

A Daily Awakening: Meditations for Life

“Awakening” isn’t a one-time occurrence, although moments of clear realization can feel quite sudden.

Awakening is a process; a gradual awareness; a growing insight which must be cultivated to be sustained.

Awakening to a new idea or way of being is usually a mixture of poetic consideration and practical application.

This is the practice of meditation: taking your awareness of the countless workings of everyday life from your head to your heart and then—no matter how joyful or painful they may be—embracing them and growing from them all.

It is an extraordinary practice, whether you seek to create a deeper connection with the higher power of your understanding, to generate more compassion or love, to better understand your mind and surroundings, to find answers to specific challenges, or all of the above.

And this practice can happen anywhere, at any time: on the mat or on the move, while sitting or walking, in silence or conversation, alone or with a group. In short, whenever or wherever you are consciously pointing your mind toward

greater clarity and service while connecting with Spirit you are meditating and preparing to awaken.

This book not only provides points for meditation and awakening, but also questions and suggestions that will inspire you to take specific actions to grow in love and usefulness, creating an unshakable sense of well-being with which to meet all of life's demands.

Head to Heart

1 Celebrating Friendship

Few things in life are as precious as a true friend, the one who always sees what is good and possible in you and for you, who lifts you up while keeping you grounded, who can tell you hard truths without tearing you down.

Make time to celebrate such a friend: Call or write to one of them, and acknowledge a specific difference they have made in your life.

Take it one step further, and tell them how their support will positively affect your future.

Give your friend a very special gift by specifically telling them how they've impacted your life. The better they know just how they've helped you, the better able they are to do the same for others.

2 Finding Compassion

When compassion is present, there is no room for condemnation, anger, or confusion.

Think of someone you are angry with, someone you often find yourself judging or criticizing.

As you think of them, replace your feelings of frustration with statements of compassion, such as, "I am willing to understand this person even if I don't agree with them, and I wish them every happiness."

Think, write, or say these things over and over, until the anger and judgment dissolve and are replaced with a sense of empathy.

Compassion is the perfect space in which to cultivate kindness and understanding; there is no better principle on which to rest your mind.

3 Exercising Patience

Sit comfortably and begin to breathe naturally, not forcing the depth or pace of your breath.

After a moment, as you breathe in, imagine your capacity for patience, tolerance, and understanding growing as your lungs expand.

Then, imagine your frustrations leaving as you exhale.

Continue this until you feel completely relaxed and composed.

Consciously breathing in this way literally “clears the air” by calming your nerves and balancing your thoughts. This is the place from which to respond rather than react, making you of greatest benefit to all concerned.

Practice patience, tolerance, and understanding, not for the sake of temporary relief in the face of another trial, but so they may become your code, making you of better service to all.

4 Inviting Abundance

We live in a crazy world, one that seems pretty intent on having its own way for its own sake. It is easy to get caught up in that rush, to find ourselves grasping to get “our share.” When we give in to such selfishness, we suppose a limit on abundance and create a mindset based on nothing but fear, blocking our connection to the vast resources that surround us.

Scarcity sounds like: “There isn’t enough . . .”

Abundance sounds like: “There is more than enough . . .”

Scarcity feels small, constricted, and helpless.

Abundance feels vast, expansive, and magnanimous.

Scarcity looks at all the problems of the world.

Abundance looks at all the solutions in the world.

To see abundance we must be abundant—abundantly positive, loving, generous, and hopeful in our thoughts, language, and actions.

Help others do the same, and watch this sense of abundance multiply and magnify until you can no longer believe in anything but.

5 Finding Your Breath

Sometimes we steel ourselves against the world by literally holding our breath, as if doing so keeps us safe in the face of uncertainty. In reality, it increases our anxiety by literally cutting off the oxygen our brain so desperately needs to function properly.

Take several minutes to connect your breath to each of your five senses. See it in your mind's eye, smell it, taste it, hear it, and touch it, one at a time until you feel the amazing support that your breath brings to all aspects of your being.

Carry the awareness of your breath into the day, and reconnect with the above exercise to calm your mind and body as needed, letting your breath work with you and for you.

6 The Power of Focus

Once you make the connection between the power of your focus and determination and what manifests in your life, you can intentionally cultivate an extraordinary ability to influence your future for the better.

Ask yourself:

What dreams have come true in my life as a result of my focus and efforts?

What else do I dream of having, doing, or being?

What actions will I take today to bring these new dreams to life?

Dreams become reality through a series of countless small decisions and actions; success rarely, if ever, happens in one fell swoop.

The biggest action you will take to make your dreams come true is resolving to get them out of your head, on paper, and on the move.

7 To Be Amazed

We are surrounded by goodness, by beauty and love and spirit, in us and around us.

We don't have to look as hard as we may think to find it; we may simply need to open our hearts enough for it to find us.

Be amazed.

Be wondrous, loving, and full of gratitude.

Be captivated by the possibilities that surround you.

Be you, in all your amazing glory.

8 Quietude

We no sooner wake up before we put ourselves in high gear, careening from one request or stimuli to the next, hopeful that our decisions will lead us to our desired end.

Instead, start the day in silent reflection; create sacred time in which to plan with a clear and unhurried mind.

Find a time in the morning when you can sit in complete silence, with no TV, Internet, phones, or people to distract you.

Connect with your body: What does it need? Would you benefit from a little stretching, a brisk walk, or maybe a relaxing massage?

What about your mind—do you need inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or perhaps to organize your thoughts around the day's duties?

Most importantly, what is the spiritual connection you need to lift your soul?

The day has dawned, full of promise; now is the time to set the tone and pace of how you will move through it. You're less likely to have to start your day over if you get off on the right foot from the beginning.

9 Relinquishing Control

The act of trying to manipulate people, circumstances, and outcomes is nothing more than an attempt to create the illusion of interior calm and safety from the delusion of exterior control.

It happens when we lose confidence in our ability to handle uncertainty.

We forget that we are adept, nimble, strategic beings, full of skills and resources and answers. When we remember these things, we loosen our grip and lighten the tension and heaviness of heart that causes us—and others—such great suffering.

10 Being Playful

It is so easy to get trapped in the seriousness of being an adult and forget how to play.

Sing, dance, write, paint, act, sculpt, draw, take pictures—whatever fires your imagination and opens your creative mind.

Play, not for any other reason except that you can.

11 In Service

We make a positive difference, more than we know, in some of the most unlikely ways, simply by our determination to do so.

You don't have to try and save the whole world; save your part in it.

You may not know how to do that; don't let that stop you from finding out.

Ask yourself, "How can I best engage my time and talents for the sake of helping another?"

Don't overcomplicate it; your desire to simply bring hope to the world has more of an impact than you know.

In this process, you will find that there is nothing quite as energizing as the aim to serve humanity in some way.

12 Accepting Generosity

The next time a close friend offers to help you, openly accept their kindness and generosity, their praise or their care, without reservation.

Say "thank you," and mean it, whether or not you agree. Let what they see in you radiate through you to those around you.

Allow their generosity, and commit to paying it forward.
Take it all in, that you may better pass it on.

There is no sense downplaying or turning away from the acknowledgments of those dear to you; these people are part of your network of love and solutions.

13 Go Easy

There is no need to make a mad dash through the day.

The next time you notice yourself rushing, slow down, take a deep breath, and learn to move with ease and grace.

Try to:

Walk with purpose, not panic.

Soften your tone of voice.

Slow your speech; be calmly articulate.

Smile more; worry less.

14 Asking for Help

There is life-changing power in learning to ask for help.

Our challenge is to commit to doing so before a crisis, free of shame, and to be determined to live in the solution and then share the lesson.

What help would you ask for if you had no fear of asking?
How would your life improve as a result of receiving
this support?

Who would benefit from the example you set in asking,
and the shift you experience from doing so?

Now that you have a great vision for what's possible by
reaching out, where, how, and with whom will you do so?

15 “Terminal” Uniqueness

All of us are special in some way, yet none are truly unique.

You don't really want to be painfully unique anyway; if
your “stuff” were something no one on the planet had ever
seen before, who would have a solution?

You do want to feel special, though—to be seen, heard,
understood, and cared for—you just may have a funny way
of asking for all of that when you're trapped by your own
limited vision of your suffering.

And maybe you're keeping yourself stuck there because
it's the only way you know of at present to get attention (even
if it's not the kind you really want).

To get unstuck, try expressing that exact truth to some-
one by saying, “I'm feeling like I'm the only one with this
particular trouble, and part of me is keeping myself stuck
because I don't know how to ask for what I really want, which
is to be seen, heard, understood, and cared for right now.”

The odds are really good that with that much honesty, someone is bound to step up and support you.

We are never at a loss for support; we are only at a loss for the words to enlist it.

16 Finding Humility

When you are shocked by another's "failings," it simply means you've forgotten your own.

We have all done things we aren't particularly proud of, driven by a hundred forms of fear, insecurity, and selfishness.

Knowing this, rather than allowing someone else's bad behavior to frustrate you, work to better understand the root of their suffering—not the effects—and how you might help to relieve that.

Shift your language as well. Every time you find yourself saying "I can't believe . . ." in the face of someone's shortcomings, change the language to "I understand how . . ." and commit to either being helpful or, at the very least, detaching from them with love.

Find humble, sincere gratitude for the progress you've made with your own defects, and you can then offer compassion to others instead of taking offense; you can move on from hurt instead of being stuck in indignant surprise.

17 Managing Your Mind

You can't stop negative thoughts from arising; they sometimes just do.

What you can prevent is chasing, engaging, or delighting in them.

Watch them come up.

Be very curious, almost childlike, in observing them.

Let go of the need to hang on to them.

Decide what to do in spite of them.

Find another way to look at them.

You're not responsible for what pops into your mind;
you're only responsible for what you do with it.

18 Open to Possibility

Sometimes it's a real godsend that things don't work out exactly as you'd planned.

Sometimes the Universe has something else in mind for you entirely.

So organize, strategize, and prepare all you want—just don't let your attachment to a certain outcome blind you to the lessons and benefits that may come "out of the blue" or lie just outside your well-laid plans.

Embrace surprise.

19 Being Present to Sorrow

It is a great strength to be present to sorrow as well as joy.

Ask yourself: "How can I work with pain to . . .

Strengthen my soul, not weaken it?

Find clarity, not dullness?

Find peace, not unrest?"

Use your answers to face your sorrows head-on, and take comfort in knowing that the time will come—maybe sooner than you think—when you can look back and see how much you've grown through your trials.

20 Taking Stock

We will suffer major hurts in this life, there is no doubt. Knowing this, why exaggerate the ones with little significance?

When you find yourself overloaded with petty annoyances, ask, “How do these slights compare to the worst hurt I can imagine suffering?”

If they come in at an 8 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10, commit to working through them and learning from them.

If they don't, resolve to let them go before they become more harmful than they already are.

As you've heard before, “learn to pick your battles.” After all, life's too short for needless worry.

21 Daily Ritual

You can't know exactly what the day will hold, but you can determine how you will hold the day.

In the morning, rise, connect with your higher power, and be grateful.

During the day, rise up, take a stand, and be courageous.

In the evening, rise above your frustrations, let go of any hurts, and be free.

Before you lay your head down to sleep, thank the God of your understanding for another opportunity to live happy, joyous, and free.

22 Vision

Start your morning by imagining what's possible this day—for you and for others—by choosing to be focused, energized, grateful, humorous, and kind.

Close your eyes, and think of someone you enjoy being with. Now picture yourself bringing all of the above qualities to your interaction with them. Imagine how much more enjoyable the relationship can be as a result.

Repeat the exercise, but this time think of someone you find it difficult to be with. See yourself bringing the above qualities to your relationship with them, despite how trying they may be. Imagine the positive shifts that are possible for that relationship as a result.

Now picture meeting the day this way just for you, and the strength that can bring you, no matter who or what you encounter.

This preparation doesn't guarantee that the day will progress perfectly, but it's an amazing way to begin.

23 Life

Life can be difficult, to be sure, but it isn't timed to get us down.

Life doesn't know what we're up to.

Life doesn't know our struggles.

Life doesn't lie in wait, hoping to trip us up.

Life is life.

Pick one very significant and painful life experience, and answer the following:

What did you learn from it?

When, where, and how can you share that lesson for someone else's benefit?

If we commit to using the tough times to strengthen our determination and faith, and to help another through their trials, some good can come from even the most punishing situations.

24 Answer the Call

There is extraordinary joy in following your heart's calling in service to others.

Your calling is whatever special gift you have to positively impact the world—the one you can't ignore, the one you can't help but claim.

You know it's your calling when . . .

Honoring it feels like a “must” instead of a “should.”

It's usually the last thing you think of at night and the first thing you wake to in the morning.

No matter how lonely or frustrated or afraid you are of bringing that gift to the world, you don't quit.

Even though you can't see the future, you can't imagine this gift not being a part of it.

Answering “the call” is not easy or effortless—it just makes sense. And developing and using your talents for the sake of helping others will be one of the most fulfilling things you can ever do.

25 Rising Above Agitation

Don't give in to agitation; it can push you to see things that aren't real, believe things that aren't true, and choose things that aren't right.

Whatever circumstance sets you off doesn't have to set you back; irritability is just a reaction, one you can let go of just as soon as you decide to.

When you're aggravated by some person, place, or thing, try the following:

Notice the frustration with simple curiosity, no judgment.

Work with it: Recognize that it truly has no power without your permission—it doesn't have a shape, or color, or location, except as you determine.

Don't indulge or chase it.

The beauty of an awakened mind is that it sees bewilderment as it arises, and gives you the tools to examine it in more useful ways than ever before.

26 Being Searching, Fearless, Thorough, and Honest

You don't know what life has in store for you; you can be sure, however, that if you are searching, fearless, thorough, and honest, a better you will be there to greet whatever comes your way.

Search for the truth about you and your abilities.

Be fearless in your attempt to grow.

Be thorough in your actions; don't leave things undone.

Be honest about your intentions, whatever they may be.

This is the process to the grounded you, the you that can weather the storms of life; the you that is open to suggestion and flexible to change; the you that makes the world a better place in which to live.

27 Out of Overwhelm

“Overwhelm” happens when we think:

We are alone in our struggles;

Our problems are too many, and our answers too few;

The stress will last forever; and

We have to meet huge challenges with an equal level of intensity.

A simple formula for moving through overwhelm is to remember:

Finding calm in the storm is the best way to weather it (be still);

You won't feel this way forever—this too shall pass (find your mantra); and

You are not alone—especially if you're willing to ask for help (connect).

You don't have to solve everything, all at once.
Just solve what you can today.

28 Living Your Dreams

There is no time like the present to make your dreams come true.

If you're uncertain about this, ask yourself:

What could be possible—for me and for others—if I went after my dreams?

How would I feel if I never went after them?

If the dreams win, then start realizing them by deciding who can help you map your plan of action.

Every time you doubt your dreams, reconnect to the reasons why you feel you must make them come true, and take one more step in their direction.

29 That's Life

We all go through life-altering experiences, good and bad, which can be stressful, to say the least.

They can also be exciting and lonely and freeing and fearful all at once. And we call this overstuffed, bursting at the seams, little package life.

Life doesn't know of our expectations, hurts, or dreams. It's just life, with all its weirdness and wonder.

The beauty of it is that even the most painful parts of our journey can be wondrous, and even the high points have their moments of weirdness; it's all part of the experience.

The secret to happiness through it all is to take it all in, as it comes, and figure out how to grow from it. This isn't news to you; it's just something you may need to remind yourself of from time to time, especially in the hardest, darkest days.

Embracing growth is easy when times are smooth; it's when those waters get really choppy that we sometimes forget to breathe and float and let the waves carry us to some greater perspective and understanding.

As life moves on in its wild new ways, find the good news in all of it; find good news in how you've adjusted to change and maintained your commitment to bettering yourself for the sake of serving others.

Your willingness to find the good news no matter what challenges you face may be the best news of all.

30 Connecting with Spirit

Who we are in the process of connecting with some greater spiritual power—open, faithful, and courageous—is as remarkable as the power itself.

And who we can become by seeking conscious contact with this power—compassionate, loving, and wise—is also extraordinary in its own right.

It seems, then, that what we receive from the act of prayer itself might have a significantly greater impact on us than anything we might specifically be praying for.

31 Taking a Stand

Be responsible for your judgments and conclusions, and where they may lead, for better or for worse.

In the midst of massive uncertainty, it's too easy to let fear drive our decisions as though our conclusions are already true, and then go about making them so just to be certain about something.

Rather than getting carried away by your emotions, look beyond your need to be right, and instead test every theory and scenario against what is right.

If these judgments and conclusions can stand this test, then carry on. If not, be willing to take a new position.

Be thoughtful and curious, and take time to reflect and think things through so that when you take a stand, your feet are pointed in the direction you really want to go.

32 Recognize Your Potential

Don't let doubt bring such a cloud that you cease to believe in the sun.

To doubt ourselves is to doubt the Divine, that seed of pure potential, spirit, and love that is within us all, just waiting to be brought to light.

So look deeply within, and recognize your potential;
connect with your spirit;
be loving.

Find the sun.

33 Letting Things Unfold

Sometimes, the best action is no action.

Not avoidance, or lack of concern, but a simple commitment to wait, to let things unfold a bit before you engage.

Start by becoming detached from a particular outcome.

Be open-minded about new ways of accomplishing your goals.

Be objective; don't insist on being the source of all your answers.

You will be amazed at what can unfold when you give it room to.