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LAUGHTER, TEARS, SILENCE

Expressive Meditations to
Calm Your Mind
and Open Your Heart

“Demystifies meditation for beginners
and inspires experienced practitioners.”

— JOHN GRAY, author of
Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus

PRAGITO DOVE

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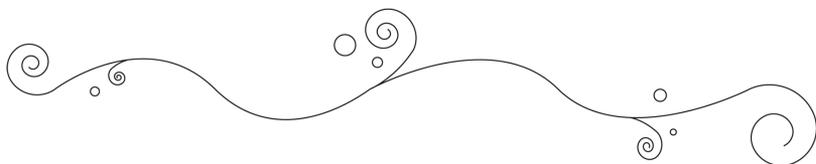
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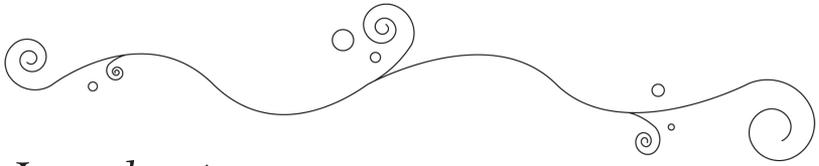
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This special abridged version, a gift for you, includes some of my favorite parts.

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Introduction

Do you sometimes feel that things are so chaotic around you that you can't find your way to inner peace and calm? The idea for this book came to me one day when I felt surrounded by family craziness and was able to drop down into a still, silent place within and just allow everything to be the way it was. I found balance in the midst of chaos.

From my years of experience with the meditation techniques in this book, I have discovered that we can all be like a still pond in the midst of a hurricane — the surface waters are slightly ruffled, but at the bottom all is calm, silent, and still. From this place no sound can disturb us; no chaos, inner or outer, can pull us off balance. When we are rooted in our inner silence we cannot be tossed around like a ship without an anchor. We can surf the waves, enjoying the ride, with our anchor of silence to ground us.

Through the techniques in this book you unburden yourself from mental overload, emotional turmoil, and physical stress — and you can have fun doing it! As these disturbances are gradually released from your body and mind, you begin to experience the serenity of the silence that lies hidden underneath.

Before I found the meditation techniques in this book, I often felt out of control. My childhood was difficult and painful, and by

the time I was in my twenties I was a mess. My mother ruled our household through fear. Being her child was often a terrifying and intimidating experience. Saturday and Sunday lunches were the worst. The family sat at the dining table until everyone had finished eating. I longed for some noise, some distraction that would take the attention away from me and the brussels sprouts I hated. My father wouldn't have minded if I didn't eat them, I'm sure, but he was as afraid of my mother as my sister and I were. Unspoken anger pervaded the silence. The lunch table was supposed to be a place for us to be together, yet no one was comfortable or happy.

My problems weren't confined to mealtimes. My mother was difficult to please and had sudden bursts of inexplicable rage. She could be kind one moment, an invective-spewing tyrant the next. She had a habit of gliding silently around the house in soft-soled slippers and suddenly coming into my room to "surprise" me. I was terrified because I never knew when she might suddenly spring up and verbally attack me in some way. Living with her was like living in a war zone, and I felt in constant danger. I didn't know how to fight this war. It was a constant game of hide and dodge. It wasn't until she was ninety-four years old that my mother was diagnosed with a psychotic illness and agreed to take medication.

The turning point for me came when my son was born. Have you ever experienced a pivotal moment when you made a life-altering decision? I realized that unless I took myself in hand and committed to self-healing, I would transmit to him the anger, pain, and fear that had built up inside me like a dormant volcano waiting to explode. I did not want to put him through what I had experienced, so I started searching for techniques that would help me. I never considered meditation because I thought it meant sitting in silence with a rigid back for hours on end, and that was the last thing I felt like doing. Then I heard about the range of expressive meditation techniques created by twentieth-century mystic

Osho, including the Osho Mystic Rose meditation, Osho Dynamic, Dancing, and Shaking, and I decided they were worth a try. They worked! They were not only doable but also fun, and they awoke in me the long-buried joyful person who was longing to be happy, creative, loving, and loved. The rest, as they say, is history.

This book covers a range of techniques that follow no one tradition but draw on many. These include the unique expressive meditation techniques created by Osho, cutting-edge combinations of expression and stillness designed to help relieve the mental, physical, and emotional stresses of our noisy, hectic lifestyles and bring us in touch with our inner silence. Various Sufi techniques that explore the meeting of movement, sound, and silence are presented, as well as Buddhist, Tibetan Buddhist, Gurdjieffian, and other Eastern and Western practices. Throughout you will also find tales drawn from various people's experiences with laughter, tears, and silence. These stories are included to inspire and encourage you to find your own way to that silent place we all have within us, where we can rest with a sense of the absolute serenity and completeness of each moment.

How This Book Is Organized

Laughter, humor, and enjoyment of life come first, in part 1, because they are the easiest. No skill is needed, and there are no rules. Laughter is something you already know how to do — it's simply a matter of degree, of bringing more lightness into your life.

Although I'm sure you know that laughter is good for you, you might feel that you have nothing to laugh about, and you may even feel more like crying. Whether you are going through a difficult phase or just feel that life is hard, laughing might seem impossible. If this is the case, then part 2, which offers deeper practices to heal pain and grief, might resonate more with you right now. Getting out from under the weight of sorrow that you may

have carried around for years brings deep relaxation, more love, and inner peace.

As you allow more laughter and tears into your life you are creating an even greater capacity for silence, peace, and spiritual nurturing. In part 3 we look at the many benefits of silence and silence practices. Attaining balance isn't always easy, but that doesn't mean we can't have it. It means we have to adjust our thinking and discover new, creative ways to find it. Silence is a powerful force for our well-being. It is that place inside us where wisdom, clarity, and calm reside. We can discover our passions and find meaning, purpose, and joy.

Finally, in part 4, I offer encouragement, inspiration, and practical plans to help you implement what you have discovered in this book. It's one thing to read the book but quite another to bring our dreams into reality. Otherwise they remain just that — dreams. As the new you emerges and unfolds you can step into the reality of your wishes, hopes, and dreams coming true, because they can!

In each part you will find different types of meditation techniques: expressive meditations (some of these require more time commitment), four-minute meditations, and some that are simply called meditations because they can be done in any amount of time.

Meditation and You

Meditation is not something apart from your everyday life; it is a quality, a way of being. Any activity done with awareness is meditation. It is not the activity that is important but your awareness as you do the activity. For example, when you take your morning shower, are you fully present? Or are you thinking about the day ahead? When *you* are fully present, enjoying the hot water on your body refreshing and invigorating you, then *meditation* is present. You can apply this focus of being fully present to any activity.

Then you will be able to easily and naturally incorporate meditation into your day.

The purpose here is not to cut yourself off from life but rather to enter more deeply and fully into it. Through laughter, tears, and silence you can bring a more authentic quality to your relationships. You can experience both being alone with yourself and being with others in a more deeply fulfilling way. Contrary to what many people believe, meditation and relationships are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they enhance each other. When you spend time alone getting to know yourself, you are then available for more authentic togetherness with others.

Inner peace is possible for us all. My intention here is to show you how to discover the joy, wisdom, and silence that reside within you. Meditation is not a technique. Rather, the techniques are there to serve as a bridge to bring you home to your authentic self. Meditation is where we arrive (our destination), and the techniques are how we get there (our vehicle(s) of choice for the journey).

These techniques link the sacred in us with our day-to-day existence. We are spiritual beings in a physical body. We don't want to be in denial either of our spirituality or of our physicality because then we are not whole; we are divided. It is this division that creates stress, dis-ease, and unhappiness, an inner fight. My intention is to show you how to come to wholeness, to bring you to a peaceful coexistence within yourself.

There are three essentials to any meditation technique: relaxation (more on p. 127), nonjudgment (more on p. 138), and witnessing (more on p. 142). I have included a short technique here as an example of what is to come and to help you get started. Over time, as you get used to this technique, and as your understanding of what meditation is and what it is not deepens, you will naturally and easily be able to incorporate the three essentials into your practices and into your life.



BENEFITS

As you make a regular practice of the three essentials (you can start with one minute a day), you will find yourself discovering a deep calm, relaxation, and inner peace that permeate your entire day.

The Three Essentials contains three vital components. First, allow the body to be relaxed. Second, witness with a relaxed awareness whatever is going on, without any interference, without any fight with the mind, any attempt to control the mind, any concentration. Third, watch the mind and your emotions, silently, without any judgments or evaluation.

When you incorporate these three things, slowly, slowly, a great silence descends over you. Start now for one minute, sit with eyes closed, body relaxed and watch with no judgment.

Meditation is awareness. It's that simple. It's about living in the here and now instead of allowing the mind to take you into the future or the past. The techniques in this book help you come into the present and integrate body and spirit. Whether it's through laughter, tears, or silence, or all three, you find your own way home. It was the laughter and expressive techniques that showed me that meditation can be fun. My definition of a spiritual person is someone who is spirited, has a zest for life out of the sheer joy of being alive in her body. This kind of positive vibration enhances the quality of your life and the lives of those around you. Further, I have discovered a powerful connection between meditation and focus that I would like to share with you now.

Enhance Your Ability to Focus

Would you like to be more focused, confident, and relaxed, even in the midst of chaos? Or have you ever found yourself distracted in

a situation in which you needed to be focused? An ability to focus and be highly productive is one of the greatest benefits I can attribute to a consistent practice of these meditation techniques.

Let's define the word *focus*. Think about this: when you take a magnifying glass, aligning it with the sun's rays and focusing it on a piece of paper, at some point the paper will catch fire. You have harnessed the power of the sun's rays for a specific result. This illustrates the power of harnessing your energy to focus on something specific to get a very powerful outcome. Not that I am suggesting that you set fire to everything in sight! But once you understand how to do this with your own energy, everything becomes possible for you. Focus is a quality you can bring to any activity, a quality of relaxed alertness, presence, clarity of mind, and creativity. It means being 100 percent present. Imagine, for example, walking along a beach, feeling the warmth of the sun on your skin, listening to the waves crashing on the shore, aware of the sand touching your feet, tasting the salty tang of the sea air, seeing the blues of the sky and sea and the yellow of the sand. All five senses are involved with enjoying every moment. You are fully present in this in-the-body experience.

Why are we so easily distracted? Have you ever been in a meeting or talking with your partner and found yourself drifting when you knew you were supposed to be focusing? Why does that happen to us? Because we are full to overflowing with mental clutter, emotional turmoil, and physical stress, and it just plain *is* difficult to stay focused.

Would you like to know how to eliminate all that inner clutter?

Do the expressive meditation techniques offered in this book. The Gibberish meditation (p. 65), for example, allows you to dump out mental overload and physical and emotional stress so that your mind is fresh and uncluttered. The Laughter (p. 9) and Osho Dynamic meditations (p. 70) are great for releasing emotional,

physical, and mental turmoil, resulting in calm, peace, and a greater ability to focus.

As you clear out all this clutter you attain clarity of mind, you gain emotional integrity, and you gain greater access to your sense of humor and creativity. Your ability to focus greatly increases for longer periods of time.

Meditation is a quality of presence, clarity of mind, creativity. It means being 100 percent present. You can bring to any activity that quality of relaxed alertness.

Do you remember? This is exactly how we defined *focus*!

Sitting Postures

For the techniques in this book that involve sitting, I would like to offer some suggestions. First, and most important, do not force a posture. If you're not comfortable, this simply creates more tension and nothing is achieved. If you can sit, good, but if it is a strain, take some other position. If you cannot sit on the ground, then sit on a chair.

Take some care, of course, but don't worry too much about whether or not your spine is absolutely erect. It is too easy to become preoccupied with these minor things.

Understand what a posture should look like, and try to absorb that, then continue on your way. The essential thing is that you are comfortable and at ease.

In the sitting positions, you want your hips to be higher than your knees to keep the stress off your back. Try placing a cushion under your hips to raise them up. You don't have to sit ramrod straight; doing so will make you tense. Sitting comfortably for a meditation technique gives you a chance to get in touch with how much you like yourself. You want to feel that your back and head are upright and in alignment, showing a sense of dignity.

How to Use This Book

In every chapter you'll discover simple, easy techniques that you can do right now as you're reading. In addition, each chapter is full of motivating and empowering words to help keep you focused. And each chapter gives you empowering insights that leave you with actionable steps and thoughts to keep you focused on your dreams and on creating your life, just as you want it to be.

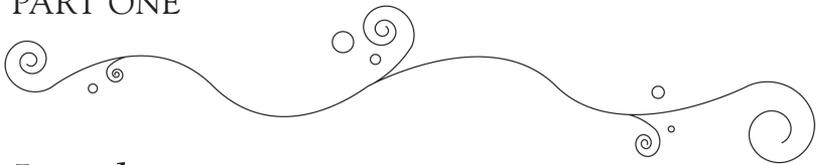
You'll gain the belief, confidence, and motivation necessary to go after your deepest, most passionate desires, whether they be for wealth, family enrichment, a lasting legacy, or anything else your heart desires.

I suggest that you read the book slowly, giving yourself time to absorb and try out different meditations. The meditations can be done alone or with a friend or in a group. It is purely a matter of personal preference. Some of you may prefer to use this book in conjunction with a meditation class or to start your own class. We each have to discover for ourselves which meditation techniques we enjoy and where and when to practice them. Some of the techniques, but not all of them, require you to sit in silence.

May this book encourage you to find the compassion and creativity that shine within you. May it bring you love, joy, and great success.

To learn more about how to benefit from the many dimensions of laughter, tears, and silence you can purchase the complete book anywhere printed or electronic books are sold, including:
www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.indiebound.org,
or www.newworldlibrary.com

PART ONE



Laughter

I start this book with the topic of laughter and with laughter meditations, because this is how I discovered that meditation can be fun. In my experience the laughter practice is one of the easiest ways to get into meditation. Even if this is the only technique you do, it will transform your life and your world; in fact, this technique can transform the whole world. You can start with a smile or a chuckle, and even if you just do one minute each day, you experience profound benefits. You attract good things, improve your health, lower your stress level, open your heart to more love, and unleash your creative juices. We've all felt it, haven't we — that overwhelming sensation of laughter when each fiber of our being pulsates with joy, bringing on a deep feeling of relaxation? Out of this easiness everything is possible, because instead of a lack of energy, you experience the fullness of energy without tension. The more relaxed you become, the fresher you feel, full of potential for creativity. Laughter is an immensely valuable activity; it is life, love, and light. When real belly laughter happens it comes from your very core. Have you experienced this? From your very center ripples start spreading outward. It is almost like an earthquake! Laughter brings energy from your inner source to your surface. It is a mystery, and it's better to experience it than to hear someone talk about it, isn't it?

Most of us hope for these moments of happy abandon, and we may tell ourselves that they don't happen often enough. The truth is, we don't have to wait to be happy. The concepts and practices I've included here are designed to help us relax, loosen up, and enjoy life. They provide an opportunity for playfulness and a reminder that life does not have to be a constant struggle. Even when we are not feeling happy, these techniques can help energize us and move us forward in difficult times. They help coax to the surface our inner happiness, serving as a vehicle to awaken us to our innate joy.

Happiness is our essential nature. Rather than waiting for events outside us to determine our happiness, we can find deep inside the happiness that is our essential nature. Perhaps we think that we have to be relaxed and calm and that all sorts of conditions need to be there for us to be happy. This is not the case. Happiness can be there *for no reason*. The more we make a practice of smiling, laughing, and enjoying ourselves for no reason, the more we discover we already have what we are seeking.

Meditation isn't something you have to work at with a straight face. Be sincere about meditation, yes, but not serious, because then you will be forcing yourself to achieve. This only creates more tension. The more fun you have with the various techniques — the more playful you are as you approach them — the more relaxed you are and the more you will want to keep meditating.

In his book *Laugh after Laugh: The Healing Power of Humor*, Dr. Raymond Moody explains: “Laughter is a good natural tranquilizer. It can stimulate the brain to produce hormones called catecholamines which may then trigger the release of endorphins. Endorphins have been described as a natural valium and foster a sense of relaxation and well being. Catecholamines also enhance blood flow and thus may speed healing, reduce inflammation and stimulate alertness.”

Laughter's Benefits

Laughter is good for us in every way: physically, emotionally, spiritually. It offers many benefits:

- *Laughter stimulates physical healing.* If you can laugh when you are sick, you heal faster. If you cannot laugh, sooner or later you will become ill. Laughter brings energy from your inner source to your surface.
- *Laughter enhances our creativity.* I have noticed, after numerous episodes of laughter, that I become flooded with creative energy. As old conditioning is released, the unconscious opens and insights come. The relaxation of body and mind provides a gateway for inner wisdom to be expressed.
- *Laughter is rejuvenating and regenerating.* When we laugh and smile we loosen up and generally feel better. The face collects stress, and when we laugh we release a tremendous amount of tension, giving us a more youthful appearance. Laughing reminds us to have fun. Today, do something just for the sheer fun of it.
- *Laughter is sexy.* Laughter helps attract people who are good for us and is very beneficial for anyone who is sexually blocked. It releases inhibitions and opens us up, bringing us directly in touch with our life force energy. Many people have reported improved sexual responsiveness after doing the laughter meditations.
- *Laughter is good for relationships.* Humor draws people together. Many couples who do the Laughter (p. 9) and the Osho Mystic Rose (p. 50) meditations tell me that they find a tremendous improvement in their relating. They discover another side of each other, the playful, humorous side, which brings relief to the more serious parts of

life concerned with work, money, housework, the kids, and so on. Remember the old adage “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”? Well, it doesn’t do much for Jill either!

- *Laughter opens the heart.* Laughter creates an opening to the love, compassion, courage, trust, and intuitive wisdom that vibrate within you.
- *Laughter activates the Law of Attraction.* Laughter fills us with warm, positive vibrations that activate the feeling state we need to attract good things to us.
- *Laughter gives us a glimpse of freedom from the mind.* For those moments when you are totally laughing, you are free of the mind. You are brought from worry to humor, from tension to relaxation, from fear to trust, from timidity to courage. In other words, you move from the mind to the heart. You cannot think and laugh at the same time. In those seconds when you are out of the mind, you are in meditation. In those seconds the mind is not and you are.

You can even laugh your way to enlightenment. Laughter serves as a bridge to our inner silence. It is an ordinary experience that can give you an extraordinary experience, a glimpse of no-mind. It can be used as a preparation for meditation.

There is hope. There are solutions to depression, fear, and pain. We can experience our emotions in a safe, meditative context, so that we can be refreshed and renewed.

In this part I’ve included many techniques that helped me transform my anger, pain, and fear into love, creativity, and joy. The same can happen for you. You can do these meditations alone or with friends. Just do them. One minute a day is a good start.

Be kind and gentle with yourself. If you don’t feel like laughing, practice smiling more often, read some joke books, or watch

some comedies. As you do, what is naturally inside will begin to surface more and more easily. And remember, if you are going through a difficult time, you can also give an equal amount of time to allowing your sadness to be there. *It is the balanced awareness and expression of both these energies that will bring you to a deeper harmony and peace within yourself.*

THE HEALING POWER OF LAUGHTER



In my twenty-plus years of teaching a wide range of meditation techniques, the laughter meditation stands out as the most popular. I have never given a presentation in which nobody laughed or wanted to laugh. Even if they had never heard of this technique before, they were willing to jump in, after a short explanation, and just start laughing. Usually, just talking about laughter and the laughter meditation seems to open people up, and many start smiling and laughing before we have even started. Have you experienced that? For example, when someone asks if you've heard a certain joke, do you immediately feel laughter start to percolate in anticipation of the joke and exploding at the punch line? One of my students, Gisele, healed her fear of public speaking when she had to give a talk about the Laughter meditation. She kept laughing out of anxiety and ended up sharing the meditation in an unexpected way. Her audience couldn't stop laughing either, and all Gisele's problems, fears, and tensions dissolved as everyone united in spontaneous laughter. In her innocence, Gisele took everyone beyond the mind and straight into the heart of laughter itself. She won everyone over, because it is just so human, isn't it, to laugh when we are nervous? We have all experienced wanting to laugh inappropriately in church or on solemn occasions, and stuffing it down seems to make things even funnier. The Laughter meditation provides an appropriate way to release our tensions and just to laugh for the sake of laughing. Here is a short meditation

technique to illustrate the many dimensions of us that laughter can reach.

MEDITATION: *Let Go of Ego*

BENEFITS

This technique helps you to drop deeper into your heart, deeper into trusting your inner wisdom. Sometimes failure happens to teach us to let go of ego and to move into a more authentic place in ourselves.

Notice if you feel bad because your ego has been crushed. This is a good thing. Have a good laugh. Do this whenever you feel your ego burning. Or maybe you would rather cry. Either way, expressing yourself this way will help take you beyond your ego.

Once I was invited to give a lunchtime presentation to employees of a large corporation in Northern California. In anticipation of the event, the director had hooked us up via video satellite to two branches of the company in Southern California. Everyone, men and women alike, was wearing a business suit, and it looked like it was going to be a serious meeting. But as we started the Laughter meditation (see description on p. 9), we were amazed at the volume of laughter that poured forth. One woman actually fell off her chair, she was laughing so much, and that made her, and everyone else, laugh even more. Afterward, the participants said they liked the idea of laughing with their colleagues, whom they could see on the screens. They all felt united, and they enjoyed this way of being in touch with one another.

I have noticed that as we do the Laughter meditation with others, any mask we are wearing gets stripped away. We are simply all human beings, laughing together. Boundaries dissolve between teacher and student, parent and child, boss and employee, and

any other categories that the mind creates to judge people as “superior” or “inferior.”

The Laughter meditation is powerful in its simple ability to transform and heal our relationships with ourselves and with others. It is good for us in every way: physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually. Do it now. Start with smiling more, for no particular reason, just because! Laugh at every opportunity that presents itself; look for opportunities to laugh.

Below you will find a more detailed description of the Laughter meditation technique. However, remember that you can laugh anywhere, anytime, for any or for no reason at all. If you are in a situation where you cannot follow the instructions below exactly, it doesn't matter. The most important thing is that you bring more laughter, smiles, humor, joy, and lightness into your life. The technique described below is particularly good to do in a group, and by a group I mean at least two people. If you want to do this technique on your own, here are a few tips for you:

Start laughing, if you can, first thing in the morning when you get up, and last thing at night when you go to bed. This practice transforms the quality of your day. It also transforms the quality of your sleep. Your sleep is deeper, and you awaken more refreshed and relaxed. Laugh for no reason, at the ridiculousness of your life, of your day, rushing from here to there. It creates a domino effect — laughter leads to more laughter. Start and finish your day with laughter, and watch as you become more easygoing, more sincere, more creative, more youthful, more compassionate, more intuitive, more authentic, and more expansive.

Remember that at the beginning laughing in this way takes some effort, but after a little while it starts to happen naturally. Your body gets used to it and even starts to expect it.

Do it in the shower, while driving your car, while stuck in

traffic. “Ha! Ha! Ha!” Even to say those words out loud starts to transform your mood.

EXPRESSIVE MEDITATION: *Laughter*



STAGE ONE: LAUGHTER

Raise both arms in the air, and shout “yahoo” several times. Then burst into laughter for absolutely no reason. Just start laughing. At the beginning it may seem weird, and you may have to force it a little, saying, “Ha, ha, ha” or “Ho, ho, ho” to get the energy of the laughter moving. You might want to use the laughter track of my *Laughter and Tears* CD to help you get started.*

Soon spontaneous laughter arises. Try it for thirty seconds, for one or two minutes, or for three or five minutes. Just laugh for no reason at all. Laugh for the sake of laughing.

It can be helpful to have some pillows to throw around and play with, depending on your situation. The idea is to become a child again and to experience the natural spontaneity and joy of life that we were all born with. That spontaneity and joy are still there; they’ve just been buried under all the to-do lists and the seriousness that we all learn comes with adulthood. But they don’t have to be. We can reclaim our natural joy and playfulness, and then we become more productive, creative, and fun-loving adults.

A great way to generate more laughter is to speak in gibberish. Do not, however, use English or any other language that you understand. If you don’t understand Italian, you can speak in Italian. By that I mean speak in gibberish with an Italian accent, and use your hands a lot to gesture. You can speak in Chinese or any kind of language, just as long as you don’t understand it. You can make all kinds of sounds, and even repeat “yahoo” from time

* To order this CD, please visit the website www.DiscoverMeditation.com.

to time to reenergize yourself. It is your responsibility to keep yourself laughing. You don't have to be a stand-up comedian or help other people laugh, unless it is in a playful way that is also fun for you. The focus is on you and on keeping yourself laughing, whether you are alone or interacting with others.

For a more detailed description of doing the Laughter meditation in a group, see the Osho Mystic Rose meditation (p. 50).

STAGE TWO: SIT OR LIE DOWN IN SILENCE

The first thing to remember is not to get serious. Just because you are going to sit in silence with your eyes closed doesn't mean that you have to be serious. Sincere, yes, but not serious! Sit down, or lie down, if you prefer, and close your eyes. You might find, and many people do, that gales of laughter are still bubbling up from inside you.

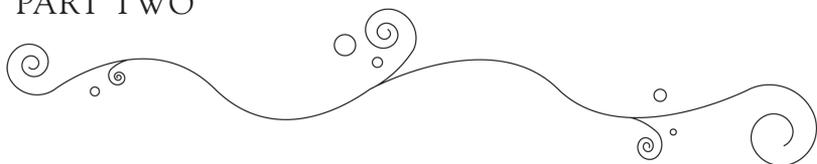
That's okay. You can sit with eyes closed and a big smile on your face and allow the energy of the laughter to keep on coming, if it wants to. Don't force it to arise, and don't repress it. Simply allow the energy to naturally express itself, as laughter, as smiles, or as silence. The idea here is to experience the laughter *from the inside*. This is something we are not used to doing, since laughter is an extroverted activity, focused on what is outside ourselves. In this second stage we take the focus *within* to experience the energy of the laughter, and/or the effects of the laughter from stage one. After a while the laughter naturally comes to an end, and you feel yourself dropping down into a place of warm silence, stillness, and joy. Experience this feeling as totally as you can, because this is how, over time, you can use the energy of the laughter to take you deeper inside yourself to your center of wisdom, clarity, and love. This technique is one of the simplest and easiest ways to come home to yourself and to find that place of divine abiding where no person or situation can disturb you.

You can do this technique for any amount of time that you wish. For example: two minutes of laughter followed by two minutes of silence. Do the same amount of time for each stage. This helps keep the balance between the extroverted nature of stage one and the introverted nature of stage two. *It is the balanced awareness and expression of both these energies that will bring you to a deeper harmony and peace within yourself.*

To learn more about how to benefit from the many dimensions of
laughter, tears, and silence you can purchase the complete book anywhere
printed or electronic books are sold, including:

www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.indiebound.org,
or www.newworldlibrary.com

PART TWO



Tears

After spending so much time in laughter, we inevitably come to tears, the polar opposite expression of energy. Life is comedy and tragedy. Understanding and allowing our tears, as well as our laughter, reaps rich rewards. Tears express the inexpressible. Whenever our innermost cup of emotion becomes too full — of happiness, sadness, or anything else — it overflows as tears.

Just as thoughts are the language of the mind, tears are the language of the heart. If the heart has become frozen, tears signal the beginning of the thaw. The more we allow tears, the more our heart melts. When tears come like a flood, we need to learn not to judge them, because with their flowing, our heart starts to warm up, becomes alive. And as we thaw the garden of our heart, love begins to grow like a flower.

Tears are also like prayer, cleansing our spiritual vision. We shouldn't try to interpret or analyze our tears. Words are inadequate for conveying their meaning. If we simply allow our tears, we become one with ourselves, with our heart.

My intention in this second part of the book is to demonstrate that you can meditate from a painful place, just as you can from a joyful place, as discussed in part 1. You can be wherever you are emotionally and still be in meditation. You do not have to be happy all the time. Sorrow also has its place of beauty and divinity.

Darkness belongs to God just as light does; the night is just as beautiful as the day. Compassion for ourselves is important, as is forgiveness, of ourselves and of others. What this means is that instead of repressing our pain we can embrace it, befriend it, and heal it.

Most people are aware of only the first dimension of tears — that of pain, suffering, misery, and sadness. When we are present with these feelings, we allow them to heal and transform into love, wisdom, and emotional stillness. For it is pain that can take us into a deeper place within ourselves and that can ultimately lead us to compassion, the highest form of love. Yet tears have a second dimension as well — they can be products of joy and ecstatic happiness. Have you ever cried out of joy, at your wedding or at your child's graduation, for example? These tears increase our happiness. The third dimension, the rarest one, is that of gratitude. This dimension comes to people who reach a place of deep connection to this whole beautiful universe, to the beauty of life itself and all the bounty that nature showers on us.

Tears are not rational. It is the mind that wants to have a rational, logical explanation for everything. So what can the mind do when the tears come? It has to learn to be nonjudgmental and compassionate and to allow the tears, even if there is absolutely no reason for them. Over time, letting the tears come helps us be more calm, relaxed, and at peace with ourselves.

Control is based on fear. When we are constantly trying to control everything, a great tension builds up in us. This tension can create pain and disease in the body and also the possibility of a sudden explosion of emotion when we least expect it. The more we understand ourselves, the inner workings of our body and mind, the easier it becomes to experience inner peace and the more the mind and the body work together in harmony.

Tears are beneficial. On the physical level they help the eyes

see more clearly, and on the spiritual level they give us more clarity of mind and access to our wisdom. Many people, particularly men, are told not to cry, because crying is seen as weakness. But tears should not be controlled, because they are cleansing. Even if they are tears of sadness, they take away our sadness and leave us calmer and quieter. If they are tears of happiness, they increase our happiness. And tears of gratitude cleanse our hearts and minds and make us feel fresh and new.

It is unfortunate that millions of people have never known the deepest aspects of tears. They know only the superficial, the ordinary. In their minds tears have become associated with pain, misery, anguish, and anxiety, and they remain unaware that tears can also become an expression of overwhelming blessings. If you have not known your tears as a benediction, you have missed out on a most beautiful experience of life.

When you learn to accept the more difficult feelings of grief, jealousy, disappointment, and fear, you find that you can *use* the energies of these feelings to take you deeper into wisdom and inner stillness. Acceptance is key, because if we do not accept our difficult feelings, we create more pain by fighting them. The kindest and gentlest way to manage pain is to accept it, to be with it, and in time it transforms into love.

I have reaped great benefits from the meditation techniques included here, and I hope you will too. Some are easier to do with friends. However, you can also do them alone; they are equally powerful either way. Just choose the ones you feel like doing. No one technique is better than another. All of them are designed to assist you in reaching your inner silence, peace, and joy.

STILL WATERS RUN DEEP: EMOTIONAL CLEARING



My childhood experiences left me confused. Over time I came to live in a kind of paralyzed numbness, too terrified almost to be. So I developed two strategies: the first one was being silent, and the second was filling my life with noise.

My first idea was to keep my mouth shut and speak only when spoken to. This silence was based on fear, on swallowing my truth, my joy, my creative expression, as well as my anger and pain. This silence was the lid on a cauldron of mixed emotions; it was like a dormant volcano, which appears quiet and serene on the surface but can erupt at any moment.

Because I had no one to share my feelings with, I was lonely in my self-imposed silent exile. I had no idea that I was cutting myself off from the love that was available to me from others. The only people I felt safe and comfortable with were the characters of the books that I loved to read, and my cat.

The silence I created was also filled with self-judgment. I was constantly trying to figure out how to make my mother happy, trying to make sense of it all. What could be keeping her from taking responsibility, from showing sensitivity, from controlling her emotions? If I tried to talk to my father about it, he always replied, "There's nothing wrong with your mother!" I concluded, therefore, that everything was my fault, that there must be something

wrong with me. If only I could be a better kid, I thought, then my mother would love me and treat me with more kindness.

It was only later, through the techniques described in this book, that I was able to heal and free myself from this silent bondage and find a natural inner silence filled with love, peace, and wisdom.

As I headed into my teenage years, I tried a different strategy: noise. I filled my life with partying, smoking, and drinking. I left home and went to college, where I was free at last, or so I thought.

Although I was physically free, I was not free inside. I felt rebellious, unhappy, and trapped. My first year in college I partied and drank myself into oblivion. I spent a lot of time with my head hung over the toilet, swearing to myself that I would never drink another drop of alcohol. But at the next party, there I was, armed with a cigarette in one hand and a drink in the other. I was incapable of having social interactions without my twin allies. My self-confidence depended on them.

This strategy was brought into sharp relief one morning when I woke up to find myself in bed with a guy I didn't know. I couldn't remember how I had met him or what had happened the night before. It was a pivotal moment in my life, and I made the decision to seek help and transform myself.

Later on, through the techniques described in this book, I learned how to express myself in a meditation context so that I could release all the emotional turmoil. The smoking, drinking, and promiscuity dropped away, and I was able to enjoy parties and socializing in a natural, balanced way.

The Search for Happiness

I wanted to be happy — really happy, not a fake, covering-over-emotional-turmoil happy. From my mother I had learned violence,

bitterness, and rage; from my father I had learned love as powerlessness and denial of truth. How could I come to terms with those paradoxical lessons? I had to take control of my life to discover the truth. Vacillating between extreme isolation and wild partying was not the answer. The Beatles sang, “All you need is love.” “Love is the answer,” sang John Lennon. I agreed with him, but where could I find love? When would I be happy?

I started searching and heard about a whole range of meditation techniques, including a series of cutting-edge expressive techniques created by the spiritual teacher Osho. As I practiced these techniques I discovered who I was underneath the numbness, the pain, and the rage that had piled up, layer upon layer, within me over the years, and that had been covered over with large dollops of noise and distraction.

I discovered that our core of inner silence is the source of our power. When we have that, no one can manipulate us, dominate us, or use us in any way. From that place of silence within, we know our truth and are able to live by it. But when we lose access to our silence, we can so easily become confused, especially when we’re hit with a wave of strong emotion. We become like a ship without an anchor, tossed around at the mercy of the elements.

Befriending Emotions for Transformation

Below are a range of suggestions and techniques that have helped me release and transform my more uncomfortable emotions. These practices and techniques help us accept, befriend, and express the full range of our emotions — anger, frustration, joy, sadness, disappointment, excitement — and this leads us to the still, deep waters within. I invite you to read through the techniques slowly and start where you feel would be the best place. You may prefer the shorter ones, or you may find the longer ones to be of

more benefit. What matters is that you find the techniques that work best for you, depending on your situation.

Identifying Feelings

The first step is to bring awareness to what you are feeling at any given moment. Here's a simple practice you can do: simply stop for thirty seconds and see if you can identify how you are feeling. Allow the feeling, whatever it is. Don't judge it. Whether you are numb or happy or sad or depressed, simply identify the feeling and accept it. There is never any right or wrong way to feel. Perhaps you're confused about what you're feeling or just don't know. Let that be okay too.

It's not always so easy to identify what we're feeling. Sometimes we don't want certain feelings to arise, even though they are undeniably there. Or we might judge ourselves, thinking we shouldn't be feeling this way or that.

It is vital that we start by bringing awareness to our feelings, because this allows us to see how affected we are by our moods. When we're in a good mood, everything looks good, and we tend to think and act clearly as a result. A low mood, however, often makes us reactive; it compromises our common sense and makes it harder for us to think and act clearly. The awareness itself can help us make allowances for the fact that we are low. We might, for instance, be extra loving with ourselves or drive more carefully. Tuning into ourselves also brings us greater awareness of and compassion for others.

Expressing, Releasing, and Transforming Feelings

Once you've identified what you're feeling, the next step is to express it. Unexpressed emotion ties up so much of our energy. The

energy of the emotion actually lodges in our body as a stressor. By letting the feelings out, releasing all the disturbance, we can listen to our silence more easily. And this listening, in turn, relaxes us and clears the way for making good decisions, taking a particular course of action, or relating better with another person.

Transforming Anger into Creativity

Anger — and with it I include frustration, irritation, annoyance, and depression — is one of the most difficult emotions to work with. It clouds our good judgment; its noise obliterates our creativity, wisdom, and clarity of mind. When anger goes unexpressed, it often turns to depression (it is often said that depression is anger turned inward). Unexpressed anger creates a stagnation of energy, a blocked, heavy feeling of inertia, and we are finding increasing evidence that this blocked energy has a direct impact on our physical health.

For example, if it stays lodged in your body, your anger can do serious damage to your coronary arteries. A new study at Harvard Medical School and Deaconess Hospital, led by epidemiologist Murray A. Mittleman, MD, shows that outbursts of moderate to extreme anger heighten your risk of a heart attack. Moreover, the study reveals that the increased peril lingers for a couple of hours, even if the eruption of temper lasts for just a few minutes. According to Mittleman, the average risk of heart attack more than doubles in the two hours following an outburst of moderate or greater anger. The solution to this situation that I offer here is the expressive meditation called Gibberish. Designed to give us a safe outlet for our anger, this technique helps us avoid outbursts, as described above, which threaten our health. We can also discover what is underneath the anger, which is usually one of three things: hurt, fear, or unmet needs.



BENEFITS

The Gibberish meditation helps us release poisons from our body and mind, which is good for our health. It offers an alternative to dumping our anger and frustrations on another individual, thus avoiding a destructive chain reaction. It also offers an alternative to repressing emotions through self-destructive habits such as overeating, substance abuse, and so on. We can learn to use the energy of anger and transform it into creativity, love, and joy. We can also transform victimhood into empowerment, thus freeing ourselves from mental/emotional prisons. Other emotions, such as joy, excitement, sadness, and grief — indeed, our full spectrum of emotions — can also be expressed with this technique, resulting in emotional balance, calm, and inner peace.

This technique comes from the Sufi tradition and was first introduced hundreds of years ago by a Sufi mystic named Jabbar. Start with two minutes for each stage. As you get used to it you can increase the amount of time to ten, twenty, or thirty minutes. Just be sure to spend equal time on stages one and two.

STAGE ONE

Close your eyes. Put on a blindfold if you can, because this helps keep the eyes closed. Start speaking in gibberish, any nonsense sounds. Don't worry about what you sound like. Make any sounds you like; just don't speak in a language or use words that you know. Allow yourself to express whatever needs to be expressed within you. Just go totally mad. This is therapeutic madness. Sing, cry, shout, scream, mumble. Let your body go free: stamp, stomp, jump,

skip, lie down, run in circles. Do whatever you feel like doing without harming anyone. Do not let up. Keep a steady stream of sound going. If you are doing this meditation with other people, don't get distracted by what they are doing. Stay with what is happening with you. If you cannot make loud sounds, for example, if you live in an apartment complex, then mouth the sounds silently but with the same force as if you were shouting out loud.

STAGE TWO

Sit in silence and watch with nonjudgment. For more information on witnessing, see p. 142.

An experience I once had taught me how to transform anger into creativity. One hot August afternoon I was having an altercation with one of my neighbors about the parking situation on our street. He was angry that one of my friends had parked her car in his "territory." When I got home, I festered over our conversation, aware that my eight-year-old son would return soon from his Cub Scout outing. I did not want to run the risk of dumping my anger onto him; I had experienced too much displaced anger myself as a child. I had been practicing the Gibberish meditation technique for quite a few years to clear the backlog of anger, rage, and frustration that had accumulated in me from childhood. I was now aware that I needed to release my bottled-up feelings once again.

First I put on a blindfold, then I turned on my *Gibberish* CD (see p. 206). I stomped and hollered and ranted and raved against my neighbor — all in gibberish, of course! Aaah! It felt so good to release the hot anger from my body and mind, to take the lid off the pressure cooker. I felt like a dormant volcano that had been muttering and grumbling underground and then had exploded to get rid of all the unwanted garbage within. The meditation was a cleansing, a dumping out of emotional and mental poisons. After

a while I noticed that the emotional charge of my anger was disappearing and that my sense of humor was returning. I found myself clowning around, mimicking my neighbor in gibberish, and generally laughing and guffawing at myself too. Suddenly I heard “stop” shouted from the CD.

I immediately stopped the gibberish and listened. The silence was profound. I then sat down for the second stage of this meditation technique, which is sitting in silence. I sat and watched: thoughts, feelings, and emotions. I felt a delicious silence descend upon me. Compassion for myself and my neighbor arose.

The hot anger inside me had transformed into cool compassion, because I’d *used* the energy of the anger to move me into compassion. As I sat in silence, my emotions were now calm; I could see the situation with more clarity. What a relief to be back home in integrity with myself! In addition, a possible solution arose in my mind. I returned to speak to my neighbor about the parking situation. He was receptive to my new idea, and we resolved to treat each other with friendliness and respect in the future. We were even able to joke about how upset we had become.

Empowering Victims and Bullies

Most people do one of two things with their anger. One option is to repress it. Women, for example, are taught that it is not ladylike to get angry (I certainly was taught that!). As a result, we become afraid of anger, our own or someone else’s, and become paralyzed with fear rather than being able to respond to a situation. We become victims.

Alternatively, we dump our anger on someone else. In general, this option is a more masculine characteristic. We become bullies. Victims and bullies are trapped by their own unconscious. Victims internalize their anger, and bullies externalize it.

If we are a victim and have become paralyzed with fear, the

Gibberish meditation technique can help us get in touch with our anger, and we can learn to defend ourselves and create boundaries. Bullies can learn to redirect their anger into a safe context. Both victims and bullies then learn how anger transforms into love. Both become empowered, freed from an unconscious habit.

Anger in itself is not bad. But to hold onto and accumulate it is dangerous. If we hold it in for too long, it can explode to such an uncontrollable degree that we even risk dying—either having a heart attack or being angry enough to kill someone else. A person who can be totally angry can also be totally happy, totally loving. It is ultimately not a question of whether you are angry, or loving, or happy. The important thing is to be a whole person, with a full range of emotions, and to release your tensions using a meditation technique. Then you are free and can move on without carrying anything from the past.

The Master Key to Happiness

These expressive meditation techniques offer a healthy awareness of oneself. We learn to become so rooted in ourselves that we live in our center, where our inner wisdom lies. In this place we are so anchored to peace and calm that nothing can disturb us. We can then consciously choose how to respond to situations rather than react from unconscious habit. The surface of the ocean has millions of waves created by the agitating wind. But the deep-down ocean is silent, still, and calm, and no wind, no hurricane, can disturb it. We are like the ocean. If we live on the surface, agitated by every disturbance, we live in constant turmoil. But we can learn how to move down to our own silent depths where no one can disturb us.

Don't fight the hot fire of anger, don't condemn it; use it and transform it into the coolness of compassion. Using your anger and transforming it is how you become the master rather than being a victim or a bully.

When you understand how expressive meditation techniques work to transform uncomfortable emotions into productive ones, and to lead you from your agitated surface to your calm inner core, you have the master key to happiness.

Forgiving My Mother

In the introduction I talked about being terrorized by my mother as a child and how when she was ninety-four, she was finally hospitalized and diagnosed with a psychotic illness.

Walking into the hospital room, I was greeted by my mother with warmth, love, and delight. She was clearly overjoyed and grateful that my sister and I had taken the time to fly from California to England to visit her. Our visit was wonderful. My mother allowed me to help her with her lunch when it arrived, let me assist her with the special shoes she needs for her feet, and allowed my sister and me to warm up her cold hands. She showed appreciation to the nurses and kindness and gratitude to my sister. We all ended up laughing together in a way I had never imagined possible. Content and happy in her hospital situation, she expressed her thanks that my sister and I were taking care of all her affairs. Up to this point I had never experienced anything but abuse from her. For this visit I had prayed and set an intention that we would be able to have, perhaps for one last time, a kind and respectful interaction.

After many years of practicing the techniques described in this book, I was able to reach a place of forgiveness and compassion. How much of our pleasant visit was due to my compassionate, forgiving state and how much was due to my mother's medication, I will never know. I do know, however, that although my mother had been receiving medication, she was still psychotic and highly abusive. The nurses had to keep her in a private room because she shouted at the other patients on her hospital floor. Yet our interactions were full of grace.

I am grateful that, even if it was for only twenty minutes of my life, my mother and I were able to laugh and be kind to each other. The power of those twenty minutes of loving-kindness stays with me to this day.

At this point I want to introduce you to another expressive technique, the Osho Dynamic. This powerful ally helped me to express and release much of the pent-up rage, pain, and fear that had built up during my childhood and to transform these uncomfortable emotions into joy, love, and creativity.



EXPRESSIVE MEDITATION: *The Osho Dynamic*

BENEFITS

The following technique is great for releasing pent-up emotions and mental stress, including anger and frustration. It shatters any preconceptions you might have that meditation necessitates sitting in silence in the lotus posture. The expressive meditations start with the body and its physical activity. Movement allows for the cathartic release of tension from the body/mind and is a powerful way to transition into sitting or lying down in stillness and silence.

The Osho Dynamic is designed for those of us who enjoy a good physical workout. It is perfect for our hyped-up lives, having little to do with the stereotypical idea of bald-headed monks sitting for hours on cold stone floors contemplating holy matters. Its message is simple: release your mental, emotional, and physical stress so that you can become physically engaged with enjoying your life *now*. It is the most vigorous technique in this part of the book and is extremely powerful in cutting through any blocks in the body/mind, bringing you to your essential self. This technique was created by Osho. A special soundtrack, *Osho Dynamic*, was created for it (see

www.DiscoverMeditation.com), and I particularly recommend this one because the drumming and music urge you on past the temptation to quit. If you can't get hold of the CD, you can do just fine by setting a timer for the different stages. However, I do not recommend substituting any other music.

The words *dynamic* and *meditation* used together present us with an interesting contradiction. *Dynamic* suggests tremendous effort, while *meditation* implies silence and no effort. Yet within this very contradiction lies the possibility of bringing ourselves into balance.

This meditation has five stages. The first three — breathing, catharsis, and the Sufi mantra “Hoo!” — are designed to get us in touch with our vital energy source, our aliveness, our vibrancy. They allow for complete release and expression and should be done with vigor, so that no energy is left static in you. The idea is to exhaust your outgoing energy. When the mind has no more energy for creating thoughts, dreams, and imaginings, when it is absolutely spent, you will find that you are *in* — deeply rooted within yourself, centered, at home.

The fourth stage is silent witnessing. Coming on the heels of the first three stages, this silence is vital, alive, bubbling with life energy. It is a live silence that cannot be achieved by ordinary, rational effort. In the Zen tradition this is called effortless effort. The use of this contradictory term suggests that the process is dialectical, not linear. The energy of the earlier stages is not denied but absorbed, *used*.

The fifth stage is celebration and dance.

This meditation is best done on an empty stomach and in the early morning. I recommend wearing a blindfold to help keep your eyes closed without effort. To free up the air passages I blow my nose before starting. You'll need about sixty minutes.

STAGE ONE: BREATHING (TEN MINUTES)

If you have the CD, put it on and, standing with neck and shoulders relaxed, begin breathing rapidly through the nose, letting your breath be intense and chaotic. (If you don't have the CD, I recommend that you do this without music.) Breathe as fast as you can while keeping the breaths deep — you should feel the breath deep in your lungs. Do this as totally as you possibly can. Keep your neck and shoulders relaxed.

Keep up this chaotic breathing. (Do not let it take on a rhythm, because then you might go on automatic pilot. Keeping it chaotic helps keep you in the present moment.) You can use your arms like a kind of bellows to help pump more energy through your chest and lungs, until you literally *become* the breathing. Once your energy is moving, your body will begin to move as well. Let it happen. Use the movement to help you build up even more energy. Let your arms and body move naturally. This will help build the energy. Don't let up, and don't slow down, until the full ten minutes are up.

STAGE TWO: CATHARSIS (TEN MINUTES)

Let it all out. Just totally cut loose. Jump, laugh, scream, cry, shake, kick, punch, whatever your body feels like doing. Don't hold back. Keep your whole body moving and the sounds coming. Don't let your mind interfere; just stay in your body. Go mad.

STAGE THREE: HOO! (TEN MINUTES)

With shoulders and neck relaxed, raise both arms as high as you can without locking your elbows. With raised arms, jump up and down shouting the mantra “Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!” as deeply as possible, from the depths of your belly. Each time you land on the flats of your feet (making sure your heels touch the ground), let the sound hammer deep into your center. Give it all you've got. Exhaust yourself completely.

STAGE FOUR: SILENT WITNESSING (FIFTEEN MINUTES)

Freeze! Stop wherever you are and in whatever position you find yourself. Don't arrange the body in any way. A cough, a movement, anything, dissipates the energy flow, and the effort is lost. Be a witness to everything that is happening to you.

STAGE FIVE: DANCE (FIFTEEN MINUTES)

Spend fifteen minutes celebrating your aliveness. Dance, expressing whatever is there. Bring this energy with you into your day.

With this technique, you want to open yourself as widely as possible for the breath of life; take in as much of it as you can. Stop philosophizing, stop dreaming of the day when you'll really start living. Do it now! Live!

Whenever I do the Osho Dynamic, I am filled with exhilaration. The deep, fast breathing dissolves the cemented patterns in my psyche, making everything move and tingle, and charges my body with oxygen and life energy. Ah, yes — this is great!

If I become halfhearted about it, I shift to a higher gear. Within minutes I have reached a speed that leaves my thoughts panting behind. That is one of the purposes of the exercise: the mind is blown away. But fear not, it will come back!

All I hear now is a staccato of massive out-breaths. I realize that even more is possible (more is always possible), and I breathe more deeply yet. I am thinking nothing, there is only breathing — deeper, faster, madder. It's totally far-out. I am simply in it, and it is fun to really go for it.

When the catharsis stage starts, what a relief it is to express all my pent-up emotions, unburden my mind, and allow my body to release all its tension. Urging myself on, I discover deeply buried layers of myself, opened up by the first stage, that need expression. Long-forgotten anger, hurts, and disappointments can surface and be thrown out. All kinds of old emotional baggage can be

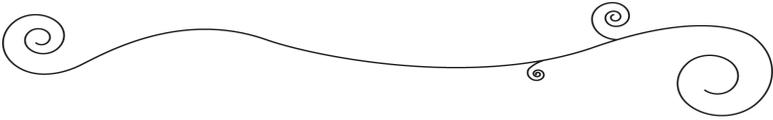
released from my body/mind. By the third stage, I feel cleaned out and ready to fully shout the mantra “Hoo!,” the sound arising loud and strong from deep within my belly. As the sound resonates through my whole body, I feel it continuing the work of the first two stages, shedding even more layers of tension. My body/mind starts to feel like hollow bamboo, preparing through this exercise to receive the silence of the fourth stage.

Suddenly I hear a voice shout “stop” (if you don’t have the CD, set a timer to ring to start the fourth stage). I freeze and listen to the silence. This is the fourth stage. I sink into a profound depth of stillness. After all the noise and effort I stand stock-still, just breathing, being, enjoying, witnessing. This is it — the moment I have been waiting for. It is such a joy to discover this vibrant silence pervading my body and simply to watch.

For the dance of the fifth stage, I have plenty to celebrate. For one thing, one more Osho Dynamic is accomplished. I celebrate myself, that I have been willing to put such effort into my journey of self-discovery, releasing my tension and getting in touch with my creativity and enjoyment of life. I feel full of infinite possibilities, like an open sky.

The Osho Dynamic is a good method for anyone who feels stressed-out, neurotic, confused. It is an inner and outer workout that hews a new path through the jungle of our overly speedy minds. Many people like learning how to teach it, introducing it as an early-morning class at their local gym or at their place of work. As you well know, the more effort you put into something, the greater the payoff is. If you do this technique for at least twenty-one days in a row, you will be richly rewarded.

ACCEPTANCE



Accepting our flaws and difficult emotions and situations isn't easy, is it? We would like life always to go our way. But I have found that through acceptance of difficulties we gain deeper insight, compassion, and understanding of ourselves. There is a gift for us in every challenge, even if it takes a while to discover what it is.

The only problem with uncomfortable emotions such as anger, sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, anguish, and misery is that we want to get rid of them. When we turn the fight into acceptance, we are able to transform them. We do not want to just escape these emotions, because they are the very situations that allow us to become integrated and to grow. They are blessings in disguise.

FOUR-MINUTE MEDITATION: *Acceptance*



BENEFITS

The more your awareness and acceptance grow, the more your anger, fear, and greed simply disappear and the seed of your authentic self flowers into full bloom.

STEP ONE

This technique is very simple. First be aware of what your emotions are in this moment.

STEP TWO

Don't reject your emotions. Accept them as natural facts without any condemnation. Allow them to come to the surface. We can

easily cast them off from the surface, but not so easily from the depths of our unconscious. The deeper they go, the more trouble they create, because they start functioning from unknown corners of our being. When I say acceptance I do not mean that there is no need to transform them. Acceptance *is* transformation, because through acceptance awareness becomes possible.

As you get used to this practice, you can bring awareness to the more difficult emotions such as anger, greed, fear. It is not always easy, in the heat of the moment, to remember a meditation technique, is it? To practice with anger, for example, you can, like an actor, recall an uncomfortable moment when you reacted to a situation and later regretted your reaction. You can revisit those moments in this practice with deep awareness and acceptance of yourself. Anger, greed, and fear are part of our humanity. As you grow in awareness and acceptance, you reach a point where you become aware of your reactions in the heat of the moment, and this gives you a choice: you can take a deep breath to calm yourself down and make a mental note to do this technique later that evening, thus creating the possibility of *responding* to the situation, rather than reacting. If you know that fire burns you, you cannot put your hand into a flame. Awareness transforms because you cannot knowingly be angry at people, you cannot knowingly be greedy.

Embracing Our Flaws

There was once an elderly peasant in China who had two large pots, one hung at each end of a pole that he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it, while the other was perfect. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived half full, while the intact pot delivered its full volume of water. For two years this went on daily, the bearer delivering only one and a half pots of water to his house. Of course, the

perfect pot was proud of achieving its full potential, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its imperfection, miserable that it was able to accomplish only half of what it felt it had been made to do.

One day, after two years of abject failure, it spoke to the water bearer by the stream. “I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes me to leak all the way back to your house.” The bearer said to the pot, “Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot’s side? That’s because I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds beside your side of the path, and every day while we walk back, you water them. For two years I have been able to pick those beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you, just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house.”

Each of us has our own flaws. But it’s our cracks and flaws that make our lives together so interesting and rewarding. We need only to take all people — including ourselves — for who they are and to look for the good in each of them.

FOUR-MINUTE MEDITATION: *Don’t Ask Why*



BENEFITS

As you gather confidence in the simpler activities described in steps one and two, you can move on to more complex things such as relationships, sexuality, anger, and so on. Over time you find that whatever the emotional turmoil, whatever the chattering of the mind, a part of you remains calm, relaxed, neutral. Your life flows with more grace and ease.

Asking “why” has nothing to do with awareness. Analysis is not the same as awareness. Once you ask why you feel something, you have already moved away from the simple fact of your emotion. Say you feel angry. *To be aware means not doing anything, just seeing your anger without any condemnation or evaluation, not asking*

about a cause. Remain neutral. Awareness is a simple process with no questions and no answers. Simply watch.

STEP ONE

Start with very simple things, such as breathing. Do this now. Simply stay present and observe your breathing.

STEP TWO

If you get impatient, face the impatience. If you look directly at the impatience, it disappears, and you are filled with a tremendous calm. You can also do this with other simple activities such as walking to your car or doing errands downtown.

Intuitive Intelligence

Intuitive intelligence arises when we accept ourselves. When you accept, you are no longer divided. The split between you and the “should,” between you and the “ought,” disappears. How often have you felt, “I am this, and I should be that”? Just be yourself. How can you truly know yourself unless you go within and discover what’s really there? So instead of trying to change, make the effort to know who you are and befriend that person. You have to be only yourself.



FOUR-MINUTE MEDITATION: *Befriend Yourself*

BENEFITS

As you practice this technique your self-love, self-respect, and self-acceptance become stronger. Your ability to trust your intuitive intelligence and inner wisdom is greatly enhanced.

STEP ONE

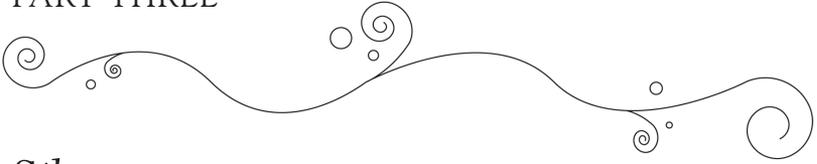
Write down one thing you like about yourself. Sit in silence, with eyes closed, and focus on this quality, accepting that there is indeed something very likeable about you.

STEP TWO

Write down one thing that you do not like, or wish was different, about yourself. Sit in silence, with eyes closed, and accept that you are not perfect, that no one is perfect. Accept yourself the way you are, including this flaw. Give yourself permission to accept who you are in this moment.

To learn more about how to benefit from the many dimensions of laughter, tears, and silence you can purchase the complete book anywhere printed or electronic books are sold, including:
www.amazon.com, www.barnesandnoble.com, www.indiebound.org,
or www.newworldlibrary.com

PART THREE



Silence

After the expression and release of laughter and tears, we have created a space where we can drop down into the silence that resides within us. Silence is power. It gives us vision, perspective, clarity. Creative solutions, inner peace, and wisdom all arise from silence. Stress and anxiety disappear, and we come into a relaxed balance with ourselves and our lives. Our inner silence is a constant source of love and fulfillment, giving rise to a deep sense of inner security. It provides us with an ever-present feeling of being at home, of all-rightness, wherever we are, whatever we are doing. From this place we can see beyond our unconscious conditionings and beliefs and free ourselves up to become more expansive, creative, loving, and resourceful.

But bringing ourselves into balance isn't always easy, is it?

When our minds and lives are overcrowded, filled with busyness and noise, how can we function to our best potential? How can we listen to our inner wisdom, to the messages from our bodies? How do we unleash our creativity? We need silence. There are two good ways to discover silence. One is through connecting with nature. It's not that nature is absolutely silent; after all, the birds are singing, the waves are crashing on the shore. *But no more information is going into our heads.* Being closer to the earth makes it easier to stop and absorb the silence. This is why nature is so relaxing.

The other way to find silence is through the practice of meditation. *Silence is at the very core of meditation*, and all meditation techniques are designed to bring us to our core inner silence. Through the techniques presented here, you can unburden yourself from mental overload, emotional turmoil, and physical stress. As these disturbances are gradually released from your body and mind, you begin to experience the serenity of the silence that lies hidden underneath. Our power lies in facing the contradictions of our lives and in confronting and releasing the obstacles we encounter. Unburdening ourselves from turbulent emotions, releasing the noise of the mind, and understanding what causes stress in our bodies takes us to the silence of our soul, where we can embrace the happiness, satisfaction, and fulfillment that are awaiting us. We can then detach from the noise of the mind, from emotional turmoil, as well as from external sounds and chaos.

Our inner silence provides us with a place from which we can be in the world yet not be disturbed by it. Yes, we can seek out silence in distant places. We can, for instance, go to the Himalayas to meditate on a mountaintop. That would undoubtedly be an enjoyable trip. But as soon as we return to our busy urban lifestyle, our inner noise will resume, because the silence belonged to the Himalayas, not to us. The key is to find the silence within *you*. Then you can continue in your work, in your relationships with family and friends, and still have that core of silence to keep you in balance.

Silence is always present, but it is very subtle, so we must learn to recognize it. It is the life force within you, within everybody and everything. Silence is a physical experience. We hear and feel it through the belly. When we experience it we are united with all living beings. *Silence is oneness*, a state of fundamental unified existence in which all conflicts, all paradoxes, are dissolved and thus resolved.

The root cause of our stress is division. When we become separated from ourselves we feel lost. We lose our power, our wisdom, our inner anchor of peace and security. It is the mind that creates this division. Words divide. Silence, love, laughter, and tears unite because they are a language that everyone understands. Silence brings us from di-vision to vision. In silence we come face-to-face with ourselves, with the parts we like and don't like — it's all part of the package. It's not about being perfect. It's about accepting and embracing all parts of ourselves and relaxing into them. Silence is our true power because from this inner core come compassion and understanding.

As you'll see, silence can also enhance the quality of our interactions and our relationships. The power of silence in our work lives often has immediate results — in increased productivity, better decision making, and a new sense of cooperation and understanding. In love and at play, silence shows us new ways to connect and experience joy. The down-to-earth, practical meditations in this part of the book demonstrate how silence can benefit us even in the most mundane aspects of our busy, overstressed lives.

Silence also brings us to that unshakable core of self-love, where we discover that the knight in shining armor is within us all the time. We discover that the most powerful place to be is centered in ourselves. No one can take that away. It is our divine abiding. And it comes unexpectedly. It's not something you can control or demand. It has no logical sequence. It can be frustrating for the mind, which likes a logical order to things. However, over time you accept that silence comes and goes of its own accord and that your job is simply to create a space and to invite the silence to show up.

As you continue to experience the gaps of silence in between the noise it becomes like seeing into the gates of heaven — silence — and the gates of hell — noise. The revelation is to understand

that you have a choice. And we do this not by avoiding the gates of hell — by turning on the TV or radio or grabbing the phone to call a friend — but by looking them squarely in the eye, accepting and allowing them. In this way distance can slowly be created. The techniques in this part, including the powerful expressive meditations, provide help for dealing with the gates of hell. Start to *enjoy* these gaps of silence, begin to experience them as delicious moments full of serenity and well-being, when the body is relaxed and at ease, the mind calm, the heart open and warm, and the emotions grounded and still. Your silence is without ego and its problems, without any questions or answers. It is simply silence. This is pure joy, pure love, pure light.

FROM THOUGHT TO NO-THOUGHT: A SILENT MIND



A silent mind? I was very far away from that as I sat in seminar after seminar at an all-day Mind Body Spirit Conference in San Francisco one sunny October day, many years ago. By the beginning of the afternoon program I was tired, irritable, and on information overload. I decided that my first afternoon session, which was scheduled for an hour and a half, would be the last, and then I would call it a day. What a pleasant surprise I was in for. The presenter announced that we were going to sit in silence the entire time. I was overjoyed. We all settled down in our seats; the shuffling, rustling, and chair scraping calmed down; and we fell into a collective silence. The woman next to me, however, was having a hard time with the silence. I could hear her fidgeting with her papers and moving restlessly in her chair. After a while she got up and left, as many others did. I understood only too well what they were going through.

At first I sat with my mind spinning at breakneck speed through the information it had been deluged with since early morning. It was like sitting with an ongoing cacophony of sound as the mind sifted, sorted, and tried to deal with the information overload. When we don't give our minds time to rest we repress all the messages that are continuously pouring in. They start accumulating just like files accumulating in your in-box, like unanswered emails

on your computer. And if the mind's clutter keeps on accumulating, the stress can become overwhelming.

As I sat in that room my mind rattled on with an amazing medley of thoughts about how to stuff a chicken, who to invite to dinner next week, what to wear to a party that evening, how to talk with a difficult family member, and what color the bathroom should be painted. I felt like an overstuffed chicken myself. As I continued to sit, it took a while before the noise in my mind started to subside, and I fell into a calm, cool, delicious silence, which I could feel reaching to the very depths of my being. The rest of the session was pure delight. And the extra bonus was, when I left the seminar, I felt rejuvenated and recharged, ready for the last two seminars of the day. Sitting in silence helps bring our attention to the backdrop of silence that exists behind the mind, in between the thoughts. The silence is always there. But the mind is so loud and busy that usually we cannot hear it. Between each thought and the next is a gap of silence. It is this silence that distinguishes one thought from another. By emptying the mind of its overload, by using silence practices and expressive meditation techniques, we can learn to create more space, more silence, for creative thoughts to arise, for our inner wisdom to be heard. When the silence comes, not a single thought arises. And this is the miracle — we move from heaven to hell, from thought to no-thought.

MEDITATION: *Creating a Haven*

Are you worth one minute? Sit with eyes closed. Breathe. Be present with yourself. Watch the mind with nonjudgment and compassion. Observe your thoughts as if you were watching a TV screen, creating a distance between you and the thoughts. Cherish this moment, this haven of rest in the midst of your day. Start with

one minute a day, or two or three or four. Start easy. It takes time to create a habit.

EXPRESSIVE MEDITATION: *One-Minute Gibberish*



BENEFITS

You gain instant relief from the chattering mind. You become more calm, relaxed, and creative.

Do thirty seconds of Gibberish, followed by thirty seconds of sitting in silence and witnessing.

FOUR-MINUTE MEDITATION: *Watch Rush Hour Go By*



BENEFITS

With a consistent practice of this technique, you start to disidentify from the mind. You are less controlled by it, more relaxed, more in touch with your inner silence and wisdom.

Sit comfortably on a chair or on a cushion. Close your eyes. Allow your body to relax.

Breathe. Now imagine yourself sitting in an armchair observing the traffic on a freeway. You see all different types of cars and trucks. Sometimes they are lined up bumper-to-bumper, and sometimes there are gaps between the cars. This is the same with the traffic of thoughts in the mind. You notice all types of thoughts, good and bad. And right now, you are simply watching all the thoughts pass by, while you relax in your armchair. You notice that sometimes the thoughts are lined up “bumper-to-bumper,” and at other times there are silent gaps in between them, just as with the cars on the freeway. Watch silently, allowing the traffic of the mind to be exactly as it is. *Let the mind pass by.*

FOUR-MINUTE MEDITATION: *A Cup of Silent Tea*

BENEFITS

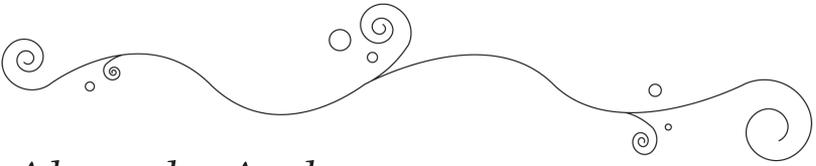
This practice gives you a taste of meditation, of silence, of the beauty and grace that can be brought to even the simplest of acts.

In Japan the tea ceremony is a Zen tradition that dates back thousands of years. It brings a sense of reverence and joy to the simplicity of the everyday. Do this simple practice to bring awareness to the ordinary activity of drinking tea, or your brew of choice, whether it's coffee, hot chocolate, or a cold shake.

Prepare the teacups and the teapot. Listen to the kettle and the sound it makes. Pour the tea, savoring the aroma, then taste the tea and feel that deep contentment that comes as the tea's warmth enters your body. Feel thankful that you are alive and drinking tea in this moment. Don't think about the past or future. Surrender to the present moment, as if nothing else exists, just you and the tea.

If you happen to be reading this on a sweltering day, or you live somewhere with a very hot climate, you might like to try this with iced tea. Listen to the clink of the ice as it drops into the glass; enjoy the colors through the glass, the mint, the slice of lemon, or the cherry you might add for flavor. Enjoy the coolness, the refreshing taste, the feel of the ice-cold tea as you sip it through a straw, relaxing into the moment.

If all you have time for is buying a coffee at your local coffee shop, then adapt this technique to savoring your latte or cappuccino.



About the Author



Using the principles she teaches, Pragito Dove transformed her fear and grief into joy and inner peace. Dove is president of Discover Meditation Training Inc., a cutting-edge meditation training company. She trained extensively as a meditation master and spiritual teacher at the Osho Multiversity, Pune, India.

She holds a master's degree in education from London University and certification as a Master Hypnotherapist and a Professional Hypnotherapy Instructor. Her first book, *Lunchtime Enlightenment* (Penguin Group, 2001), was published in five languages. An experienced trainer and facilitator, she has provided meditation training to organizations including the University of California San Francisco Cancer Resource Center, Hill Physicians Medical Group, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, NASA, Peak Potentials Training Inc., the John C. Lincoln Hospital, United Health Care, World Laughter Tour Inc., the Association of Applied Therapeutic Humor, Autodesk, and the National Association of Women Business Owners. She lives in Marin County, California. Visit her website at www.DiscoverMeditation.com.

I hope you've enjoyed these sections from my book, *Laughter, Tears, Silence: Expressive Meditations to Calm Your Mind and Open Your Heart*.

To learn more about how to benefit from the many dimensions of laughter, tears, and silence you can purchase the complete book anywhere printed and electronic books are sold, including:

Amazon www.amazon.com
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Testimonials

“Pragito skillfully proves that there is no time when meditation is not possible and enlightenment is not imminent.”

— Michael Bernard Beckwith, author of *Spiritual Liberation*

“Provocative, engaging and, above all, very real. Full of rich lessons in the nature of living a great life.”

— T. Harv Eker, author of the #1 New York Times bestseller
Secrets of the Millionaire Mind

“In this useful and comprehensive book, Pragito Dove offers over one hundred techniques, including a series of expressive techniques to release physical, mental, and emotional stress. Once the lid is taken off the proverbial pressure cooker, we can more easily experience inner silence and stillness.”

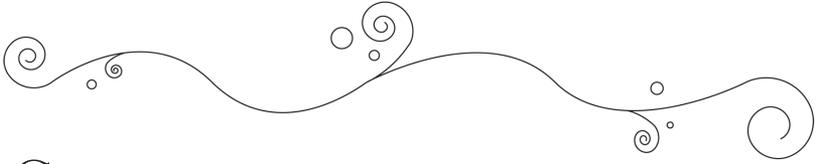
— Deva Premal and Miten, musicians and recording artists

“In *Laughter, Tears, Silence*, Pragito Dove illustrates the importance of laughter, fun, and play, which not only enhance our creativity and productivity but open our hearts to giving and receiving more love. Dove’s techniques help us clear out the clutter of emotional turmoil and an overcrowded mind so that we can settle into the calm pool of joy-filled silence we all have within us.”

— Dr. Madan Kataria, founder of Laughter Yoga International

“No matter what you think about meditation, read this book. It offers a revolutionary look at a perennial topic and insight and suggestions that can stimulate anyone toward a deeper experience of inner peace, love, and joy.”

— Marcia Wieder, CEO and founder of Dream University®



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