it would be like to have a place within your own mind which is always calm, always still and always clear; a place that you can always return to, a sense of being at ease or at peace with whatever is happening in your life.

Your mind is like a wild horse when you sit to meditate, you can't expect it to stay still in one place all of a sudden just because you're sitting there like a statue doing something called meditation! So when you sit down with this wild mind, you need to give it lots of room. Rather than trying to immediately focus on the object of meditation, give your mind time to settle, to relax a little. What's the hurry? Keep doing this, slowly bringing the horse closer, all the while keeping an eye on it, but giving it enough space to feel at ease and not too nervous. **Allow the horse to come to a natural place of rest, where it feels happy, confident and relaxed staying in one place.**

It doesn't matter whether we're trying to get rid of lots of thoughts, difficult emotions, or a painful feeling in the body, it's all the same, it's resistance. And **as long as there's resistance, there's no room for acceptance.** And as long as we don't have acceptance, there's no way of having a peaceful mind. Happiness is just happiness, no big deal. It comes and it goes. Sadness is just sadness, no big deal. It comes and it goes. If you can give up your desire to always experience pleasant things, at the same time as giving up your fear of experiencing unpleasant things, then you'll have a quiet mind. Just become more aware. If you find yourself sitting there and you feel very good, then maintain this attitude of wanting to share it with others. When you experience discomfort in your meditation, whether it's the restlessness of a busy mind, physical tension in the body, or a challenging emotion, I want you to imagine it's the discomfort of the people you care about. It's as if in an act of extraordinary generosity, you are sitting with their discomfort so they don't have to. By **sharing the comfort with others and the discomfort of others**, we're doing the opposite of what we normally do, which means there's no resistance. By imagining that I was doing something beneficial for others, it seemed to make the whole thing easier. The kind of happiness that I'm talking about is the ability to feel comfortable no matter what emotion arises. So I started to examine the body during my meditation (mentally that is), scanning up and down through the body and trying to find this thing called sadness. It was illusive, that's for sure. The one thing I couldn't ignore was that the intensity of emotion was continuing to diminish. If you don't think about them, then they tend to lose their momentum. The emotion itself is often not the problem, it's the way we react to it that causes the problem. By **learning to let emotions come and go**, and because there's this underlying sense of awareness and perspective, then no matter how difficult the feeling, there is always **the sense that everything is okay**, even if the emotion is very strong. The way we feel is fundamental to our experience of life. Emotions affect our perception of people, of situations and the environment in which we live. When we feel angry the world can look very threatening: we see situations as obstacles and other people as

enemies. And yet when we feel happy, the world can appear as quite a friendly place. We view the same situations as opportunities and the same people as friends. The world around us has not changed that much, but our experience of that world is radically different. Sometimes our emotional states can become so ingrained, they start to feel like traits. It's as if the emotion is so overwhelming that we can't see past it. And in these situations the emotion can even begin to define who we are. Depression is a good example of this. So while at times the two can feel inseparable, it's useful to be aware of the difference.

Meditation is simply the exercise that is going to give you the best conditions to practice being mindful of these emotions, existing in a place where you are at ease with whatever emotion is present. So we come back to the idea of gentle curiosity: watching, observing and noticing what happens in the body and mind as these emotions come and go. Remember, **the objective here is headspace, a sense of ease with whatever emotion is present.** It means to sit on the roadside, watching the emotions pass, neither getting drawn into them because they look inviting, nor running away from them because they look frightening. We need to find a way to be aware of our emotions, to experience, acknowledge and live with them, and yet not be at their mercy. When it happens it can be good to know that you're as well equipped as you can be to deal with the situation. When I first heard that meditation was simply a snapshot of my everyday mind I found it hard to believe. I just wanted to experience the ultimate fruit of meditation—that of enlightenment. I guess you could call it an “enlightenment or bust” kind of attitude, where I was always focusing on a future goal rather than resting in the moment and **enjoying all that life has to offer, gentle curiosity.** But if you take the time to look a little more closely, you'll notice that each and every breath is actually quite unique. The same can be said of the thoughts that pass through the mind (even if sometimes it feels as though it's the same one coming back time and again), and even physical sensations that arise in the body. Be content to watch it just as it is. So, as you apply the instructions to your own meditation try, whenever you can, to apply this idea of gentle curiosity to whatever you're watching in the mind. It will make more of a difference than you could possibly imagine.

### - The Practice

All meditation relies on at least one of two essential components: concentration (usually the calming aspect) and clarity (usually the insight aspect). Observe the breath, let the mind settle, and allow all the tension to work its way out of the system. **Clarity naturally arises from a quiet mind, without first calming the mind,** it's very difficult to have any clarity. That's why there's slightly more emphasis on the concentration component in this particular technique. What needs to become clear, will naturally become clear. Remember, these experiences are essentially the **body and mind unwinding,** releasing old baggage they've been carrying around for a long time. It was as if I were too close to the anger, identifying so strongly with it that I had become the anger, as opposed to just witnessing its presence. Letting go of such strong emotions is not always easy. The less I indulged the thoughts, the less momentum anger had. The process will likely be a gradual one. As an observer in a theater, no matter what

by Andy Puddicombe

happens, **your only job is to watch the play unfold**. The images and voices are not you, in the same way that the play or the film is not you. It's an unfolding story that you're watching, observing and witnessing. This is what it means to be aware. Through developing that ability of passive observation you get to experience the clarity and confidence to make decisions, make changes and live life more fully. If you're going to learn how to meditate, then start slowly. How can there ever be a sense of ease resting in the present moment if the mind is hurriedly trying to get to a space and time in the future?

Take five deep breaths, breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. As you breathe in, really try to get a sense of the lungs filling with air and the chest expanding. And as you breathe out, just let the breath go.

Next is about taming that wild horse, bringing the mind to a natural and comfortable place of rest. Simply shift your attention to each sensation and remember to apply a sense of gentle curiosity. Step back and just allow them to come and go with your full awareness. By making a conscious effort to acknowledge the sounds, rather than resist them, build up a picture of how the body feels. Start by **getting a general sense of any areas of tension or relaxation. Become aware of how you're feeling emotionally**. As I say, this entire process of checking-in should take about five minutes to begin with, and if you only have five minutes to spare, then only do this part of the exercise—that's how important it is.

Following that is a short section where you'll be focusing on the rising and falling movement of the breath and then freeing your mind altogether while you just sit back and enjoy the silence. The breath is autonomous, it doesn't require our control in order to function. Your only job here is to notice, to observe, and to be aware of what the body is doing naturally. Meditation can look very serious and it can be tempting to start treating it like "serious work." But **the more you can bring a sense of humor to it, a sense of play, the easier and more enjoyable you'll find it**. When you've come to the end of the counting, just let your mind be completely free. Don't try to control it in any way. This means not focusing on the breath, not focusing on counting, or anything else at all for twenty seconds before bringing the meditation to a close. Slowly bring the attention back to the physical sensations in the body. Gently open the eyes first and take a moment to readjust, to refocus, and be aware of the space around you.

### - The Integration

**Mindfulness simply means to be present, undistracted, in the moment, as opposed to lost in thought and caught up in the emotions**. We were taught how to be mindful in all four postures, standing, walking, sitting and lying down. The mind can only be in one place at a time. The reality in that situation was that by placing 100 percent of my attention on the physical sensation of walking, the mind was no longer lost in thought. The effort is simply remembering to **notice when you've been caught up in thoughts or feelings** and, in that moment, redirecting your attention to a particular point of focus. Awareness can be applied to every little thing you do—no exceptions. Having this increased awareness is the difference between having a

stable, calm and focused mind, or a mind that feels out of control. Take the time to notice the experience. Not only are you present to experience everything you do (quite literally living life to the full), but it also feels very calming. And with calm comes clarity. You begin to see how and why you think and feel the way you do. You start to notice the patterns and tendencies of the mind. And what this does is to give you back the choice of how you live your life. **Rather than being swept away by undermining or unproductive thoughts and emotions, you can respond in the way you'd actually like to.** Imagine what it would be like to have someone give you their full and undivided attention. Imagine what it would be like to return the favor. So, the beauty of mindfulness is that you don't need to take extra time out of your day to practice it. All it means is training your mind to be present with the action, rather than being lost in thought elsewhere. It doesn't matter whether we live a very physical life or a sedentary life, there is just as much time to be aware cycling down the road as there is sitting in a chair at home. And remember, even if you're not necessarily experiencing a pleasant emotion, you'll still have a sense of space around the emotions, some increased perspective, and some emotional stability. The one thing that remains the same throughout the day is that your thinking dictates the way you feel. In the absence of awareness, the realm of thought takes over. Think of mindfulness in terms of something you can apply throughout your day. Remember, **all it means is to give your full attention to whatever you're doing**, whenever you're doing it. How many of us live our lives in this way? Swept away by memories of the past and plans for the future. So preoccupied with thinking that we're completely unaware of what's actually taking place right now, oblivious to life unfolding around us. **Try to think about meditation as the platform from which you'll operate over the next twenty-four hours.** That sense of calm will enable you to respond skillfully to situations if you can maintain your awareness.

- **Headspace for eating** - I've met very few people who are completely comfortable around food, who have no hang-ups about what they eat. **Attachment is wanting something so much that when you don't get it you resist.** My emotional attachment to the ice-cream (the fact it happened to be food was incidental) had been so strong that I'd lost all sense of awareness. And this loss of awareness had resulted not only in endless, exhausting and ultimately futile mental chatter, but had also left me with the feeling of having been swept away on an emotional roller-coaster from which there was no getting off. Mindfulness in eating - Sitting at a table, in silence, turn off the television, any music, and yes, even your cell phone. You'll also get more out of it if you do it without any reading material in front of you. This leaves just you and your food. Take a couple of deep breaths. Next, take a moment to appreciate the food. Where has it come from? What country? Was it grown or was it manufactured? Try and imagine the different ingredients in their natural growing environment and even the types of people who would have been looking after the crops or animals. Notice if there is any sense of impatience in the mind, of just wanting to get on and eat the food. Appreciate the fact that you actually have food on your plate. Notice the texture as you pick it up, the temperature, and perhaps the color(s). How does it

smell? What does it look like up close? And, as you put it in your mouth, what is the taste, the texture, the temperature? You don't need to "do" anything. You're simply observing the different bodily senses at work. Is the food met with pleasure or displeasure in your mind? Is there acceptance of the food as it is, or maybe some resistance to certain aspects of it? As you move toward the end of the meal, notice if perhaps there's a sense of disappointment, or relief, at having nearly finished. Maybe even take a little extra time to savor the final mouthful. Before getting up to leave or moving on to the next thing to eat, take a couple of deep breaths again. Remind yourself of how the plate looked when it was full of food and how it looks now, empty with nothing on it. Notice how, in contrast, before you sat down the stomach felt empty and how now it feels full.

- **Headspace for walking** - It can sometimes feel as though we're so busy remembering, planning and analyzing life, that we forget to experience life—as it actually is, rather than how we think it should be. When most people start to meditate they usually find it quite hard to get the amount of effort right. Try too hard and the meditation feels uncomfortable, but don't try enough and you fall asleep. **It's that balance of focus and relaxation** that I mentioned before. walking meditation should not be considered a replacement for the seated meditation. Both have their place, but the sitting practice has its own particular importance. It simply requires you to walk naturally, but at a slightly slower pace. As you begin to walk, notice how the body feels. Does it feel heavy or light, stiff or relaxed? Don't rush to answer the question, but take a few seconds to become aware of your posture and the way you're carrying yourself. Without trying to change the way you're walking, simply observe how it feels. Begin by noticing what you see going on around you. Then turn your attention to sounds—what can you hear? Next turn your attention to smells for thirty seconds or so, some of which may be pleasant while others might be positively unpleasant. Finally, make a point of noticing any physical sensations or feelings. The intention is to simply acknowledge the sensations for thirty seconds or so, without feeling the need to get involved in thinking about the feelings. Observe the way you walk and the rhythm you've become accustomed to. **Use the rhythm of the walking, the physical sensation of the soles of the feet touching the ground, as your base of awareness**, a place you can mentally come back to once you realize the mind has wandered off. This is the equivalent of the rising and falling sensation of the breath when you do your sitting meditation. How do you feel when the rhythm is broken? Remind yourself of your intention to **walk, free from distraction**, until you reach the end of that street. As soon as you realize the mind has wandered off, just gently bring the attention back to the sensation on the soles of the feet. When you get to the end of that street, start again, as though it's a new exercise each time.

- **Headspace for exercise** - mental balance between focus and relaxation. The grimace is a response to that realization, a tightening-up as they apply more effort. As you go about your day, start to notice just how much effort you put into these things. If

your mind is present, alert and focused, yet with a sense of ease and relaxation, then you'll see progress. Start to get a sense of how best to work with the mind on any given day—when to apply more effort, and when to ease the foot off the gas. These changes seemed to coincide with me **focusing less on the result, and more on simply being in the moment with each and every movement**. Allow the body and mind to work together with a combined physical and mental focus. You don't need to "try not to think," but rather bring your attention to the process, rhythm and sensation of running. When you realize the mind has wandered off, just gently bring it back to the object of focus again. Get a sense of how you're feeling, building up an awareness of how you feel. Before you leave, take a good few deep breaths. Notice how the mind responds too. Is it with a feeling of pleasure? Or is it a feeling of mild anxiety? Is there anywhere in the body that feels tight? Resist the temptation to try and get rid of it somehow. You may well find that in the process of awareness, the tension naturally releases itself anyway. Do you have a tendency to be hard or kind to yourself when you're running? One popular method is to break down the run into every ten strides, or every twenty, or even every hundred. It's a bit like counting the breath and will help stop the mind wandering off.

- **Headspace for sleep** - lie flat on your back under the covers... take a moment to appreciate the sensation of sinking into the bed... take five deep breaths... imagine the thoughts and feelings of the day just disappearing into the distance, and any feelings of tension in the body just melting away. Begin by checking-in, in the usual way, noticing how you're feeling, in both body and mind. Remember that in the same way you can't rush relaxation, **neither can you rush sleep, so take your time** with this part of the exercise. Rather than resisting the sound, gently rest your attention on it, remaining present with the sound for thirty seconds or so, before bringing your attention back to the body. Scan the body. Remember to notice the areas that feel relaxed and comfortable, as well as any areas of discomfort. Notice whether the breath is deep or shallow, long or short, smooth or irregular. When you realize you've been distracted, that the mind has wandered off, in that moment you are back in the present, and all you need do is gently return the focus to the rising and falling sensation. Do this for a couple of minutes. Then think back through the day in a focused and structured way. Take about three minutes to go through the entire day, right up to the present moment. Having brought yourself up to the present moment, you can now return your focus to the body. Place your attention on the small toe of the left foot and **imagine that you're just switching it off for the night**. You can even repeat the words "switch off" or "and rest." Do the same with the next toe, and the next, and so on. Continue in this way through the ball of the foot, the arch, the heel, the ankle, the lower half of the leg and so on all the way up to the hip and pelvic area. Before you repeat this exercise with the right leg, take a moment to notice the difference in the feeling between the leg that has been "switched off" and the one that hasn't. If there was any doubt in your mind about whether anything was actually happening as you do this exercise, you'll feel it now. Repeat the same exercise on the right leg, once again starting with the toes and working your way all the way up to the waist. Continue this exercise up through the torso, down through the arms, hands

and fingers, and up through the throat, neck, face and head. Take a moment to enjoy the sensation of being free of tension, of not needing to do anything with the body, of having given up control. Remember that it's not an exercise to make you go to sleep, but rather an exercise to **increase your awareness and understanding of your mind at night**. So, if you're still awake, there are two ways to go. The first is to allow the mind to drift off, in the usual way, freely associating as it wants, without any sense of control or coercion on your behalf. Or begin by counting backward from one thousand to zero. Your only intention, your only focus, is to try and make it to zero. And if you should drift off to sleep midway in the process, then that's fine too.

### - Practicalities: getting started

This is not work, some additional chore (although, strangely, people often perceive it that way), these ten minutes are your time to relax. Take the time to notice what aspects of your life seem to improve the quality of headspace, and which aspects detract from it. The important thing is to be comfortable, relaxed and at ease, but with a feeling of being focused and alert at the same time. By adopting a physical posture that reflects the qualities of mind you'd like to develop, it will make it that much easier to do so. The best time of the day to do your meditation when you are learning is first thing in the morning. It tends to be a quiet time of day. But probably the most important reason is that if you do it in the morning, it gets done. It's the troublesome thoughts and emotions that we need to get to know the best. In order to know your own mind, and therefore experience life with a renewed sense of perspective, it's important to always complete the ten minutes, no matter what. There is something about the momentum that builds up when you sit to do it every day which simply cannot be replicated. By doing it at the same time each day, it helps you to develop a very strong and stable practice. New patterns of behavior and mental activity can be created and, just as importantly, old patterns of mental activity can be let go of. **There really is no such thing as good or bad meditation, just aware or unaware, distracted or undistracted.** We need to see these things clearly before we can let go of them. So it's almost as though by witnessing the discomfort coming to the surface, you are witnessing its departure.

### - Ten suggestions for living more mindfully

It's about developing a gentle curiosity: watching, noticing and observing what's happening in every aspect of your life—how you act, how you speak, and how you think.

1. You can be more alert to the tendency to slip into negative patterns of thought. The good thing about this realization is that clearly it's not what's happening outside of ourselves that causes us the most difficulty, but rather **what's going on inside our own minds**—which, thankfully, is something that can change.
2. Communicating skillfully and sensitively with other people is therefore essential on the road to getting some headspace.
3. The idea of **taking time out to be grateful** may sound a little trite to some, but it's essential if we want to get some more headspace. It's very difficult to be caught up in lots of distracting thoughts when there is a strong sense of appreciation in your life.



4. We live in a world with such high expectations that we can often be critical of our own progress in learning something new. Fortunately, meditation has a strange way of bringing out the kindness in people—and **practicing kindness in everyday life** will simply feed back into your meditation.
5. Compassion is not something that we can “do” or “create,” it already exists in each and every one of us.
6. Equanimity, while **becoming more sensitive to emotions we are less identified with them**. I might not be feeling love, joy and peace, but in my essence I am all three. God feels everything, but it does not overwhelm him.
7. By noticing moments of resistance throughout the day, you can start to become more **aware of what prevents acceptance** from naturally arising.
8. Meditation is not really about achievement and results—which is why it’s such a nice change of pace from the rest of life. Instead it’s about learning to be aware,
9. By being more mindful in everyday life, it will have a positive impact on your practice.
10. It can also mean having the strength and stability of awareness to **respond sensitively to difficult situations** rather than reacting impulsively. So living skillfully requires a certain amount of discriminating wisdom.

#### - Tales from the clinic offline diary

James, 40, explained how much he worried. How could he explain that he was in a constant state of anxiety. Likewise, how could he explain that having everything so good only made him more nervous, because he had that much more to lose. Most of the focus was on how James related to his anxious thoughts. He had always seen them as a “problem,” something to “get rid of” and he’d built up so much resistance to the thoughts, that he was battling them pretty much the entire day. **He needed instead to focus on his resistance to the anxiety**. Slowly, he gave up struggling to get rid of the thoughts and allowed the feelings of anxiety to flow a little more. He no longer identified so strongly with the feeling of anxiety. Most importantly, he said he was no longer fearful of worry, which meant he didn’t need to expend huge amounts of time and energy in trying to get rid of the feeling. The irony of it all, he said laughing, was that ever **since he’s stopped fighting the feeling, it didn’t seem to come and visit quite so often**.

Rachel, 29, came to the clinic because she had started having difficulty in sleeping. The more she thought about it, the more wide awake she felt. In fact she found that the anxiety soon turned into frustration. Then she got angry. She started to panic that “it” was happening all over again and that she was in for another sleepless night. By the third week she was starting to see genuine progress. Perhaps **the biggest change was Rachel’s perspective toward sleep. It no longer mattered that much**. She said that looking back she couldn’t understand how she’d taken it all so seriously. She said that she now recognizes that her sleep won’t always be perfect, but that’s okay, she’s happy to ride out the wave. And it’s this change that has made it a truly sustainable approach.

Pam, 51, was referred to the clinic by her doctor. She'd been on antidepressants for over three years and had tried various strategies to overcome the way she felt. She was still holding down a full-time job and, other than her GP and human resources manager at work, nobody knew about her depression. She described the depression as just "sitting there," making everything look dark and pointless. Part of the reason for coming to see me was that she wanted to reduce her medication. At the heart of Pam's depression was the feeling that nothing went right for her and that **everything was "her fault."** It wasn't an easy process for Pam but slowly the clouds did begin to part and she was reminded of what the blue sky felt like. It was Pam's willingness **to understand the feeling, and make friends with it, that ultimately enabled her to let go of it.** What's more, she'd done it herself, taking time out each day to sit with her mind, no matter how she was feeling. She still sometimes worries if she goes more than a few days or so feeling unhappy, fearing that the depression might be returning, but she says she's learned that **as long as she remains aware and remembers that they are just thoughts, she knows that she can never be harmed by them again.**

Clare, 27 - Sometimes people come to the clinic because they're looking to add something to their lives or improve a particular aspect. She's an artist, in every sense of the word, and she's clearly good at what she does. Your mind may still have a tendency to wander, but when it does, **you'll see it happening a bit sooner and you can avoid getting caught up with the story.** Not only did Clare struggle with maintaining her focus, she also had difficulty remembering to take the ten minutes out of her day. But by the end of ten weeks, she had short bursts of mindfulness dotted throughout the day. The accumulative effect of this, together with the ten minutes of meditation each day, cannot be underestimated. For Clare, those moments were a time to "regroup," to check whether she was spinning off into other ideas, and bring herself back to what she was working on at the time.

John, 45, was at the clinic for one reason only: his wife had said that if he didn't do something to control his anger she was leaving. John did not have a physically violent relationship, with either his wife or his children, but there were elements of verbal aggression and bullying at home. In fact, John found himself getting irate with perfect strangers too. He would barge past people in line at the store, drive like a madman, and get upset when the smallest things didn't go his way. His blood pressure was high and he regularly felt a tightness in his chest. Meditation did not make things worse, but it may well have given him greater awareness and insight into just how angry he was feeling. So John and I made a deal that his course of **meditation wasn't going to be about getting rid of the anger, but instead meeting the anger with kindness and understanding.** We worked through a number of different techniques over the months, each specific to John's character, but that simple yet challenging task of meeting anger with kindness remained at the heart of them all.

Amy, 24, is a single mum with a young daughter. She came to the clinic after speaking to her GP about various health concerns. She was underweight, had stopped menstruating, and was experiencing a small amount of hair loss. She was a determined

woman, but seemed to carry the weight of the world on her shoulders. She'd struggled bringing up her daughter on her own and, although she was keen to be in a relationship, she didn't think anyone would really be interested in a single mum. Amy was intensely conscious of her body. She exercised at least once a day, ate a diet that was woefully inadequate, both in content and nutrition, and clearly had an unhealthy relationship with how she viewed herself. Amy had slipped into a pattern of thinking about thinking, which doesn't make for a very restful mind. She also seemed to be "correcting" herself the whole time, trying to create the perfect state of mind she imagined meditation to be. That's the interesting thing with meditation. It's a reflection of the way in which you relate to the world around you. She became more aware of her lack of self-worth. We worked mostly with techniques that **encouraged a sense of kindness and compassion toward herself**. It's actually the way she feels about herself that has changed the most. She says she feels as though she's found something within herself that reminds her that she's okay, no matter how she might feel on the outside—so that even when she slips back into old ways of thinking, she somehow feels okay with that. Tom, 37, came to the clinic describing himself as "a professional addict." Over the past fifteen years he had been addicted to alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, sex, gambling and food. Sometimes it was just the one addiction, and at other times it was several at once. He'd been in and out of rehab a few times, and when he came to the clinic he belonged to so many different support groups that he had just one night free each week to simply relax or meet up with what he called his "non-addict" friends. In his insatiable appetite for something new, Tom was always chasing something, and as long as he was involved in doing something, he felt okay. But as soon as he stopped, he felt on edge. To his surprise, he'd found meditation easier than he expected, which in turn gave him a huge amount of encouragement. **Meditation is just sitting down and taking ten minutes out to unwind, to appreciate the silence**. He went at it with an enthusiasm and discipline that I've rarely seen before. Had the dependency on a substance simply been replaced by a dependency on the feeling he experienced in meditation? Possibly, although it appeared to be much more than that. And besides, if he was going to be dependent on something in life, it's hard to imagine anything more beneficial than meditation. He still gets in touch if he hits a tricky spot or needs some guidance, but mostly **he's content to sit with whatever it is and see how it plays out, in both his mind and his life**. He still attends some of the support groups, but says he feels as though he can now be there to help support others, rather than going there just to be supported himself.