

Gratitude & Clarity in 2018

Break out a journal and your favorite pen, it's time to get clear!

Start every day by contemplating and focusing your energy on what you want for yourself this year. Visualize it! Write about what achieving these goals would look like and then take it one step further; write about what it would FEEL like. Every morning



write a snippet about these goals this will re-focus your energy and keep you moving forward with the intention of your goals.

End every day by reflecting on your day. Make a bulleted list of all the things in your day you were grateful for. When you first start this exercise it may be hard to even think of one or two things but as you practice and shift your attention to gratitude you'll start being able to write pages! This practice will train you to be focused on the positive and will allow you to slip on those rose-colored glasses and feel true, deep joy and gratitude through out your day.

2018 is for YOU! It's for you to feel centered, joyful, and grateful.

Be Here Now!

Decorating the house, cooking large meals, traveling to family members and friends homes, cleaning, raking, shoveling, buying presents, on and on. We're all so busy it's so easy to forget to breathe and be in the beautiful moments this holiday season.



Take a moment at least once a day to stop and connect with your breath. Feel your stomach expand as you breathe in and contract as you breathe out. Become aware of your surroundings: sights, sounds, smells. Let there be no judgement of what comes in and out of your mind. Let your thoughts come and go and really be in the NOW.

In every moment you have two options to be: now-here or nowhere. Choose to be in the now and truly appreciate all of the blessings in your life.

Family Fun Time

Family is the centerpiece of the holidays. This holiday season take a little bit of extra time to connect with all of the special people in your life. One meaningful way to be present in the moment and connected with your family is to start, or continue, family traditions.

Every family has unique traditions but here are some we love:

- Bake an experimental dessert (along side the classics of course). Make a mess and maybe find a new favorite!



- Post turkey eating, go for a winter walk or dance down the beach with some hot cocoa or hot apple cider.
- Volunteer at a local soup kitchen and serve Thanksgiving meals before enjoying your own. After all giving and gratitude are the keys of Thanksgiving.

Whatever tradition you choose to carry forward or choose to create, take moment to take a deep breath, smile and be grateful for all the love we have in our lives!

Early Morning 'Me' Ritual

Our lives are so busy, full, wonderful and stressful. We're so focused on taking care of our children, parents, clients, or students we frequently forget to take some time for us. It is vital that we carve out some time for 'me'-time and may we suggest the morning?

Start your day out slowly, don't just jump out of bed. Lay there, breathe, feel your body even if it's just for a minute. Then do something just for you! Here are some suggestions.



- Sit and sip your coffee in peace and quiet.
- Write in your journal about what you're grateful for and your goals for the day or week.
- Go for a run or a walk or practice yoga.
- Take some time to pamper your skin. Mindfully put on some lotion or complete your skin care ritual.

As no two people are the same, no two morning 'me' time rituals are the same. Explore, try new things, and see what makes you feel the most empowered, energized, and ready for your day!

Full Body Relaxation

Lay flat on your back, arms and legs outstretched in a comfortable position.



Put your focus on your toes and your feet. Clench the muscles of your feet as tightly as you can. Clench, clench, clench! Then release. Feel those muscles relax. Really be present in the moment of the feeling of those muscles relaxing. Do the muscles feel warm? Let your feet melt into the floor.

Repeat the clenching and releasing of your muscles body part by body part until you feel your body melt into the floor. From your feet travel to your calves, your thighs, buttocks, abs, hands, forearms, shoulders, neck and face.

Release any expression from your face. Let your tongue fall from the roof of your mouth, your jaw slacken, and let your eyes sink back into your head like deep pools.

Practicing this exercise at least once a day will not only relax you and reduce cortisol levels; you will be learning what it feels like when your body is stressed and what it feels like to truly have your muscles relaxed. You'll be better able to hear your body's cues and know when to stop and breathe and release your tension. What's better than getting to know yourself better?

Before Bed Rituals

Usually by the time we fall into bed we just want to do something mindless; scroll through social media on our phones or turn on the TV. But what if we could try instead to try to be mindful in relaxing our minds and bodies. The National Sleep Foundation has found that the introduction of electronics has increasingly robbed us of sleep. Let's try this instead:



- Plug your phone in to charge somewhere other than your bedroom
- Crawl into bed and be truly mindful and notice how great the bed feels under your body.
- Take a few moments to take a few deep breaths, check in with your body. Is anything achy? Your feet? Take a few moments to massage your feet.
- If you're usually a TV watcher before bed, try reading a book instead!

Try it for a week; see if you notice a difference in your quality of sleep.

Calm & Smile

When we smile the brain releases a wave of dopamine, endorphin and serotonin, also called the “feel good” neurotransmitters. This release causes our muscles to relax and our blood pressure to drop making us feel happier and more relaxed. Here is a breathing exercise to remind us to smile! Inspired by Vietnamese Buddhist monk and teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh.



- Take a deep breath into your belly; as you do so silently say to yourself, “Breathing in, I calm body and mind.”
- Release the breath slowly while silently saying, “Breathing out, I smile.”

Repeat the breaths as many times as feels right to you. When you have completed your breaths before you move back into your life silently say to yourself and take a moment to understand that, “Dwelling in the present moment, I know this is the only moment”.

Deep Ocean Breath

Summer is such an energizing season! We're all so ready to go out and get things done that sometimes we forget to take a moment to slow down and give our body much needed stillness. Take a moment each day to take inspiration from nature and be still.

This is a breathing exercise inspired by the ocean waves to get you started:



- Take in a deep 5-count breath. Breathe in audibly, in taking air through your nose
- and mouth creating a sound similar to the ocean as a wave goes out. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5...
- Hold the breath in for a moment.
- Release the breath audibly in a slow, controlled 5-count, creating a sound similar to an ocean wave breaking on the shore. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5...
- And repeat as many times as needed to feel your pulse slow and your mind clear.

If you find it helpful and relaxing imagine the smell of the salty air, the cool, comfortable breeze, and the sound of the ocean matching your breath.

Take a Break from Technology

The average person checks their phone 150 times a day! Now compound that with the amount of time we spend in front of computer screens, TVs and tablets. All of this screen time effects our brain, eyes, neck, back, weight, relationships and happiness. How about in the spirit of spring we make an effort to limit our screen time and use that time to get outside and smell the flowers?



Start small by turning off any electronics 30 minutes before bed and leave your phone outside the bedroom. If you're saying, "but it's my alarm clock!". Please go and buy an old-school alarm clock. This will allow your brain time to relax before bed and allow you a better night's sleep. If you're ready for the next step limit your own daily allowance of screen time. Maybe it's only allowing one episode of your favorite show a day or decreasing from checking Facebook 10 times a day to once a day.

No matter how you choose to make a change it will make a difference in your life. You'll have more time and focus to connect with loved ones, you'll spend less time sedentary, be more active and relearn to recharge without our electronic escapes.

Personal Spring Cleaning

Winter is slowly fading away and we're starting to see the first signs of spring. As spring makes its way we suddenly feel the proverbial need to 'spring clean'. And why not? It's a wonderfully refreshing and renewing thing to do. Take a day to go through your belongings and get rid of those extra things you don't need. Donate, give to a friend or recycle. Simplify, minimize, and allow space for new growth!

Don't forget to also apply this to your internal life; declutter your mind. Think about what your goals are for this new time of growth. What has served you and needs to continue to be nourished and further cultivated? What hasn't served



you and is cluttering space in your life and mind that could be used for something that would make you happier?

Meditate on those thoughts and simplify them to a two sentence mantra. "I will cultivate _____. I will let go of _____." Repeat, repeat, repeat.