

Meditate to Love

**Explore the delights and benefits
of
meditation**

52 creative meditations

Rémi

I am dust in the universe, but a beloved dust...

Rémi

English translation Marie-Anne Joannis and Cecilia Rodgers

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The invitation

Foreword

Before I started practising meditation regularly, I used to train on my own with an app or videos on YouTube. This approach makes it possible to initiate oneself without exposure to the gaze of others. After the euphoria of the discovery, come periods of irregularity and occasional demotivation. The initial benefits then risk fading away or disappearing completely.

A few years ago, I decided to try practising with others, even just for one session, without expectation or commitment. I pushed open the door of a room near my home where Rémi was running a weekly session. My apprehension was immediately swept away by a warm welcome, a sense of sharing, and an immense joy. The journey began in earnest and never stopped.

Let's be honest, the first sessions were confusing at times. I was torn between conflicting desires to explore new feelings and to return to the whirlwind of everyday life, my comfort zone, which paradoxically could be so inhospitable at times.

As the weeks went by, this regular practice brought me its share of discoveries and unsuspected gifts. The sensation of feeling free of my thoughts, my actions, my expressions. To devote oneself to solitary meditation allows one to listen to one's rhythm. Among the circle of meditators, the power of collective practice points the way to serenity.

When Rémi undertook to put his words down in writing to create this book, I immediately felt joy that the author could pass along his message at any place and at any time. His intention, bathed in softness, now allows him to reach those who would never have come to him... due to shyness.

The author wishes to favour practice over grand theories. So, let yourself be guided through his meditations, so inspired and so inspiring. May you discover these pages like the bee explores the flowers of the fields, infinitely fragrant and colourful. Just breathe out and release the first burst of laughter to express your innermost joy.

This book, open to all, is an invitation. Each and every one of us can offer ourselves this journey with the aim of calming ourselves and fulfilling our lives.

Soak up the following pages. They open the door to a garden that is part of your daily life. A natural space that is accessible to many people who are so absorbed in their thoughts and obligations that they do not even want to visit it. Let us rediscover our pure, original, lush Garden of Eden.

Philippe Verdier, writer and journalist

Recommendation

For Rémi, from your friend, the international author Joseph Alexander.

It comes from my heart to write these words about Rémi, who I have known for some time.

Rémi is a man of great honesty. His life is about creating, and serving others, through his profound knowledge of meditation.

Rémi has taken a journey of understanding. His happiness is to help others to their own greater understanding of life. To create joy, and health, and to grow.

Akin to this, Rémi has a great faith, which he imparts through his meditation, his wisdom and the joy he has experienced in his life.

So nothing could make me hesitate to recommend this book for other people. I am delighted for Rémi and all those who read his book. You will all gain greater wisdom and joy and an uplifting experience which can carry you through the journey of your life.

I wish love and peace upon Rémi and all his readers.

Joseph Alexander, British writer

About the author

After discovering meditation through yoga at the age of 16 and completing his studies in Paris, Rémi Leseigneur left for India for the first time at 22 to meditate in an ashram.

At the age of 24, he started six years of yoga teacher training in Paris and Lyon. He then returned to India with the post-training group where he was able to deepen the theories and practices of meditation. At the age of 30, he settled in Geneva, where he still resides.

Travelling around the world, he became interested in the approaches taken by different cultures, from meditative reading of sacred texts and poetry, to the Japanese sitting meditative discipline of Zazen, to the ritual of tea, to the contemplation of gardens and bouquets. He also discovered the meditative aspect of Sufi dance, the North American tobacco ritual, the North and South American Indian sweat lodge, the Celtic hut, to name but a few.

He found that each culture has found its own approaches to re-centring and connecting with the soul.

For about twenty years, he has been leading meditation groups, accompanying people individually, and training mentors, all the while continuing to learn.

Why this book?

Meditation has always been transmitted orally. I wondered whether books were useful in this area. Why write one more when there are already so many? There are entire libraries on meditation, with remarkable works.

And then I thought: "Am I the right person for this task? Do I have the qualities and the desire? Will I find the time and the means to carry out such a project?"

This questioning was necessary for the maturation of this book, until a creative impulse was awakened. I was not sure of my ability to write a book. I saw myself as a scientist and not as a writer. My doubts manifested themselves in a reluctance to get down to work. A procrastination that, in the end, was necessary and beneficial.

It took the encouragement of friends and participants of the meditation sessions. They expressed their need for support, both practical and theoretical, in order to empower themselves and answer their questions.

Finally, life offered me time, a space of freedom. I had no more excuses, so I threw myself in.

As I progressed with the project, the need to clarify my vision, knowledge and experience of meditation was stimulating and nourishing. Putting my experience into words has made my ideas much clearer and has pushed me to go further.

In some places, there is a fashion for meditation, in others, there is more fear, distrust or contempt. *Fashion is everything that goes out of fashion*, said Jean Cocteau. Many try, start, and... forget, postpone or give up. So nothing better than a book to explain, clarify, encourage, support and resist the fickle waves of fashion.

Feeling scared? You can be! Meditation conveys so many representations: mysticism, New Age, sect... Between austerity and enlightenment, some people are simply afraid of not finding their path. Plus, there is especially the risk of feeling bored or worse, coming face to face with oneself!

To meditate is to risk coming face to face with the mirror of one's soul.

The path of meditation leads to deep self-discovery. The meditator is not there to flee their reality, but to face it. Contrary to popular belief, they will not leave for the clouds to stay there, rather they will become conscious of their body and root themselves on earth, to better bring back the benefits of their meditations and enjoy them in their daily life.

My approach is not a research with a lot of theory, nor an exhaustive approach on the subject, but simply a presentation, based on experience, with the goal of facilitating access to meditation, to show its beneficial aspects and, especially, to promote the desire to meditate for one's own good and that of others.

I wanted to offer an accessible, simple, fairly concise guide, with a little lightness and humour. This book is written in my own way and is obviously my own.

I present here what I call my truth. Like a cookbook, each person is free to choose their own dish and to adapt it according to their own creativity. This is why the meditations are formulated in the first person, in order to describe what I am experiencing and to avoid the imperative, which would be too authoritative for my taste.

I do not claim to indicate what to do, but only a possibility, an inspiration; to open a window towards the inner experience to those who want to try the adventure.

How did I come to teach meditation? When I was 24 years old, I didn't know how to progress further in yoga and meditation. A friend told me: "Now you just have to find a school to become a yoga teacher". So I intensified my practise instead of becoming stagnant. I trained in yoga theory, postures and some meditation in Paris. In Lyon, the post-training went further, especially in meditation.

Subsequently, it was meditation that I taught the most, in response to requests and to my own desire. Very quickly, I felt the joy of sharing a passion and the prospect of contributing to the well-being of others along the way.

At times I worried about the limited number of participants in the sessions, thinking that perhaps it was a shame to communicate with such a small number. I finally decided to let go of the quantity, but to simply follow what was alive, to give to those who wanted, generously.

My aim: to simply accompany people in group or individual meditations, so that they have the necessary tools to develop a personal and autonomous practice. This practice then extends to all aspects of their lives.

This book appeared to me as a good means of doing so, a vehicle of thought, knowledge and experience, in the joy of sharing.

Why would I keep to myself this approach that contributes to my joy and happiness every day?

I entrust it to the wind, which will take it wherever it wishes, to offer a connection to the person I may only meet through this text.

Through this book, the gift for me would be to perhaps contribute in making it easier for a few people to experiment with the numinous, the absolute, and contentment.

This book is intended as a source of reflection and learning, and is like a practical tutorial. It begins with an introduction to my approach to meditation, in which you will find my experience and knowledge of the subject. Above all, it indicates some of the many diverse and indispensable applications of meditation.

It then provides a guide to the meditations.

What is meditation?

There are so many rumours about it, let's start by clearing up some misconceptions!

What it is not

Meditation is not a boring chore or a hobby for those who have nothing else to do.

The goal is not to *kill time*... before it is time that kills us.

Meditation is not an austere discipline reserved for a spiritual elite.

It is not forgetting the body, escaping from individual or overall reality.

It does not seek to prove anything.

It is not seeking anything.

It does not seek to annihilate the mind. On the contrary, wanting to stop thinking creates a tension that agitates the mind.

Man is only a reed, the weakest of nature; but he is a thinking reed.
Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts*

Meditation is not a religion, even though it is practised in many religions, usually in very specific forms such as prayer or textual study. This approach is not presented here, which does not detract from either its value or its benefits.

I like the metaphor that presents the different spiritual approaches as rivers that all lead to the ocean, provided one dares to jump into the water.

The meditation presented here is compatible, I believe, with all religions and traditions.

It is particularly compatible with the absence of religion, dogma and systems of thought.

Presentation

But then, what is meditation?

Meditation is a path of inner consciousness.

By *consciousness* I mean perception, intuitive and reflexive knowledge, understanding of oneself, of others and of the world around us.

Meditation connects us to our deepest nature, it shows us who we are. It teaches us about life and connects us to all others. The meditation presented here leads along a fairly short spiritual path, about 30 to 40 cm, the distance from the brain to the heart.

I often think of meditation as a game, while serious and important, it is also light and creative. It leads to states of being, to experiences of fullness or emptiness that can be very pleasant, even if they are sometimes destabilising before revealing their benefits.

It is not about making an effort to relax or to chase away thoughts. The proposal is lightness and welcoming, as in origami, the art of paper folding. Here, the art is in the presence, the right attitude, delicateness, patience, and perseverance. Letting go, stopping the fight, the rejection, gives thoughts and tensions the possibility to dissolve.

In meditation, nothing is rejected, everything is transmuted, according to Lavoisier's principle of chemistry (18th century): *Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed*. Internal tensions, whether muscular, emotional or mental, are not lost. When they are accepted and released, they generally lead first to relaxation, suppleness, even sleepiness, and then to a renewal of energy, a new dynamism and enthusiasm.

*On the door of transformation, is written "I welcome".
The key to meditation is the acceptance of what is.*

This key opens the door to the space of all possibilities, towards transformation and self-fulfilment. It is not about fatalism, defeatism or pessimism. The idea is to start with an assessment of the situation and to recognise reality, instead of rejecting it, denying it and struggling in vain. Then, in the calm and lucidity of meditation, it is

possible to reflect better, to let possible strategies emerge along with their implications, in a clear and expanded awareness. Finally, recentring allows one to find the energy, strength and determination to take constructive action.

To illustrate this process, I like to describe someone facing a difficulty, as if they were facing a wall. Instead of striking against the wall in anger and complaining that it is the wall's maliciousness that is hurting them, meditation gives them an opportunity to accept the presence of the wall and to breathe. It allows them to change their positioning, to observe the wider situation in order to realise that the wall is in its place, that it protects them and supports the roof. Only then can they find the window and the door to enter within themselves.

The denial of reality is a lie and an imprisonment. Rejection is a solution of escape and defeat in the face of one's own fears. The matter is not one of definitive resignation, but on the contrary of liberating oneself through welcoming. There is no longer any victim or tragedy. The drama is simply transformed into comedy, with humour and poetry. Meditation helps one to do one's best and to accept the outcome, whatever it may be. This is why meditation accompanies those who seek a path of personal development and those who seek a spiritual path.

Personal development leads us to ask ourselves the great metaphysical questions: "where do I come from, where am I going, who am I, why am I here, what is the purpose of my life and for whom, etc. ?" Finally, it tackles the themes of love, gratitude, kindness, trust, unity, solidarity, generosity, forgiveness...

The spiritual path, on the other hand, leads to a relationship with life, the fruits of which are also those of personal development: authentic communication, harmonious relationships, healing of past wounds, clarity of understanding in meta-position, which is to say, positioning from above...

Personal development aims at happiness, whereas the spiritual path aims at a relationship with Life, with the Universe, with the Divine. Meditation can be part of the programme of each path. There is no competition, quite the opposite. One as much as the other is beneficial not only to the seeker, but also indirectly to all those close to them, and in turn to others as well. The person who walks around

with a smile on their face will often share their joy without doing anything special, often without even realising it. They are welcome, appreciated and change the atmosphere.

One path leads to the other, and they end up meeting, leading to one's self, to the Self. To meditate is to learn to know oneself from within, to learn to live with oneself and with others. It means daring to question oneself, to look at oneself in order to change, to grow, to improve. Life is change.

If we keep doing what we're doing, we're going to keep getting what we're getting. Stephen Covey

It is even possible to try both possibilities in parallel. In my opinion, it is an illusion to believe that only the dense material world exists and to wait for crisis situations before considering metaphysical questions. Observing the wonders of nature invites us to question the force of organisation and creativity that governs it.

Those who live only for the material and the external deprive themselves of access to their soul and to their inner world. The absence of a deep meaning to one's life is a great source of suffering. It is undoubtedly one of the frequent causes of suicide or malice. By malice I mean the conscious and voluntary intention to harm, to hurt others.

Another pitfall, conversely, is to want to live in an ethereal world, removed from material contingencies, on the pretext that everything is illusion and ephemeral. Reality quickly reminds us, especially when we suffer, whether from a little hunger, an accident or an illness. Perhaps we are the dream of the universe, but a very real dream! If we are in a body, it is indeed to experiment.

I like to think of the human being as a cell in the body of humanity. This cell corresponds to an organ of the earth, which itself forms a cell of the universe. This vision allows us to find our place, modest, but not insignificant.

The important thing is to find one's path, which will be adapted to one's possibilities, aspirations and temperament.

If you don't take a step forward, you'll always stay put!

The concrete benefits of meditation can be seen in daily life through concentration, efficiency, dynamism, pleasure in action, in relationships, availability, joy, tenderness... Even chores can become more pleasant.

At favourable moments, it is possible to feel full of love. It is the experience of meditation that will allow this love to manifest itself in many circumstances.

We are undoubtedly on earth to make the connection between the subtle and the dense, the light and the material, in order to learn to love in this great school that provides us with so many opportunities to forgive, to appease, to serve, and to evolve in patience and kindness.

Etymologically, kindness, or benevolence, indicates the disposition to wish someone well. In Italian, *ti voglio bene*, literally: *I wish you well*, is a declaration of love!

A parenthesis is needed to clarify the link between yoga and meditation, both of which encompass many aspects of the two paths mentioned and have similarities.

Yoga means union, between the individual and the whole, through liberation from maya, the illusion, to enlightenment. It would also be fair to talk about the *types* of yoga, as there are many variations of them, which can be combined with each other.

Here is a simplified presentation.

Bhakti yoga is the yoga of devotion, mantra and purification.

Karma yoga advocates humble service to dissolve the illusory ego.

Jnana (or Gyana) yoga develops knowledge and consciousness.

Raja yoga controls the body, breath, perceptions and thoughts. It includes amongst others precepts, postures, breathing exercises, concentration and meditation.

Pratyahara refers to the control of external forces and of the senses, in order to manage what comes in and what goes out: air, food, information, actions... even the people and objects that enter our home, our interior. [Translator's Note: Both the inside of the home and the body can be described in French with the word "interior".]

In meditation also, there are two complementary movements; this is the principle of life, the principle of alternation. The movement of interiorisation is the most *traditional*.

It responds to the need to recentre in an environment of extreme demands, to manage perceptions so that they do not agitate the mind or feed the ego, rather leading the mind towards appeasement.

Carl Gustav Jung invites us to introspection: *Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.*

It is an opportunity to let rise to the surface the information, images and symbols immersed in the deepest part of oneself.

To have the feeling of leading a symbolic life, to be an actor in the divine drama, gives the human being inner peace. It is the only thing that can give meaning to human life. Carl Gustav Jung, *The Symbolic Life*

Without losing contact with one's inner self, outward meditation makes one aware of one's relationship to all that lives, to all that is, with a sense of continuity and respect.

When the eyes are open during meditation, a phrase often comes up: I see outside, I look inside.

The meditations proposed in this book offer the two complementary aspects, towards harmony and well-being. They will alternately mobilise all of the senses. Not only are music and singing given pride of place, but sometimes smells or flavours are also emphasised. There are many visualisations that predispose to contemplation. The beauty of nature teaches meditation and wonder.

The movement of walking or dancing solicits exteroception through the perception of pressure and touch on the skin, but also interoception through information coming from the joints and tendons.

Meditation is a presence to what is. It is a conscious, active and voluntary process. To meditate is to learn to be happy without doing anything, producing anything, seeking anything, rejecting anything. It is staying here.

It is a dive into oneself, to discover oneself ever more deeply.

It is also a journey to meet life, the world, others...

I consider meditation to be that which is done in consciousness, experienced with attention. So, some people meditate nearly without knowing it. They lack the intention, the awareness of being in meditation.

Accessing meditation requires the acceptance of circumstances, of ourselves, and of all beings.

The exercise of meditation often begins in stillness, then gradually moves into daily life.

Meditation can become informal, for example, when I realise that I am annoyed or sad and allow myself to experience that emotion, by observing it without drama.

The meditative attitude slips into a meal, for example.

The food is then tasted, enjoyed, with an awareness of my stomach and all my sensations.

It manifests itself in a conversation if I pay attention to what each person is saying, and at the same time stay with my bodily sensations and emotions.

Unlike everyday life, in which one must produce, prove, seek, have... the meditator observes, feels, savours: *Nowhere to go, nothing to do.*

Hyperactivity is a difficulty, an obstacle to overcome or play with, but it is not an impediment. It is actually an indicator of the need to meditate.

The meditator will first welcome their racing thoughts. Gradually, they will calm down as the sessions go on, to be absorbed, soothed by the meditation, until sometimes the meditator no longer consciously hears the peripheral noises, nor the noise of the thoughts, nor even sometimes the suggestions of the one who is leading the meditation.

When there is a thought that goes round in circles, why not write it down to settle it, to let it stop quietly? Sometimes I voluntarily interrupt myself and write down an idea that comes to me because my mind is calm, settled, and I can see more clearly. I save it so as not to worry about forgetting it and to not be preoccupied by it anymore.

And I go back to my meditation.

In the quieting of their emotions and their mind, the meditator becomes meditation, *they are meditated*. They let the meditation happen, rightly living in the *non-doing of it*. They simply savour, without getting tense about a result.

Meditation is about being, about *beingness*. It is about attention to what is. One of the keys of the meditator is: *I welcome what is to allow transformation*.

The lotus lies on the water, rooted to the earth, under the sun, caressed by the wind, it radiates love. The meditator lets themselves be carried along by their meditation. They appreciate life, aware of their roots in the earth.

Usually, I gladly use a capital E for Earth, because I consider it to be alive, representing the universal feminine, maternal fertility, nurturing, and yin qualities.

Some speak of Pachamama, mother earth, linked to fertility in the cosmogony of the Andes (in the west of South America), where the Inca Empire was.

The uncapitalised writing chosen here is intended to simplify and not to start capitalising every word in nature, although they may deserve it. Similarly, some people write Life. I choose to write it in lower case for convenience. It is up to each person to read it as they wish throughout the book.

Meditation is a moment when we allow ourselves to be, to exist, to savour, to feel, to experience, to live, to enjoy ourselves!

If you don't take the time, time will take you!

To meditate is to free up time, to see it as a precious friend with whom I can dance through life.

By following the path called later, we arrive at the place called never.
Seneca (1st century AD)

Meditation is a question of attitude, of positioning, of decision. It leads to living fully, to learning to know oneself deeply. It offers an exploration of the body and sensations, an awareness of emotions

and thoughts. It allows one to approach the presence of what is, without identifying oneself. *I am the one who looks at sensations, emotions and thoughts.* I no longer confuse myself with what is happening inside me.

It plays down situations: *it will pass too!* A story says that a king summoned a wise man to find out the secret of happiness. The wise man asked for gold. He returned later with a gold ring and offered it to the king, who first thought it was a talisman before reading on the ring: it will pass too. Meditation teaches us to live in the present moment and reminds us of the impermanence of all things.

Circumstances are seen as clouds passing in the sky, as a shadow cast on a wall, without leaving a trace.

After the passage, the sky remains itself with its sun, moon and stars. At a certain point, meditation can become permanent, each moment becomes an experience, a gift, a wonder.

It is possible, for example, to feel like a drop of water. Each drop is specific, unique, different from the others in its composition, its density, its colour... and at the same time, each drop is part of the ocean of life; it is in continuity with all the other drops, connected to common phenomena and to all of nature.

This type of experience is described in Frederick Tristan's book *Le singe égal du ciel* [Translator's Note: translated as *The Monkey Equal to Heaven*], inspired by the Chinese tradition. It illustrates the meditator's journey with humour and depth.

It also evokes the limit between dream and reality. Doesn't the dream have its own reality? During the dream, something did happen.

There is no question of taking refuge in dreams, nor of denying reality by saying that everything is an illusion, of drifting towards the depressing and nonchalant "what's the point", which puts the brakes on life, creativity and action. This is the pitfall encountered by those who escape into drugs and addictions.

The perception of the external world is indeed individual, depending on our senses, our experience, our beliefs, our emotions... This does not take away its existence. The inner world and the outer world do exist simultaneously. The meditator realises the union, the continuity of these two realities.

The meditator will thus discover, or rediscover, aspects of their life simply by paying attention to them, as if pausing for a moment in front of a painting that we had stopped noticing at home, and of which we see certain details by approaching more closely.

Meditation is an inner ascent of the mountain of illusions, to arrive above the clouds and discover the truth. Illusion is an erroneous interpretation of a sensory datum: optical illusion, for example. Here, it is a question of deceiving oneself, without knowing it, about the reality of the external world and the internal world.

In yoga, dharana means concentration. Ekagrata, the fixation of thought on a point, a subject, focused mental concentration is the basis of meditation. Having practised it, I do not reject this very formative approach, which consists of remaining for a long time in silence and immobility.

In practice, the attention can be simply fixed with open or closed eyes on the breastbone, the forehead, or any part of the body.

Some practices always opt for the same area. I invite you to change it in order to discover, test and compare the different effects depending on the area.

Observation can be focused on a sensation, e.g. a tickle, tension, discomfort, pain. Sensations can be forgotten by shifting attention elsewhere, not by trying to push them away. They can then become the object of meditation. Therefore the aim is to simply welcome them as part of life, and possibly even to listen if they have a message to convey.

The same attitude can be adopted for emotions. These can often be located in a region of the body, as if they were resonating there. Observation and acceptance generally allow the detachment necessary to find serenity.

It is more delicate with thoughts as they quickly draw us away from the body and from meditation. Here again it is useless to fight against thoughts, it is better to welcome them, sometimes to note them down to remove the fear of losing a good idea or something to do. Instead of running after them, like wild horses, the aim is to make the thoughts calmer, more docile.

Like horses, once under control they will pull the thinking chariot straight along, instead of scattering in all directions.

Reflection is useful. Meditation does not fight against the brain. It helps us to think wisely, in the service of our needs, without taking up all the space or power. The intention is to calm the horses, to tame them in order to gather them and lead them.

Developing the ability to direct one's thinking is generally done in proportion to one's practice, and requires regularity and perseverance before it brings great satisfaction.

The meditator begins by observing their thoughts, and welcomes them as they are. It is by focusing their attention on their meditation that they will occupy their mind and refocus it. The mind is then compared to a light which concentrates all of its power when it is focused like a laser beam. Concentration then allows one to be much more efficient in one's day, to memorise, to learn... not to forget one's schedule, nor to run around aimlessly, nor to make mistakes and have to remediate...

In the end, the time devoted to meditation ends up being largely regained!

Some have predominantly retained the therapeutic aspect of meditation and stripped it of any spiritual reference. This is the case of mindfulness meditation, which was first spread in the USA by a doctor and yogi, Jon Kabat-Zinn, himself a student of Thich Nhat Hanh (a Vietnamese Buddhist pacifist) and Seung Sahn (a Korean Zen master). This approach has given access to many people unfamiliar with Eastern cultures or approaches and has allowed meditation to enter hospitals and clinics, notably to treat stressed, anxious or depressed patients.

Every discipline, every art, every work requires learning. To facilitate learning, this book proposes different paths to lead the mind towards tranquillity. To be able to renew one's exercises allows one to avoid boredom and to move towards playfulness and pleasure.

The object of attention can also be one's breathing, a perfume, emptiness, music, the repetition of words (a mantra), or even a movement of the body, one's own dance in silence or with music... It is classic to focus on the heart.

You can only see well with your heart. What is essential is invisible to the eyes. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Meditation opens the eyes of the heart.

Meditation is like a flower that grows. It invites us to water it, to nourish it, to admire it... to love it!

The gaze can also focus on an image, a landscape, a flame, the moon, a flower, or any other object. Or one chooses to follow an action, a movement, the dance of the waves on the sea, the gentle roll of the clouds, the flight of butterflies...

Almost anything can become an object of meditation.

Because of their recreational approach, the proposals made in this book will perhaps be more suitable for those who are put off by austerity, whose mind wanders or who fall asleep easily. It is, of course, for everyone.

In my life, laughter and humour are important, and spirituality is associated with pleasure and joy. It is the attachment to pleasure that is the source of suffering, not the pleasure itself.

The spiritual path can thus fully embrace healthy pleasure, forsaking excesses, moving towards simple, even subtle, pleasures that also nourish the soul.

Taking your meditation practice seriously does not mean taking yourself too seriously, or getting worked up. It is possible, even advisable, to meditate with joy and enthusiasm. There is a saying in yoga worth remembering: *if your practice makes you sad, change your practice!*

One of the few possible mistakes in meditation is to become attached to a result, to seek perfection...

There is no room for competition, neither with others nor with oneself. One cannot expect to do more than one's best. Mistakes can enrich *the wise learner*. The secret is to smile at one's trial and error.

The biggest mistake is not to learn from one's mistakes.

It is said that thought is creative. By becoming more and more master of their thoughts and emotions, the meditator becomes the creator of their life, to carry out their projects, to develop their relationships, to accomplish their dreams.

Thus situations that come and go, then fade away, are experienced as gifts, or at least experiences, and not as burdens.

All of man's misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to sit quietly in a room. Blaise Pascal

Having clear and focused ideas, without being drowned in emotions, makes it much easier to build your projects and make them a reality. *Do not dream your life, but live your dreams.*

Enlightenment - it's when you realise that everything's simple!

Why meditate?

Now that we have looked together at what meditation is, and what it is not, I propose to introduce some essential notions, to better understand *what it is for!*

Meditative introspection leads us to the origin of our functioning. Progressively, it reveals the causes of our repetitive patterns, whether conscious or not. Often, it is emotions, impulses, which act in us, to which we react, and which manipulate us without our knowledge. Sometimes, old wounds have generated survival strategies that were once useful but have become obsolete and limiting. The triggering event has disappeared, but the habits remain and cause an energy-intensive dysfunction.

Sometimes, the time of the trauma or the sources of the behaviour go back to our ancestors. Anne Ancelin Schützenberger wrote *Aïe, mes aïeux!* [Translator's Note: Translated from French as "Ouch, my godfathers!", the book's English title is *The Ancestor Syndrome*] in which she describes very well the transgenerational links, the influence of family secrets and the transmission of traumas.

Meditation gradually reveals the most hidden mechanisms. It deactivates and dissolves them. It gives the keys to know oneself, to free oneself and to blossom. The meditator will have to persevere with courage and lucidity.

By turning to one's own history, one finds what has shaped us. In order to adapt, the child will build a *childhood ego*, to know who they are. In Latin, ego = me, I.

The child compares themselves with those around them. I am more, less...

They learn to adapt in order to survive. They feed on judgements, separations and rejections, from others and from themselves. In our urbanised societies, there are no longer any ferocious beasts, yet ferocity still exists, even in the playground. Hence some children build themselves shells, disconnecting themselves from their emotions in order to avoid suffering.

During adolescence, the need for individuation is felt, along with the need to belong to a group. Adolescents struggle with this paradox: *being different, but all the same*.

The adolescent defines themselves by differentiating from their parents. They burn in auto-da-fé the image of their models, their childhood idols. They lose their bearings, and seek themselves.

The adult, however, may realise that their childhood ego, built on comparisons, judgements and habits, which protected them and allowed them to survive, has become a prison.

Their work is then to deconstruct this cocoon to build their self, an EGO in connection with all that lives. Identity thus becomes awareness of continuity, of belonging to a much greater whole. The cocoon of the self becomes larger and larger, in an expansion inward and outward.

The meditator does not seek to kill the ego. They dissolve it in love, through consciousness, to make room for the EGO, the great *I am*, conscious of everything and everyone.

Meditation leads to knowing and recognising oneself, so that one no longer defines oneself in relation to others, neither by attachment nor by rejection.

The usual functioning shifts from comparison to self-validation, self-appraisal. This is also nourished by the feedback of others, formulated in a constructive way, reflections which are enlightening and necessary. The meditator leaves behind control, insecurity, fear of rejection and suffering, to move towards a lighter existence, with more confidence, fullness, joy, service, and above all, towards a life that has meaning.

Ego and insecurity breed fear of change. The resulting attachment is the source of many ills. Whether it is attachment to another, to possessions, to beliefs, to judgements, to habits, to comfort, to pleasures...

there is always fear of lack, anxiety, suffocation of self and others. Attachment causes suffering. Meditation opens access to one's subconscious.

Meditation leads to detachment, which can be experienced as painful or simply accepted as beneficial, or even sought after in order to achieve freedom and happiness. It is a path of letting go and of liberation.

Meditation also gives access to one's inner resources and releases creative potential. Many top athletes "meditate" before their performance. Many artists go into a meditative state while creating. This is the case, for example, in ikebana, also called the way of flowers or the art of making flowers live. Harmony is first created on the inside through meditation, and then represented on the outside by the floral arrangement, in connection with the earth, the sky and humanity.

Meditation provides the keys that open the doors of serenity, joy and freedom. It is applicable to many areas, sometimes unsuspected. It gives access to various territories that deserve to be explored. I have listed them, some of which may seem incongruous or original, but which are keys to happiness and a successful life.

Some chapters seemed to me to deserve more development, such as emotions or forgiveness, which is not to say that meditation is less useful in the other areas covered.

Let's explore them together!

Inhibitor and Illusions

First of all, let's lighten the load.

The word "inhibitor" is borrowed in particular from chemistry. It signifies a factor that slows down a chemical reaction. It is used here in the context of inner alchemy, the transformation of shadow into light, of lead into gold.

The lead is not to be thrown away. The light is all the brighter for some because they have gone through dark periods.

The history of crystal is very symbolic. At the end of the 17th century, glassmakers had the idea of adding lead oxide to sand. This required more heat, but the result is even more transparent, stronger, finer and brighter than glass. When we contain more lead, it is necessary to meditate more, to obtain a purer, more crystalline love.

The lead of the individual, that which weighs them down, is represented by fears, angers, shames, cowardice, judgments... This is what feeds the inhibitor and what will be poured into the heart's furnace, the alchemists' athanor. Also called the sun of the torso, this area is located in the middle of the chest, behind the sternum. This is why many of the meditations in this book refer to it.

The bellows on the fire will be perseverance, love, awareness, humility and courage.

One of the obstacles to evolution is the lack of knowledge of these shadows. Am I trying to play with my shadows, or are my shadows playing with me? Meditation, through inner observation, allows one to look at them more closely, to visit, to shed light on all levels, and even to gain distance in relation to one's situation.

It also allows for reconsidering situations, to better discern the challenges and lessons, in order to enlighten each other. There is no substitute for someone who, from the outside, can tell us what is going on behind our backs, to identify and describe the shadows that are manipulating us like puppets, by the strings of our emotions.

In a way, we are all on a journey on this earth, which is responsible for teaching us the lessons of life. It is possible to choose to know oneself

and to open one's eyes through an active, conscious and voluntary process, in order to better and faster access happiness and the meaning of one's life.

Inner tensions, blocked emotions, unconscious dysfunctions can be seen as shadows that drag behind, that slow down our progress.

The comparison is with a vehicle. On the one hand, the inhibitor we have just mentioned acts like a brake, keeping us in known areas and guaranteeing safety. It avoids recklessness and foolhardy risk-taking to protect life by preventing accidents.

On the other hand, the accelerator pushes us to experiment and discover new horizons. The fuel that makes the engine run is curiosity, the thirst for freedom, passion, love... Trying to move forward with the brake on will seriously hamper progress and require much more effort.

Meditation allows us to gradually release the brake to find harmony and the right action. It is the dance of life.

The strategies for avoidance of meditation are many, ranging from abrupt stops to more subtle resistance. Simple denial manifests as: "I don't need it, it doesn't concern me". The argument of the agenda invokes the lack of time: "I am busier than others".

Sometimes this is an opportunity to give the impression of importance or a full life. If this is a reality, it does not prevent us from asking ourselves what our priorities are and how to free up time. Procrastination repeats: "I'll do it later".

To discover your own avoidance tricks, I invite you to prepare some writing material now, sit down quietly, close your eyes, and simply ask yourself: what are my main inhibitions and how do they ruin my projects, my relationships, my dreams...?

As soon as ideas, images or situations appear, do not hesitate to write them down so that you can find them clearly later.

Before defusing the mechanisms of sabotage through meditation, we will explore them in more detail, by starting with a major obstacle, illusions.

Just as fog greatly slows down traffic, illusions hinder the progress towards happiness and consciousness. In the yogic tradition, maya is both illusion and creative power, reminding us that we create our own reality, with our senses and our filters of understanding.

Let us now look at how illusion works. It is compared to a fog that masks reality and obstacles. It is a cause of falling into our idiosyncrasies. It causes us to bump and hurt ourselves against the posts of circumstances. It is this fog that causes one to lose one's way, to wander through one's life, and to go round and round in gruelling repetitions. And finally, it dissimulates the gifts of life.

Where does the fog come from? Illusion is created by the ego. It is made up of emotional filters, fears, character identifications, preconceptions and judgements.

Thanks to meditation, the wind of lucidity can disperse the fog. This requires staying grounded and having the courage to question one's views, habits, references and beliefs.

Beliefs are the crutches by which we limp along towards the Truth.
Paraphrasing from Cyril Scott, in his book *The Initiate*.

Meditation teaches us to face reality, not to flee from it, to accept what is, and to look at it with serenity. This is the contemplative and introspective work of meditation.

The crossing of the fog is done by walking towards the sun of consciousness. Seeing reality in all its power is also called "awakening" and is compared to an illumination, to the light that turns on. This is one of the fruits of meditation.

In order to move towards the light of truth and the inner voice of intuition, it is often necessary to be accompanied by an experienced person or persons. It is reassuring to be able to receive answers, confirm one's feelings, overcome difficulties and receive encouragement. This is why this book is paired with a website, offering recorded meditations, teachings, and the possibility to join a meditation group live remotely, amongst others.

As much as meditation alone is helpful, it is also beneficial, if possible, to attend guided meditations and to benefit from the teachings of experienced people, whose lives show the benefits of their knowledge, experience and practice.

At this stage of the presentation of meditation, here is what we can retain in summary.

The stillness of meditation allows the restlessness of the mind to settle, to clear away the fog of illusions and to reach a more tranquil, pure, pristine state, to attain vacuity.

Vacuity is like a blank canvas on which to paint your life. Vacuity is a quality that allows space to be creative of all possibilities. In the beginning was vacuity.

Even if thoughts may return, it will be with pauses, with breaths, as in sheet music. These silences of peace, the space between the notes, between the thoughts, between the words, are full of beauty and potential.

It is not uncommon for these times of silence to spontaneously trigger the emergence of solutions or creative ideas... At this point, it is wise to open one's eyes for a moment, to write them down succinctly and not lose the gift. This allows one not to be preoccupied with the fear of forgetting, as with an evanescent dream, and so that fear does not cause the idea to go round in circles and disrupt the meditation. Once the idea is on paper, the meditation can resume peacefully.

As a preventive measure, a daily journal can be used to write down worries and emotions, to better prepare for meditation. It can also be used to record the positive aspects of life, to celebrate successes, gifts, qualities and to draw out the positive elements of experiences.

In addition, before writing or working, a period of meditation beforehand promotes clarity of mind, concentration and efficiency. Meditation helps to develop lucidity, to contact one's inner resources. It brings calm to find the words, to formulate one's feelings, one's needs. Each individual will follow the protocol that suits them, writing before, during, or after meditation, or not at all.

Furthermore, the meditator may have the illusion of being apart, feeling misunderstood, alone or superior. In this case, sharing with other meditators can be helpful in understanding the meaning of the period one is going through, in benefiting from their experience, and in sharing the fruits already harvested. It is not so much a question of advice as of support, encouragement and even explanation. Care

should be taken to avoid "I would do it like this if I were you, you should...". A simple sympathetic and understanding ear is much more beneficial.

When I explain the areas of application of meditation, I like to describe them as training modules, comparable to the squares on a game of go. A true game of cosmic laws, it represents the different possible experiences, and the different ways of loving.

Becoming incarnate, literally taking on flesh, taking on a body, means choosing a character, or an element, which will represent us on the squares of the game of the go and enable us to move forward on the path of life.

As in the game, the course is not linear. Sometimes, the one who seems to be the most advanced moves back several squares or stays several turns on the same one. Not all the squares have to be covered; however there are some unavoidable experiences that each player will encounter. Their spiral arrangement leads us to the centre. The final objective will be to reach the centre, to arrive at one's own heart, after having gone through the stages of learning to love.

The heart centre is also called: the space of all possibilities! It is very well represented in the film *The Matrix*. During the initiatory visit of the hero, Neo, to the *matrix*, and after having decided to take *the red pill of consciousness and truth*, he discovers this free and infinite space, which contains potentially everything. Neo becomes the creator of his own life. Neo means new.

The red pill corresponds to a choice of life, a conscious, active and voluntary path towards intrinsic happiness.

The blue one would be the refusal to see the truth, with a slower evolution, seeking that which is easiest, ultimately resulting in more suffering.

In any case, whatever the choice of pill, evolution is intrinsic to experimentation on this earth. Life is a perfect and tireless teacher. It is Life that sets the rules. We can resist and try to refuse to submit to it, but it is always what Life says that goes, and it is we who suffer the blows.

Similarly, we can dispute the existence of the force of gravity and the

laws of physics, but they still apply and the experience may be painful when we fall.

Seen in this light, there is no longer any drama, there are only experiences to learn to give, receive, forgive, care, encourage, teach, and thus to learn gratitude, wonder, empathy, patience, perseverance...

Meditation allows us to observe our circumstances in order to find the lessons of life and to develop wisdom, serenity and humility. Meditation allows us to advance on the path that leads to the sources of inner happiness, which is in essence independent of external circumstances.

Triangle of Roles

Among the sources of illusions and suffering, certain roles are deleterious. Stephen Karpman's explanation of how the triangle works has its place here. Let's discover the characters in this dramatic comedy.

The Victim

The victim takes no responsibility. They deny their power and avoid evolving. In this attitude, they can only complain, whine and mope. They then set themselves up as an accusing judge towards others, towards life, towards the outside world, towards those who have not fulfilled their contracts, who have not done what should have been done according to the victim's belief that *they know how it should have been*.

The role of the victim is in fact a way of denying reality. But this escape tactic is not very effective in avoiding pain. It is also a technique of manipulation used in order to make the tormentor out to be the guilty party.

Finally, it is surrendering, giving power to self-perpetuating suffering. It results in powerlessness, sadness and self-pity. Only with awareness can one escape this vicious circle.

The Tormentor

The tormentor is the victim's preferred playmate. In this role they seek to reassure themselves that they are not at the bottom of a pyramid of domination and suffering.

Sometimes, the relationship with a parent or loved one has been accompanied by suffering or violence. The way of communicating their "love" is associated with this expression of violence.

Some people are almost unaware of this and do not know how to interact respectfully. It is not uncommon to find that violent parents have had violent parents themselves, unfortunately perpetuating the known pattern.

Hurt people hurt.

In some relationships, the future victim has the effect of a mirror. They reflect qualities or characteristics that the tormentor does not see in themselves, or on the contrary, faults that the tormentor blames on themselves.

Rather than accepting the gift of truth or accepting themselves, the tormentor will push the mirror away or even seek to break it.

For example, someone with a physical complex will reject the person with the advantage. By the same mechanism, someone who is homophobic will not admit to their attraction to people of their own gender or acknowledge their lack of freedom in general. In order to see the truth and accept it, the tormentor has a great need to meditate.

Finally, the victim may simply represent an outlet for the anger of the tormentor, a scapegoat who has the misfortune to be there at the wrong time.

Some become their own tormentor. Faced with the anguish of seeing their happiness disappear, they prefer to destroy it themselves so as not to have any more risk or fear. For example, in a relationship, they will end up leaving or making the loved one leave, rather than dreading their departure. They will then torture themselves with guilt and regret.

The presumed tormentors, are as much to be pitied as the so-called victims, and obviously the proclaimed saviours too.

The suffering of the tormentor is to disconnect from their heart, from empathy, from the other, in order to survive. Otherwise they live in self-reproach, guilt and shame.

The Saviour

The saviour: a temptation paved with good intentions.

The saviour just forgets that it is not possible to make others happy with themselves in their stead. Generally, they would be better off taking care of themselves.

Often, in addition to kindness there is also the desire to be the *helper*, the *great one*, in the prestigious role.

By mirror effect, in the refusal of the suffering of others, there is the refusal of facing one's own suffering, one's wounds, one's problems, and one's inability to soothe one's inner tensions.

The saviour is thus the person who needs care and refuses to ask for it. If they are able to ask for support, they may not follow the recommendations, sabotage the treatment, or discourage their friends. Indeed, if they seek their life's meaning in helping others, it may take time for them to be ready to accept help.

The saviour tends to play hide and seek with themselves. They propose to play the same painful game with others. Rather than identifying their own problems and needs, they prefer to run away from them and focus on those of others. This is the profile of many caregivers. Fortunately, thanks to their work with their patients, they can sometimes recognise that what they see in others reflects their inner reality.

The suffering of the saviour resides in the lie to themselves, the lack of self-care and the lack of self-confidence, manifested in the pride of placing themselves as the superior who can help, teach, solve, heal...

These three masks lead a dance, an alternation. Those in this triangle usually swap roles according to circumstances, even if they have a predilection for a particular role. It is not certain that one role is less painful than another, because the suffering of each actor or actress here is denial and lack of love.

At this point, I propose that you take some time in order to meditate on the key questions: What is my favourite role? How do I play it? When do I play it? With whom? ... and above all: Why? What does it cost me, but also, what is the hidden benefit for me, what do I get out of it?

Freedom

Meditation is a path of liberation, of overcoming obstacles on the path of consciousness and happiness. It gives access to the voice of freedom that resonates in the heart of each of us.

First of all, it is necessary to ask ourselves: "What is freedom?" Moreover, should we say freedom or freedoms?

My formulation of freedom could be: to be free from the manipulations hidden in the shadows of unconsciousness, or: to be free from the ego, fears, impulses and illusions, or even: to be mindful of what is going on in and around me.

I also like as a definition, albeit a little more provocative: to obey love, to let myself be guided by life, to be in harmony with my heart.

Here, none of these "definitions" refers to the outside or to others, because if my freedom depends on them... then I am not free. As far as freedom from others and circumstances is concerned, sometimes it is received, sometimes it is taken.

Contrary to what children often believe, freedom is not doing what I want, when I want, how I want. This is what they will learn very quickly in their exchanges with others. *One person's freedom ends where another's begins.*

The forces that act and make us react, and make decisions, are often linked to the ego, illusions, fears, beliefs, habits... We believe ourselves to be free in our decisions, but in fact the real motivations are hidden in the lie to ourselves and to others.

If freedom comes from an enlightened will, a good question to ask ourselves is: "Where does my will come from?"

Are we free when we consume under the influence of an advertisement, when we respond in anger, when we think under the yoke of education, or when we act according to primal impulses?

To what extent am I being manipulated by circumstances? Am I deceiving myself? How lucid am I?

There is the famous "If I wanted to, I could...", yes, but then why don't I? For example, there are those who claim to be free to smoke, to get drunk... They claim to be able to stop whenever they want, but they continue despite the damage.

In my opinion, free will comes from awareness, knowledge and love of oneself and others. Meditation leads to the development of these elements, by experiencing self-knowledge and emotional peace. It allows one to be more attentive to others and to better observe the world around one in order to better know, welcome and love them with lucidity and empathy, in a profound and respectful freedom.

In this sense, it is important not to confuse will with desires. We are beings of desires.

Meditation, through centring, allows us to discern the source of our desire. It shows the impulse that comes from the heart, in the service of life, for one's own happiness and that of others.

Freedom may come down to choosing between two options: ego and EGO.

The childhood ego thinks it is separate. The individualistic *little I* judges, compares, rejects, criticises. It expresses itself from the mind and from fear, and submits to its impulses.

The EGO of the *great I am*, conscious, in continuity with all that lives, welcomes, loves, includes. It expresses itself from the heart in the languages of love.

This dichotomy presents itself as a succession of choices, each of which may have consequences. Freedom is a question not only of will, but also of decision and courage.

True freedom leads to letting go.

Meditation allows me to better identify what shackles me in order to detach myself from it: possessions, social position, comforts, leisure activities, sexuality, food, appearances, judgements, beliefs, fears, shames... as well as dependencies, especially emotional ones.

Emotional freedom

Rightly, let's take a little time to look at emotional freedom, which deserves its own little chapter.

To begin with, let's remember that even with wonderful parents, in an ideal setting, childhood has normally been marked by emotional lack. Even if parents have been available, there will inevitably come a time when the child has to leave their arms. Despite their willingness to listen and their good will, the child's wishes will sometimes be thwarted, at least for reasons of cohabitation and education. The child will therefore not escape natural sorrows.

In addition, the normal circumstances of life bring throughout our existence a set of frustrations, unfulfilled desires, emotional lack, hurtful relationships...

Through the course of adult life, emotional gaps may be filled in and disappear or they may grow into a lake of sadness, until they form a bitter sea.

In any case, it is rare to be loved exactly as we would like to be loved, and this is true for all those we come into contact with, whom we hurt and who hurt us.

Here the meditator de-dramatises, de-victimises, and stops believing that their case is worse than that of others. Any contest to decide who had the most unhappy childhood or the worst life would be futile and deleterious. The objective is awareness, in order to move towards freedom and happiness.

When two people bereft of love meet in order to find in each other what they lack for themselves, disillusionment and suffering often ensue. Each person expects the other to give them what they do not have. Sometimes, after a phase of illusion, the masks come off. Then comes disappointment and reproach. The easy solution is to believe that the problem comes from the other person and to look for a new partner, who "works better", at the love supermarket.

But if the pattern is not identified, if there is no awareness of the internal drivers, the same scenarios will be repeated, with different but similar nuances, settings and actors.

Frequently, the choice is unconsciously made to have a partner who is similar in some ways to the parental archetype. In short, one risks marrying one's father or mother. Thank you Oedipus! The search for the fusional relationship with the parent, for the repair of the relationship that did not take place as dreamed, risks turning into a nightmare for both.

Thus the idea is to perceive the relationship as a reciprocal construction, to know oneself and the other, and to learn to love the other and oneself. Instead of making the other person responsible for satisfying my demands, I learn to identify my needs and I develop strategies to meet them. By moving away from demands, from urgency, I become autonomous, as an adult.

The other person can say yes or no to me, depending on what is right for them, in a constructive, trusting and caring dialogue. Starting from plenitude, having few expectations, I am all the more available to the other.

For example, to satisfy a need for tenderness, one can ask for it from one's partner, a loved one, an animal, a cuddly toy... I can also offer myself a gift, flowers, food, a hobby... a delicate attention whatever shape it takes.

And what a marvellous attention to oneself that is, a meditation to tenderness, kindness, recognition, trust... with an atmosphere of cocooning, love, unconditional welcome.

Instead of being outside, *the solution is often inside!*

So what does meditation do? It helps to access that restorative space of caring and safety, where we can learn unconditional love for ourselves and others, peacefully, day by day.

I say playfully that there are two main paths of learning: being in a couple or being celibate. Each can be a source of joy and fulfilment, if it is accepted with an open heart.

Through meditating on the thoracic centre, behind the sternum, between the shoulders, it is possible to integrate the love of a mother and the love of a father for oneself. It is possible to find the love of the inner man and woman, also seen as lover or as brother and sister, and sometimes the inner son and daughter or the inner grandfather and grandmother.

This self-love is not an egotistical narcissism, but a way of being autonomous in order to meet one's own needs, and taking responsibility for one's own security and emotional freedom. This allows one to share not a lack, but rather a plenitude, to go towards the other from an abundance of love to offer. The famished emotional beggar is ready to make every concession and stoop for a few crumbs of tenderness. The heart is a fountain of joy and peace that lavishes happiness.

One who has drawn from the fountain of one's own heart, who has filled oneself, can generously share its abundance and its delights.

By starting from a state of tranquillity, I welcome the other person without wanting to change them in order to make them correspond to a utopian ideal. If it is difficult to change oneself, wanting to force the other to change is an often ineffective violence, which ultimately proves to be painful for everyone.

I alone am responsible for my own happiness, the other can at best contribute to it.

Since we already have difficulty in knowing how to take care of our own happiness, it is unreasonable to ask the other person to make us happy. They simply don't have the means.

By giving up using the other person for my needs or by making them correspond to an ideal, the encounter then becomes a gift that adds to the happiness already present. The relationship is rid of possessiveness and attachment that imprison. There is no longer the fusion-confusion that engulfs the other, devours them, for fear of separation. Freedom emancipates us from the fear of infidelity that poisons relationships.

In this respect, meditations specifically on relating indeed exist, in which it is possible to look at the other, even to touch them, to interact, while remaining centred, in kindness and reciprocal connection. The meditator can then practise adjusted and harmonious interactions, in a safe environment.

The other is no longer a buoy to which clings the one who is drowning in their lake of solitude. There is no longer the desire to tie the other down in vaguely reassuring obligations of imposed exclusivity and

possession. The freedom of each person is truly respected.

Regular meditation leads to emotional freedom, freedom of being, freedom of thinking, in a word, to *true* freedom.

What about me, what is my freedom? What limits me? What really prevents me from meditating? These are some good questions that it is necessary to answer.

Now, here is the invitation to take a moment to write...

Emotions

Emotions play an important role, consciously or not, either as a driving force or as a brake. During their practice, the meditator takes the time to get in touch with what is being lived within, to face their emotions, in order to assume them fully. Before going to meet them inside, it is necessary to identify the emotions and their characteristics.

Some people understand emotions as immediate, spontaneous perceptions. They are therefore distinguished from feelings, which are more lasting and possibly associated with thoughts.

The emotion is like a film playing on a screen. After it passes, the screen remains blank and available for another film.

My intention here is a simplified presentation of the basic emotions visited and tamed during meditation.

The practice proposed in this book aims at recognising them, welcoming them, possibly locating them in the body, and then dis-identifying from them, i.e. looking at them like clouds passing in the sky, or butterflies fluttering at certain times around our inner garden. I am the one who thinks. I am not the thoughts. During meditation, I do not follow them, I let them fly away.

The meditator is the one who observes what is going on in themselves (and possibly around them). They remember that emotion is ephemeral. They do not make a drama out of it, do not let it take all the space, do not give it the power to control their life.

Emotions can sometimes be destructive, tiring and harmful. On the contrary, when used properly, they serve to build, support and enliven. The meditator can transmute excessive emotions like a fuel deposited in the furnace of the heart.

The meditator grants the attention and time necessary to recognise their emotions. They are used to diving into this complex and deep ocean. With courage, they will visit their emotions and experience them responsibly and appropriately. In this way, they avoid their emotions stealing more of their time and happiness by sabotaging their projects and relationships.

Through awareness and vigilance, the meditator uses emotions as doors to a greater space of freedom, to an expression of love. These doors also give access to creativity, to express emotions through art in all its forms. For me, art without emotion risks being bland, even solely intellectual, and dead. It is the inner life of the artist that gives strength to their work, from dance to sculpture, from books to music, including amongst others, theatre and architecture.

Ancient Chinese medicine explains the functioning of the body by a symbolic constitution of five elements. Each element is linked to two organs (one full and one hollow), except fire which is associated with four organs (with a more functional aspect and a more energetic aspect).

Emotions are associated with the elements according to several schools.

Similarly, yoga attributes to the heart chakra not one but two colours (green and pink).

In this presentation, there are no negative emotions, it is how they are used that will be determining, to direct them towards fulfilment and inner strength, according to a vision close to that of Spinoza.

The approach proposed here divides the emotions into five categories, each of which has multiple variants:

- water - kidneys and bladder: *fear/courage*
- metal - lungs and large intestine: *sadness/peace*
- wood - liver and gallbladder: *anger/justice*
- earth - spleen and stomach: *shame/welcoming*
- fire - heart and small intestine, master heart and triple warmer: *joy and compassion*.

Let's take a moment now for each of these basic emotions.

Fear

It deserves an extensive chapter, as it is often cowering behind anger, shame and sadness, as their underpinnings.

For example, the fear of being alone, of being abandoned, of not being loved can lead to sadness.

Behind anger sometimes lies the fear of not being heard, understood or respected.

The fear of being rejected, judged, or stigmatised leads to shame.

The expression *to feel fear in the gut* proposes a localization of its expression in the body.

Everyone has their own fears, but with their own specific proportions and manifestations, even if some are common, or indeed universal. This is the time to name or illustrate some of them.

The *fear of love* is little known and yet essential. It can be seen as a fear of loving oneself, a fear of loving and of being loved. It even makes us doubt the intention of the person offering a gift. Everyone has experienced, since childhood, moments of tenderness that had to end, or departures, absences, lacks, disappointed loves...

The difficulty of welcoming impermanence creates an impression of an emotional wound, and leaves the belief that love is dangerous, volatile, and that it can hurt.

To take the risk of loving others and loving oneself, is to exit a compromise, a known and managed discomfort. It also means taking responsibility with consciousness and daring to live.

Fear of happiness or abundance. It may come from, for example, a fear that it will end, a fear of not deserving, or simply of no longer benefiting from the victim status. Unconsciously, being pitied and getting attention for one's misfortunes is more comfortable than being responsible for taking care of one's happiness.

Fear of freedom or choice. To be free is to be responsible for one's choices, actions and mistakes. To choose, is to give up. It means risking regretting the other option and blaming oneself, on top of an internal dispute.

Fear of power or greatness. It is accompanied by the fear of succeeding, of being seen, the fear of accomplishing, of having power and using it badly, of being responsible and perhaps guilty. As long as we feel small and weak, we can pretend: it's not my fault, I had nothing to do with it. To become an adult, is to be responsible.

Fear of Life, of the Divine. It echoes the fear of the unknown and the fear of the infinite. It accompanies the great metaphysical questions: Who am I? Why am I here?

The need to find meaning in one's life is a cause of suffering that is not always conscious. Meditation leads to this path of reflection, which it illuminates to find answers.

Fear of suffering or discomfort. It sometimes paralyses to the point that people stay in pain rather than seek treatment, even if it means the situation gets worse.

The *fears of emptiness, of lack* - of money, of love, of food - are well known.

The *fear of death* is universal and yet experienced differently by everyone.

Fear of loneliness. Some partners stay in a couple so as not to find themselves alone, depriving themselves at the same time of the opportunity to face themselves, in order to prepare for another relationship.

The *fears of rejection, of abandonment*, often lead to the *fear of conflict* which prevents the resolution of differences, and ultimately poisons relationships.

The *fears of speaking up, of expressing* one's needs, of telling the truth reflect the *fear of judgement* and lack of love. They translate as emotional insecurity and a lack of confidence in one's own intrinsic value.

Fear of the other. Etymologically, xenophobia is the fear of the foreigner. It is linked to inner insecurity, lack of trust, fear of missing out, fear of change. Group consciousness has evolved from the individual, to the family, then to the tribe, to the country, and finally to the species and the planet. This fear reflects the tribal aspect of prehistory, the time of the pack. It generalises *others* through stereotypes. By dehumanising others, the xenophobe dehumanises themselves.

The *fear of betrayal*, fear of being deceived, abused, is rooted in the need for security and trust.

The *fear of change* and of being unable to find one's way around, of losing one's bearings, often increases with age, with the decrease in adaptability, cerebral plasticity and physical possibilities. It is also linked to the need for security and stability.

The *fears of old age, illness and disability* have grown significantly in our society, where youth is adulated, and the right to care has been transformed into a demand for health and comfort. Death has become taboo. Illness and suffering are denied. Meditation then helps us to look calmly at the truth. Suffering and ageing are part of life.

I end this incomplete enumeration with the fear of fear, *phobophobia*, which manifests itself in the absence of objective circumstances. For example, someone who is afraid of heights, even though they are on flat ground, can recreate their own vertigo simply by evoking a high place or a precipice. How many fears manipulate us, even without any rational basis?

In a meditative spirit, I invite you to look for a personal example, or several, of a situation that you encountered or have experienced, for each of the fears mentioned, in order to discern to what extent it concerns you. If you don't find one for yourself, it is still interesting to look for someone else's, as you might well see afterwards if it does evoke a reflection in yourself through mirror effect .

Fear manifests itself, among other things, as stress, mental agitation, tachycardia, haste, obsession, perfectionism, control, escape, excuses, reproaches, aggressiveness, lies, rejection...

If you believe you never have any fear, instead of being in a state of perfect bliss, you probably are in a state of great recklessness, of denial, or incapable of accessing your own feelings.

Giving into one's fear, letting it dominate, leads to avoidance, victimisation, self-deprecation, powerlessness, cowardice. The fact that some people can subjugate their fear, indicates that it has only as much power as we give it. Meditation leads to inner awareness and mastery.

Without fear there can be no courage!

I like to value emotions that are considered negative in order to give them their place, and show how to transform them and find their usefulness. It takes courage, determination and humility to dare to look at one's fears, admit that they exist, eventually talk about them, stay with them, confront them and overcome them. Confronting one's fears and taming them is a crucial process for strengthening and developing oneself, increasing one's confidence and self-esteem.

Welcome to the deposit of fear! I see it as an opportunity to develop one's uprightness, firmness and the ability to assert oneself, to speak the truth. The image is that of those plants that develop more roots and a stronger stem when there is more wind.

Fear is an indispensable survival energy, it keeps us away from unnecessary risks. For example, fear of fire protects against burns. Fear: a little is needed, but not too much!

When I am afraid or stressed, a phrase that helps me a lot is: "What is the possible *consequence*? What is the worst that can happen?"

Often, the risk is ultimately manageable. Would the worst thing be death? Even so, would that be so terrible? By relativizing, by de-dramatizing, by contextualising, I find more easily my calm, my discernment, my priorities and my ability to act. Here too, meditation helps a lot.

Meditation allows us to discover, and even transform our stresses. It is a process that can be carried out alone, even if it is more comfortable when approaching certain topics to be accompanied by a competent person who, from the outside, and with their experience, will be able to clarify and support.

Often, fear is experienced as suffering. It is then tempting to try to hide it or to get rid of it. Welcoming it means saying: "Oh yes, I'm afraid, like everyone else, but so what? It is not necessarily a problem, but it can be an opportunity to move towards greater consciousness and freedom."

Fear opens the door of courage, affirmation and trust.

Sadness

According to Chinese medicine, it is associated with the lungs and the skin. It is probably linked to the expression *having a thin skin*, commonly known as wearing one's heart on one's sleeve. Sometimes, pathologies are associated with emotions. Hence, certain lung or skin problems can be linked to sadness.

Turned towards the negative, sadness becomes self-pity, victimisation, depression, laziness, resentment. Resentment and bitterness will feed hatred and produce a venom to make the other person suffer, by making them responsible, guilty. This poison is called *reproach*. It is the assassin of relationships.

Everyone has the right to cry, to be sad, to be affected by a situation. The image of Rambo, the muscular and insensitive hero, is a poor model, a trap, because solidity has replaced the courage to live one's emotions. It will then be very difficult to access creativity, harmony and happiness. Let the little boys cry. As adults, let us dare to cry with all our tears.

Meditation welcomes sadness with kindness, to de-dramatise it, to put it into perspective, by viewing everything from a distance, to get out of isolation and to turn towards life. Sadness allows us to connect with the suffering of others.

I avoid saying that I understand the sadness of others, because an emotion is felt. Each person lives it in their own way, depending on their story. To apprehend it only with the mind is often an escape, for fear of emotional suffering.

When the other person suffers, I connect with their experience, from a silence within. I can remember my own suffering, and actively listen to the feelings and needs of the other. Meditation renders me available to listen to and welcome the other.

When it is de-dramatised, *sadness opens the door to peace, kindness and empathy*, towards a higher form of love.

Anger

It is associated with the liver and the immune system. In excess or misdirected, anger hurts, causes suffering, destroys, and can even kill. When turned towards oneself, it is the cause of stress and many illnesses.

A universal, but not always clearly named, source of anger is found in powerlessness. It is encountered from birth, when we cannot even turn around by ourselves, and can hardly express our needs other than by wailing. This frustration, encountered throughout life by the inability to change situations, and the impossibility of changing others, generates a natural anger. It is necessary to learn to accept it, because old age often brings restrictions of capacity and autonomy which only aggravate the feeling of powerlessness.

Meditation allows for a transmutation of anger into a source of positive energy. It provides the strength to stand up for the weak and the defenceless, to support just causes. It gives courage and confidence to speak words of truth and carry out acts of protection. It forges decisions to take one's life into one's own hands, and to persevere with one's resolutions.

Anger opens the door to justice. It is anger that allows us to rise up against injustice. Properly directed, anger is an energy for a world of equity, of sharing and of respect. It also promotes inner transformation.

Shame

It is often associated with the pelvis, the genital organs and sexual impulses. It is also felt at the level of the diaphragm, between the lungs and the digestive system.

It is an expression of self-rejection, with an aspect of judgement, which can lead to anger. It is fed by the fear of no longer being lovable. It can go as far as disgust, and can be outwardly manifested by rejection or disgust. Often, what we cannot stand in others reflects what we reject in ourselves.

Turned against oneself, it drains away stability. It can manifest itself by insecurity, excessive control, obsessiveness, strict habits, perpetual

checking, and excessive planning or organisation. This attitude can manifest itself by a home that is too clean and tidy, by a perfectionism and an intransigence at work, too strict a budget, impeccable possessions, plotted relationships or having too many expectations.

Shame pushes one to hide. Therefore, it naturally leads to shyness, self-censorship, isolation, loneliness, devaluation, depreciation, depression or psychological confinement. But as a reaction, it also leads to pride, boasting, and the crushing of others so as not to risk exposing one's own flaws, nor to even recognise them.

Shame destabilises to the point of inhibiting vital energies, crushing desires, preventing speech, lowering the gaze, and undermining an entire existence.

Transmuted, *shame opens the door to respect* for others and for oneself, to respect the rules that allow us to live in society, and finally to respect life.

When properly lived, observed and accepted, shame opens the door to welcoming what is, towards kindness, open-mindedness, tolerance and patience.

Finally, all these ambivalent emotions are also an opportunity to exercise forgiveness. Meditation allows one to see their hidden emotions appear and to face them, with lucidity and determination. Meditation helps to build courage, calm and confidence to decide on the just positioning.

In dreams, emotions or memories can appear as animals, monsters... Meditation can allow access to a better understanding of these representations, in order to visit and clarify the situations or issues represented. These are not enemies to be killed, but simply figurative emotions, in other words, energies that have remained blocked, which have had a function and which, during meditation, can be put back into circulation with kindness and awareness.

Only two examples of meditations are mentioned here, because they are quite simple and easily accessible. One is to visualise a bubble around what is to be released, and to let this bubble rise into the sky to go into the sun or to offer it as a compost to the earth. The other is to visualise a sun in the torso, and then place what is to be transmuted into it, like fuel in a fire.

The art of meditation allows emotions, tensions and impulses to be transformed into love and joy.

Joy

It can be located in the middle of the chest, also called the heart centre in yoga. Poorly managed, it becomes agitation, exuberance, invasion of others, disrespect for oneself and others. It then borders on a kind of drunkenness, seeking pretexts to self-perpetuate. It goes to the head and risks going towards stupidity, mockery or outbursts.

It is important not to confuse it with imitating joy, for social reasons or seeking to be loved, nor with embarrassed laughter to give oneself a sense of composure.

When meditation has allowed us to welcome the other emotions in all serenity, then joy finds its place to live in us again and to radiate. Natural joy does not need external circumstances. It does, however, help us to appreciate life's gifts, pleasures, humour... Healthy jokes disintegrate on a face that refuses to laugh, on a mind that is sorrowful and tense.

Joy is simply nourished by the gratitude of being alive, by the wonder of creation, be it natural or human. It turns drama into comedy.

It invites art in general, dance and singing in particular. It brings lightness of life, spontaneity, kindness.

Joy opens the door to gratitude, generosity and relationships with others.

Associated with peace, it leads to happiness.

There is even a yoga of laughter, which is based on organic laughter, not motivated by a funny circumstance. Laughter is extremely good for the nervous system and digestion, as well as for the whole body.

It predisposes to relaxation, which is beneficial to meditation. This is why I happily encourage, when it comes, a moment of laughter at the beginning of the session. Often, laughter spontaneously arises at the end of the session. It sometimes comes to me in waves during the sessions. It is easily contagious and sometimes spreads to the whole group. We are then bathed in a liberating and regenerating joy.

In summary, meditation as presented in this book does not aim at abolishing emotions. It proposes to welcome them as experiences, as gifts, as *the spice of life*!

The meditator can then use them like a cook, by pouring them into the cauldron of the heart, where love will soften them. In this way they can contribute to our happiness and that of those around us.

When this alchemy is happening, it manifests itself in serene joy, confidence, dedication, and constant happiness.

Compassion

Compassion is seen as a manifestation of love. The experience of suffering facilitates access to compassion; each person is free to open the door of their heart, or to close it.

Some people understand compassion as empathy put into action. For this reason, in many meditations, the feeling of the heart centre extends into the arms.

Empathy places the person who is supporting into a zone of communication close to the person who is suffering. It is a support that enables appeasement and helps to move forward.

Expressions of compassion can become ostentatious, when they are motivated by a feeling of superiority, or a quest for approval or feeling valued.

The role of saviour leads to a loss of heart and a loss of compassion.

Love is usually considered to be a feeling. A chapter will be devoted to it later. It will be presented more as a state, or a force that transcends us. The meaning of our presence on earth is certainly to learn to love.

Compassion opens the door to inner freedom.

It transcends judgement and leads to a state of connection with all beings, with all life.

Suffering

The approach to suffering was particularly developed by Greek philosophers and by Buddhism. Today, when we speak of suffering, we often think of pain, such as toothache, abrasions or other. In reality, if suffering can be physical, it is also emotional, psychological or moral. We will speak here of suffering in the broadest sense.

Emotional suffering generally manifests itself in all circumstances that generate the so-called *negative* emotions described above. Examples are legion through all the daily annoyances that can generate frustration, loneliness, agitation, self-pity, rejection...

Psychological pain manifests more like thoughts swirling obsessively. In principle, they are linked to the past in the form of regrets, or to the future through apprehension.

The pain of the past is mostly fuelled by sadness, shame and anger. When it comes to sadness, the remedy is connection to oneself and detachment, to go through a mourning process, whose stages have been very well described by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (born in 1926 in Zurich, Switzerland, and died in 2004 in the USA), more recently by the Frenchman Christophe Fauré, and by others.

When shame or anger haunt us, self-acceptance and kindness become the necessary supports in a process of forgiveness, in order to free ourselves from judgments and resentment.

Future pain is more related to fear. For example, it manifests itself before an exam through stress and fear of failure. The preparation of a friendly or sentimental meeting can activate the fear of rejection. Financial concerns, for their part, express the fear of lack. Organisational control reflects insecurity and the fear of not being loved, or the fear of suffering. There are multiple sources of worry.

All of the above manifestations are normal. Meditation does not aim to neither deny nor prevent them. It is not about becoming amnesiac, irresponsible or imprudent. On the contrary, it offers resources to better live them, to go through them, while continuing to be happy.

Sometimes the meditator forgets whatever suffering they are experiencing because their attention is focused elsewhere, or

because they relax and relief comes from the release of their body or mind.

On the contrary, suffering can become the theme of meditation. In this way, the meditator gradually gains distance, dis-identifies with physical or other pain, de-dramatises it, and can envisage being happy despite suffering, or even better, with suffering.

In our society, suffering is often presented as unacceptable. At the slightest discomfort, a painkiller is very quickly proposed as a panacea. Of course, it is good to be treated and not to refuse medical progress. Some people prefer to wait and suffer than face the risk of painful dental treatment, for example. Meditation helps to develop lucidity, maturity, reason, courage and mastery of apprehension, both before and during treatment.

The flight from pain, and the endless race after pleasures, are the wheels of endless repetition of the same experiences. The image is that of the hamster in its exercise wheel, running, but staying on the spot. Sometimes the actors or settings of our experiences change, but the scenarios remain the same.

Resistance to evolution, refusal of suffering, rebellion, or positioning oneself as a victim will increase the intensity and duration of the pain.

Self-victimisation is deleterious, as it leads to self-pity, apathy, complacency and cuts off one's own resources, one's power to act and to be.

Yet suffering is very much caused by identification with one's own life experiences, thoughts, feelings or sentiments. When confusing oneself with what is happening in one's body or mind, instead of being a spectator of it, circumstances are turned into drama.

Moreover, the fear of pain is generally more of a problem than the pain itself. Fear of suffering is a great source of suffering. By providing the necessary calm and detachment, meditation helps to free oneself from it.

Through patient introspection, the meditator asks the question, "Who am I? Who decides? Who desires? Who refuses? Who surrenders?"

The relaxation and clarity of mind induced by meditation lead to discovering the answers to these questions.

Happiness and suffering are compatible!

Suffering complicates access to happiness, but does not prevent it. Whatever type of suffering is experienced, it is inherent to life.

If we put suffering on one side of a coin and pleasure on the other, we realise that it is not possible to have a coin with only one of its two sides.

Monsieur Bergeret, by Anatole France, explains clearly and philosophically to his daughter that she cannot hope to live without suffering and that suffering is part of life.

I often prefer to talk about *discomfort* in order to play down and relativise the power that is given to suffering when it is seen as terrible or unbearable. I give it meaning by reminding people: no fear, no courage.

The amount of suffering on the path of life is probably proportional to the amount of courage one has come to acquire. Meditation welcomes what is: welcome to suffering. In the end, it is often suffering that moves us forward and motivates us to evolve.

Meditation gives us the ability to step back and see suffering in a smaller, less threatening way, to put it into perspective and overcome it. Once welcomed, it is possible to live with more lightness and joy.

Whatever their pain, the meditator is the one who observes the sensation they experience. They can compare it to a cloud passing in the sky. A healthy distance is established. Taking the focus off of the problem allows one to see the rest of the landscape, the other aspects of the situation. My existence is not reduced to suffering. The distance allows me to enjoy the whole panorama. I can appreciate the benefits of the circumstances and the happiness that is offered to me.

For example, if you have a headache, instead of concentrating on the discomfort and accomplishing nothing, waiting for a pill if necessary, it is possible to focus on something else and to get on with daily life. Perhaps the action will be a little more arduous, but at the end of the day the tasks will be accomplished. Often a meditation or an activity,

a film, a book, a conversation, a walk... will even make you forget the pain.

It is probably wise to accept that sometimes it is our soul that wants us to evolve and that it will push us into discomfort, favouring situations that will transform us through certain difficulties.

The chrysalis must build up its muscles by tearing the cocoon itself. If someone wants to help it by cutting the cocoon, its muscles may be insufficient when it emerges and the butterfly will never be able to fly. Thus suffering or adversity also strengthens our mind, so that it can better attain a certain height and bliss.

The meditator finds in their centring the strength to overcome the fear of suffering, builds character, and prepares for life and happiness. Suffering teaches, among other things, kindness, compassion, empathy and patience. What gifts! The vulnerability of the human species has been stored in our genes since the beginning of time. We owe our survival to our capacity for solidarity and mutual aid. Empathy and attachment are created especially towards those we have seen suffer, or have cared for. The parent devotes a lot of time and energy to the child.

Sometimes, a friend takes care of a friend. Visiting an elderly person regularly makes them special and more important to us, because of the investment in presence and affection. Frequently, the suffering of the other person echoes our own and reminds us of our frailty.

As we saw earlier, righteous anger leads to indignation, to action for justice, to defending the weak, to standing up against iniquity. Well-managed fear, for its part, allows courage to express itself and to grow. Similarly, suffering that is accepted opens the door of the heart to love.

Sometimes, in drama or panic, some people frantically try to push the door open to get out, whereas it opens by pulling towards oneself, in welcoming, by stepping back first so as to be able to move forward towards freedom.

Effort, which can be experienced as a form of suffering, is nevertheless necessary to obtain a result, to fit into society, to persevere in meditation, in a sport...

Generally, we value more what has cost us effort, whether it is our children, our diplomas, our creations, but also simply the housework, the cooking... There is a certain pride, a rewarding feeling, of having succeeded in overcoming an obstacle, starting with laziness!

We all evolve with the aim of being happy, that's the carrot. But we also have the sting of discomfort behind it. Suffering is not a mistake on earth, it is really part of the evolutionary process. Just as offence is necessary to learn forgiveness. Everyone has come to learn to love.

Running away from suffering is as painful as running after pleasures. The meditation proposed here aims to welcome what is in order to be at peace and happy, independently of circumstances, with circumstances, by stopping the fight against life, by laying down arms, whether it be through fatigue, humility, logic, or other.

Welcoming is the key to opening up the space of possibilities.

That is to say, facing reality with lucidity allows us to take stock of the situation and makes possible an evolution, a change, a resolution.

The one who refuses to accept reality is like the one who bangs on the door with all their might and complains that it hurts their hands, instead of quietly opening the door with the handle.

It is essential that suffering is no longer seen as a calamity of which one is the unjust victim, but that it is understood as a constructive experience, welcomed, even chosen. This is one of the paths that meditation allows us to explore on the road to happiness.

Happiness

Let's take a little look at happiness.

In the Indian tradition, *santosha* corresponds to contentment, a state in which the meditator seeks nothing more, in total happiness, completely happy with what is. It is a representation that may seem to some bland and tranquil, and to others extreme and unattainable.

The image of happiness is often distorted by advertisements, which are by nature misleading, claiming that happiness can be bought, featuring beautiful young people having fun, kissing, and above all consuming and spending. The pursuit of happiness through material goods only leads to frantic consumption and disappointment.

For some, it is accompanied by the race for wealth. But the happiness of the rich shown in magazines seems obviously fake. If their happiness were real and deep, they would be more generous, and the world's goods would be better used.

Disappointment about happiness in relationships often comes from confusion between love, tenderness, sensuality, sexuality, romance, friendship...

Some people want to be loved for their personality, for who they are, but they put their physical appearance first, like objects. They thus attract the other person's impulses. Before the relationship has even begun, it has already gone in a limited direction. It will be more difficult later to include all the other dimensions: emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

Before running after an image of happiness, which is often a mirage, it is important to know where we are, what we are looking for, where we are going. Emotional lack will push us to look for a quick, easy solution, with someone who is themselves in lack and who ultimately will not be able to give what they do not have. Meditation helps to visit one's lack and emotional needs in order to soothe and manage them. It leads to mastery, even sublimation of impulses so as not to be a slave to them. By delving within to centre and to know oneself, it becomes easier to discern the type of relationship that will fulfil both oneself and the other.

More generally, the belief that happiness depends on external circumstances is an illusion that causes much suffering on this earth.

If I were better looking, younger, older, taller... I would be happier.

If the weather were different, if people were...

If I had a spouse, a house, money... I would be happy.

If I could travel, do this, do that...

There is nothing inherently wrong with all these conditionals with being, having, and doing. An effective way to spoil one's own life is to want something other than what is. Meditation is the welcoming of the present moment above all. Then it is possible to consider evolution, to take creative action.

Another way of spoiling the present moment is to live in a time that does not exist, in the past or in the future, turned either towards dwelling on memories, regrets, reproaches, resentment... or towards hypothetical and obsessive plans, distant dreams... Anxiety manifests itself by excessive planning, tense control, or conversely, by the refusal to anticipate, nonchalance, forgetfulness, delays...

Sometimes certain events come back up during meditation. Recalling one's life story allows one to learn the lessons, appease the corresponding memory, and let it rest in peace. Similarly, as the mind is clarified by meditation, solutions come to organise one's future. These can be written down. Freed from all preoccupation, meditation can be resumed quietly.

Both French and English use the word *present* to mean a gift.

Seeing the present moment as a gift is the key to happiness.

Living in the present moment gives access to happiness.

Meditation brings serenity and joy, which allow the welcoming of all circumstances, whether judged as good or bad, that is to say whether desired or not, while remaining in a stable and authentic happiness.

One who chases after pleasures runs away from happiness.

Meditation allows us to dive into ourselves, to welcome calm, to let thoughts and emotions settle, so that what was deep down can emerge, towards transformation, lightness and freedom.

It takes willpower and courage to give yourself into introspection and to visit those aspects that are hidden in the shadows, which are not very glorious, but rather shameful or painful.

Like exploring a castle, you discover hidden rooms, from the attic to the cellar. Session after session, you bring light, you clean, you tidy, you sort, you throw away... and you also bring back treasures.

As you walk through your inner corridors, the paths become well known, the resources and potentials become more and more accessible.

The worst thing that could happen to me would be to run after another happiness than the one that is present!

Authentic happiness depends neither on circumstances, nor passing emotions, but on an intimate relationship with the Self, with one's being, a connection to the heart, which brings true peace and joy.

The reason I am happy is that I can be happy for no reason!

To walk the path of meditation that leads to happiness, the cardinal virtues are courage, perseverance and humility. We will now discuss them in more detail.

Courage

The word comes from the Latin *cor*. To be courageous is to live with your heart, as opposed to those who live with their head and try to control their environment and their existence illusively.

On this theme, Osho has written *Le courage*, published by Poche Jouvence.

Courage is closely linked to trust, faith, passion, discovery and freedom.

The idea of courage is sometimes associated with muscle-bound superheroes, ready to fight on the outside. But there are other, more discreet kinds of courage, such as working tirelessly to feed your family, giving birth in pain to give life, daring to speak the truth, looking at your deepest wounds, or even just crying in front of someone.

It takes a lot of courage to face one's cowardice, to manage to admit it to oneself, to recognise it, to welcome it, until one is able to tell it to another. Meditation helps to ground oneself in order to find one's courage, confidence and inner strength.

Cowardice and laziness lead to procrastination, but putting off necessary actions only increases the problem. On the contrary, courage allows one to enjoy life. Meditation makes it easier to make the right decisions by accessing one's inner resources and becoming more lucid.

Meditation gives the right positioning through determination and objectivity. It allows one to approach difficult situations without feeling sorry for oneself.

To wallow in self pity is to position oneself as a victim, to renounce one's power to transform the situation, to refuse the lessons of life.

To pity the other person is to position oneself as superior, with pride and distance, instead of coming closer through empathy and kind presence.

Meditation helps to keep one's composure and lucidity of action in the face of internal or external difficulties, in the presence of an accident, an argument... Often, great courage is simply not to flee, to remain present, with what is, with the other, with oneself, with the emotions, the suffering...

Courage means accepting the situation with one's strength, which is inevitably limited, and therefore also with one's weakness, in order to lead one's life, make decisions and assume the consequences.

It is written in the Bible (Judges 6:14): *Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in the strength that you have'*, and (in 2 Corinthians 12:9): *My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*

In some cases weariness, exhaustion or illness help us to let go. Instead of trying to force circumstances to be as we imagined they should be, they end up taking a different course, sometimes leading to the result we had hoped for, sometimes elsewhere, sometimes even for the better.

It is good to remember that the more trusting and adaptable we are in welcoming what is, the more life can take the wheel to lead us to the right place. Meditation leads to the inner calm that allows us to hear the GPS of intuition, to let ourselves be guided by a natural wisdom through the adventure of life, to finally feel like co-pilots and better enjoy the landscape.

Don't run away from fear, it runs faster than you!

Thus, through meditation, courage is perhaps simply trusting life and welcoming what it offers us.

Perseverance

There is no need to hope to undertake or to succeed to persevere.
William 1st of Orange

Here, the main key to perseverance is... pleasure!

Motivation and determination are inseparable from perseverance. Why do some people find hours to watch television, play on the computer, or any other hobby, and do not have a few minutes to meditate? Out of taste, out of ignorance? Out of laziness, out of ease? Out of fear of looking inside, of coming face to face with themselves?

There are undoubtedly many reasons, or many pretexts, for not finding the time, for not finding oneself. However, we all have the same time budget, incompressible and inextensible, 24 hours a day. For each of us, the investment choices we make will have their consequences. It is illusory to expect the fruits of effort without effort!

It is true that conditions can be more or less favourable. Illness, a hectic, noisy environment... are not helpful for meditation. However, it is precisely in these moments that meditation can be of service, and teach how to read, learn, rest, in such contexts.

To start, it is best to find a pleasant setting. Similarly, it is best to begin with setting realistic goals. Apart from some people for whom meditating is natural, rather than trying to do an hour-long session in silence, which may seem long, it is advisable to decide on a modest but regular and lasting practice, which will fit more easily into an already busy schedule. There is already a definite benefit in taking even five to ten minutes frequently throughout the day, ideally each and every day.

Some people prefer to meditate in the morning to start the day well. Others meditate in the evening to calm the mind and prepare for a good night's sleep. Those who can, take time at each end of the day.

It is of course possible to meditate during the day, during a break, at your desk, in a park, in a church, on a bench, while walking, while waiting for the bus... These solutions require varying the exercises, in order to be able to meditate with open or closed eyes.

The trick is to try out different possibilities, to find what suits us, and to set ourselves a discipline, etymologically speaking: a way of learning. Discipline need not be a scary word. Motivation comes with results. If some people do not meditate, it may simply be because they have not experienced the joy and delight of meditation!

To the question of knowing what to choose between quality and quantity, I answer: "Why choose?" To meditate is to find oneself, one's heart, one's joy. To meditate is to develop a loving relationship with oneself and with life. If I fall in love, I will invest time, energy and attention in developing this relationship.

If I don't take a few minutes to meditate, for fear of losing a little time to do what I have planned, I actually risk losing my whole day. In the evening, I may have accomplished my programme, but will I have lived, savoured my day, acted with pleasure?

By being well focused and relaxed, work is often done better and time is largely saved. As for the attitude of joy and kindness, it is not always directly measurable in money, but it has been shown to considerably improve health in the long term, as well as the productivity of certain companies.

These notions are good to know to encourage oneself, even if I think that the right attitude to meditate is to let go of the result. To motivate oneself, it is useful to compare one's state before and after meditation in order to appreciate the immediate benefits.

The effects also manifest themselves over the weeks in emotional, mental, behavioural and relational evolution. Those around us can echo this.

The pleasure of living better is motivating to persevere!

Determination manifests itself in a force of action that is based on deep-seated motivations.

When I was twenty years old, Dan Millman's book, *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* (1980), touched me a lot on this subject. It contains a lot of wisdom and naturally speaks about meditation. The film *Peaceful Warrior*, based on the book, is a good example of perseverance, courage, humility and evolution.

Determination characterises the warriors of light, i.e. those who seek meaning in their lives, who work for justice and love. Some people prefer to use the term 'knights of light'.

I understand *warrior* to refer to courage, to the notion of defending one's life, of fighting against a formidable opponent: one's own shadows. The word knight evokes the mastery of the horse. The meditator's mount is called consciousness.

And why light? Because meditation illuminates self-knowledge in the search for truth that leads to freedom.

Obviously, this is not a martial art or a fight with an external opponent. The struggle is all inner, between a universal aspiration to love and the fear of suffering, between the heart and the ego, between our consciousness and our shadows.

The struggle is paradoxical, often not very visible from the outside, *discreet*.

The *feats of arms* are moments of serenity and kindness in situations that were previously difficult, being able to concentrate to learn for a long time, carrying out a difficult task with joy...

By connecting us to our inner struggles, our needs and desires, which are sometimes contradictory, meditation helps us to see the issues and gives us the necessary *armaments* to become masters of our lives, free from the manipulation of impulses, and the egotistical illusions of comparison and dissatisfaction.

It is said that the ego has no consistency, that it acts mainly through illusion, fear and the mind. The main tool used by the warrior of light to dominate it, to win the battle and live free, is the will, that is, the combination of determination and perseverance. The intention is that the mind should serve the heart and not the ego.

It reminds me of the stained glass windows showing Saint Michael bringing down the dragon. The dragon here represents the *Kundalini*, the Sanskrit word for the snake coiled in the pelvis in yoga, the life force, the impulses, also associated with the fire of a volcano.

The warrior of light does not allow themselves to be sated by the dragon. They dominate it, without killing it. In this way they keep

access to their energy reserve. They will surely need their power to carry out their quest for truth, to serve life, to help, support and love, better and better, themselves and others.

The meditator is reputed to awaken the power of the snake and let it flow up their spine. This is referred to in many traditions, including the Egyptian uraeus in the form of a cobra ascending on the forehead, or the Greek caduceus.

There are different methods, according to ancient traditions, for setting this potential in motion. It is to be tamed progressively. In case of dizziness or headache, do not hesitate to slow down or stop the circulation, even if it means going from the top of the spine down. Often, it is enough to breathe well with the belly.

The purpose of this type of meditation is to access an inner resource to have more dynamism in one's activities and a clearer mind.

The benefits are progressive and proportional to the practice.

It is good to be accompanied, for those who want to go further, more intensely on this path.

Perseverance is essential to overcome one's *demons*, especially lassitude and laziness. The people close to you are often decisive with their understanding and their encouragement for you to continue meditating regularly, simply by respecting the tranquillity of you, the meditator, without interrupting.

The support of a meditation group is invaluable, if only to be able to talk about one's experiences, to receive inspiration once a week for example, and to benefit from a stimulating ambience.

Although there is no substitute for being face-to-face, means of communication make it possible to join groups remotely or to benefit from recordings.

It requires humility to recognise one's need for help, sharing and teaching. The ideal is to combine an individual practice with a group practice. To avoid fatigue, it is good to benefit from guided meditations and to dare to be creative according to the inspiration or need of the moment.

Becoming autonomous may sometimes bring the feeling of being small, and sometimes big, but that does not matter. Reality is this simultaneous double truth, facing the infinite towards the microscopic and towards the stars.

Meditation connects us to the very small as well as the very large. We find a world of fractals and *matryoshkas* (nested Russian dolls).

In meditation as elsewhere, too much pressure is counterproductive. The practice teaches contentment and peace, so as not to ask oneself to do more than one's maximum, but to be content with doing one's best, to accomplish what is possible at the time, according to one's resources. The path is humbly that of the warrior of light, not the *superhero* of the cinema.

Long live the middle road! The goal is to aim for perseverance, a lifelong path. It is essential to keep harmony and pleasure!

Humility

In some Indian traditions, offering a coconut on a sacred altar symbolises the offering of one's life, one's heart, showing that even though the outside may seem rustic, rough, dark, the inside is ultimately good, soft, clear and pure.

In their practice, the meditator will sometimes find themselves facing bubbles of memories, emotions, truth. They discover areas of their life or their character, forgotten, left in shadow. Confronted with themselves, they see themselves as if in a mirror, and this is not always easy. Fortunately, the in-depth examination of the self, the reflection of the soul, also shows the inner qualities and riches. Gradually, the calming and grounding from meditative practice will bring emotional and mental stability.

Humility will develop in the course of welcoming oneself, with one's strengths and weaknesses, through trust, through taming in meditation. Pride, on the other hand, is a manifestation of insecurity, of lack of self-confidence, often as a result of judgements, from others or from oneself. It locks one into a narrow prison. It is then recommended to let one's pride, one's ego, one's inhibitor "cry" so that the heart can then laugh!

The meditator begins by accepting themselves as they are. They take stock of who they are, with as much kindness, lucidity and honesty as possible, to open up the possibility of evolution and fulfilment. Qualities and flaws are seen simply as characteristics, not as fatalities or burdens. I like the idiom which says that flaws are qualities in excess. From the Latin *qualitas*, from *qualis*: as it is. Etymologically, quality is the state of being 'as is'.

Recognising one's qualities, this is not being prideful. Expecting praise from others pushes one further towards pride and hypocrisy. It is better to live simply, naturally, even if it means renouncing the pride of *wanting to be humble*, perfect, and to get out of *modesty contests*.

The invitation is to evolve, to blossom, for the happiness of each person. Humility also means accepting one's limits. Doing one's best, yes, without demanding more than one's best, allows one to escape the pressure of excellence and competition.

Some people compare their meditations. A common trap is to want to succeed in your meditation. What does this mean? Sometimes there is the reproach to oneself for being too agitated, for not concentrating, for falling asleep... A meditation is *successful* when it is accepted as it is! That is part of humility.

Experience is always an opportunity to learn, in this case to direct one's mind, to focus it in order to use it well. The image is that of a rider allowing themselves to be led anywhere by their horse, perhaps a beautiful steed.

Meditation teaches one to lead one's horse, one's thoughts, according to one's plans and needs, to the right destination and in all humility.

Humility leads to letting life express itself through you, trusting it, so that you can let yourself be carried along by it.

Welcoming

Welcoming oneself and welcoming the other are two sides of the same coin. Some people say that they find it easier to love others than to love themselves. How to measure?

What kind of love can you give when you can't love yourself? Is it selfless? How can we offer what we cannot receive ourselves? What kind of love can we receive when we can't love ourselves or when we can't manage to give?

The lack of love for oneself sometimes manifests itself as a preoccupation with others, to the point of becoming a devoted saviour. The inner reality, however, is a demand for attention and care, which reflects one's own need for love.

Those who are of the other type, who only think of themselves, selfish, are also desperately seeking love. But it is not possible to find true, complete and genuine happiness with no regard for others, in hoarding and self-centredness. The accumulation of pleasures and gratifications induces satisfaction, but not happiness. There will only be an appearance of happiness, partial, circumstantial, ephemeral and illusory, because consciousness knows that we are connected to the whole, to the whole of life, and that the attempt to be indifferent to the outside cuts off a part of ourselves.

If it is possible to withdraw from the world for a longer or shorter period of time in order to find oneself, one must know how to distinguish the legitimate need for solitude from the flight from or rejection of others.

For some, it is by remaining single for some time, without a romantic or sexual relationship, that they will be able to cope with their emotional lack. For others, it is in a relationship that their limits and needs will be revealed.

To paraphrase from the Bible (Luke 6:32): *If you love those who love you, what do you do that is so extraordinary?*

We are here to learn to love. Each person will choose the people with whom to learn, including those who are more difficult to love.

The other is potentially a mirror. The more difficult it is for me to be with the other, the more their presence might pose the question: what aspect is being reflected that I am rejecting, or that is not yet resolved in myself? Is it myself or the other that I am rejecting?

Rejection uses a formidable weapon: reproach.

Etymologically: “re-approach” - to bring one's own perspective of the version of events closer. Under the pretext of wanting to obtain justice, to be right, to pose as a victim... reproach distances one from the other, pushes them away, creates arguments and resentment.

Meditation allows a time of pause, to take the necessary distance to see the situation, in meta-position, in order to change point of view, to see the angle of perception of the other, to comprehend their feelings, their experiences, their needs, to eventually be able to understand the other, to respect them, and better welcome them.

Meditation can also be a moment of tenderness to oneself, of personal reunion, to connect to what is lived within, to recharge one's batteries, and to let the other also breathe for a moment on their own.

This is not selfishness, no need to feel guilty. It is a prerequisite for being truly available.

The tranquillity that sets in our thoughts often allows situations to settle and lets reality emerge that was veiled by fears and filters of illusions.

During conflicts especially, meditation allows one to find more emotional calm in order to turn towards the objectivity of the facts, towards kindness, and then towards forgiveness and a harmonious resolution. It reveals the strategies of escape and compensation that mask fears and lacks. It directs the gaze inwards, to take stock of the *cumbersome items* on the one hand and the resources on the other.

Everyone has their childhood wounds, their inevitable emotional lacks. Even if the parents, the environment and the surroundings were loving and caring, disappointments are inevitable. Naturally, there are unachievable expectations, both in children and adults. Small emotional voids create a *pit*, which is sometimes abyssal. The scrapes of existence sometimes leave an oversensitivity in some people who have been scratched by life.

Loving oneself is not about fulfilling one's impulses or following stereotypical patterns. Following desires without knowing their origin, their real motivation, does not lead to happiness and freedom. Ephemeral pleasure often has a bitter taste.

When the emotional void is not made conscious, people feed each other's lacks and often seek to receive. Even when they give, it is often in the hope of a return.

They find themselves locked in the *prison* of beliefs.

Meditation will guide us on a path of appeasement, healing and repair, through patience, gentleness and listening to oneself. It supports us to feel our needs and to discern the adequate answer at the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level, towards harmony and a deep sense of well-being.

Afterwards, it is often repeated: "as I am", because it is essential, it helps to get out of the struggle against reality. It frees us from obligation, judgement and reproach. Before thinking of changing anything, it is indispensable to begin by recognising what is, welcoming it without revolt or resignation, in order to open the door to the space of transformation and fulfilment.

The meditator then finds themselves with the right questions: "What is the positive side? What can I learn from the circumstances? What is the impact on the lives of others? In which direction should I go?" The practice brings the calm necessary to listen to the inner answer and to position oneself with rectitude.

Meditation also helps to meet and welcome one's polarities, the opposites that generate life: the feminine and the masculine, the receiver and the sender, stability and movement, yin and yang, inhalation and exhalation.

Meditation harmonises the polarities in order to be in tune with the moment and the situation. It makes available the range of behaviours and actions that are linked to all our potentials.

Every man and every woman contain masculine and feminine elements, in their own proportions, and independently of their physical appearance.

Generally, parents are the archetype of man and woman, authority and freedom, structure and creativity, tangible and intuition. Readjusting the representation of Man and Woman allows one to balance and adjust one's relationship to all others, and to oneself of course.

A process of maturation is then set in motion towards the integration of one's inner father and inner mother.

Finding one's inner lover leads to the reconciliation of the inner man and woman, freed from reproach and judgement of men and women in general.

Meditation drives the inner union, the sacred couple, harmony between yang and yin, between strength and sensitivity, for example. This manifests itself, among other things, in an emotional trust and peace that allows one to go to others with an emotional abundance rather than with a pressing demand.

In this process of self-awareness, the inner child is then freed in turn, accompanied by his or her counterpart. Then the inner boy and girl come together to play, create, imagine, dream and have fun.

The child imagines in joy and freedom, the parent creates and takes constructive action, following the wisdom, patience and serenity of the grandparents.

Meditation frees us from the myth of Aristophanes, related in Plato's *The Banquet*, which illustrates the need for a missing half and the search for a partner. The encounter with the other comes in a peaceful context of inner plenitude and abundance of love. Emotional security reflects the inner marriage.

Meditation gives access to the attitude that brings happiness, that which shares, overflows like a fountain, to offer real, unconditional, generous and free love.

Forgiveness

To forgive, is to give beyond, etymologically even to give life in spite of the fault, i.e. to give grace.

Errare humanum est, ignoscere divinum: to err is human, to forgive, divine.

Meditation helps to bring up the wounds, the *offences*, i.e. the situations that have hurt us, including situations in which we have hurt ourselves, by not respecting ourselves for example.

It also helps to welcome emotions in order to better discern the facts, to change one's point of view by taking a step back, to move towards appeasement, or even forgiveness.

Below is a forgiveness process that I have formulated from training, readings and my own experience. Nothing revolutionary, it is simple and free.

I have often experienced it sitting quietly on my little meditation bench. It has accompanied me in revisiting all the relationships in my life, since childhood, and making inner peace with each one.

I am not saying that it is always easy and comfortable. It resembles a form of self-guided meditation. It is practised alone. It does not necessarily replace a good, frank discussion or mediation, but it can precede them in order to be better prepared for a dialogue.

It starts, naturally, with a meditation, which is resumed whenever an internalisation is necessary once again.

It allows us to disengage emotionally when the other person is not available for a constructive exchange, whatever the reason for their refusal, for their personal incapacity. This process is particularly appropriate with people who are inaccessible or deceased.

It also applies to oneself, when one is in reproach against oneself.

Autonomous Resolution of Conflict (ARC)

Objective

Autonomous Resolution of Conflict (ARC) is a protocol for moving forward in a forgiveness process.

The intention is to free oneself from the suffering of resentment, rancour, reproach, anger, rumination... to move towards relational **serenity**, in a constructive approach of clarification, kindness, learning, affirmation and fulfilment.

The goal is not necessarily reconciliation. In some cases, the relationship will now appear meaningless, and perhaps even toxic.

Forgiveness allows one to find a better way of communicating, and to bring comfort to oneself and often to the other.

Context

Rancour feeds the ego and pride. To harbour resentment by ruminating over history is to torture oneself. It is also playing at being one's own tormentor, positioning oneself as a victim, and sometimes as a vengeful vigilante.

To refuse to forgive is to cling to the past, in a refusal to move forward, to live and to love.

The path to forgiveness is often like feeling one's way around in the dark. This protocol aims to make it clearer, more conscious, **simpler** and more **accessible**.

Do not set too specific or immediate a goal. The process can take place over several stages. It takes time for important issues, but it holds many gifts and a few nice surprises.

Usage

This process can be followed to forgive those who are present or those who are absent, those who are alive or those who have passed away,

parents, spouses, children, friends, teachers, colleagues, superiors, rulers...

It is also aimed at forgiving Life... and oneself.

It can also lead to asking for forgiveness directly from the person concerned.

This approach compiles and reshapes steps identified in different books or teachings. It presents four preceding phases to forgiveness in order to clarify the situation, and two additional phases to forgiveness, for a total of seven steps.

It is useful to begin with a **meditation**, to focus the mind and increase its clarity. Ideally, each step will be experienced in a meditative attitude, in order to go through it as lucidly and deeply as possible. Starting by getting settled correctly, sitting with your back straight, aware of your body and breathing, helps you to find yourself again.

Forgiving in 7 Steps

1 - The basic situation

The first thing is to look at the conflict situation, to describe it clearly, as factually and objectively as possible.

To move towards lucidity and understanding, let the situation, the atmosphere, come back up. Watch the film unfold. Hear the noises, the words... What happened?

Draw out the **objective**, proven, tangible **facts**, with as much neutrality as possible, without comment or interpretation.

Naturally, **emotions** follow. They are sometimes located in the body, which is why it is important to pay attention to your feelings. Writing helps to identify them.

One emotion can hide another, i.e. anger for example can mask sadness or fear.

While doing your best to remain a spectator, also take note of the thoughts, and judgments, criticisms and **reproaches** that are coming up. You can simply memorise them, but writing them down allows you to see them better.

Judgements reflect beliefs, translation filters: if someone does this then it always means...

Judgements put people and circumstances into categories. They lock them up into boxes that are simplifying, reassuring, but above all imprisoning.

2 - The need

Returning to the basic situation, combined with meditation, brings one back to objectivity, and moves aside the emotional and mental veil, which often hides the real issue.

The next key question is: what is the unmet need?

It is expressed independently of anyone else.

My need is my own. I don't have to seek to compel anyone to meet it.

Need is neither a desire, nor a preference, but a necessity.

Example:

Need: I need to hydrate.

Desire: I would like a tea.

Preference: Jasmine tea rather than bergamot.

The proper formulation of the need allows one to take **responsibility** for one's life and regain one's power. A need is personal and does not involve the other.

If you hear "I need you to ...", you already know that there is an evasion of responsibility, or even an attempt at manipulation (on your part or on the part of another). It is then necessary to return to the real need.

The clear identification of the need leads to the construction of a perspective and a resolution.

In the choice of strategy to meet one's need, urgency and negotiability are key criteria. It is important to remember that not all needs are compatible and not all will necessarily be met. There is prioritisation.

Example: I am tired, hungry and need physical activity. It is possible to choose rest, food or sport depending on the time available or the priority of the moment.

See the list of needs below.

3 - The request

The **clarification** of the need allows one to formulate a request. This is a key element, without which the identification of the need would remain mute, powerless.

What would I have wanted? How would the situation be in a better world ...?

It must be realistic and concrete. The result will be verifiable. This makes it possible to avoid chimaeras or illusory generalities such as: I want to be younger, I want them to love me...

It can be addressed to the other or to oneself, or even to the universe.

The expected result is achievable, and if possible verifiable.

The request is negotiable! The question to ask oneself is: "Am I ready to accept a refusal? Am I ready to look for a solution that also suits the other person?"

Examples of a request to the other:

Request: In the future, would you agree not to make noise in the morning?

Negotiation: moving towards a mutually satisfactory solution for each.

In the morning, you can take your shower, and then put on the headphones for music (not the radio at full blast).

Request: Would you be willing to meet this week?

Negotiation can go towards: see each other next week or phone each other this week...

The request turned towards oneself, can look like: "I ask myself to do such an action, in such a way, within such a time frame...", "I promise myself not to say yes anymore when I think no."

Examples of self-request:

Next time... :

- I will not let my emotions get the better of me.
- When the phone rings and I'm not free, I won't answer it anymore.
- I will allow enough time to catch my train.
- I will not accept to do a favour that I am not comfortable with...

Do not confuse request, whim and demand.

Whim

I want lemon tea now.

I want us to meet now.

A sense of precision or urgency is usually characteristic of a whim.

Demand

If refusal leads to a negative emotion (frustration, anger...) then the request was a demand and not an open request.

The demand does not respect the freedom of the other person and makes the other person pay for a possible refusal by blackmail or by affective or emotional punishment, such as guilt, reproach, or a domestic scene.

Frustration, anger, sulking, even sadness, indicate an immature aspect and an attachment to the form of response given to a need or want.

Obligation does not leave room for love.

4 - Welcoming and meaning

Often, the situation no longer exists, only a memory persists. However, the emotions remain, very real. Making a drama out of it increases suffering and prevents learning.

Meditation helps to gain perspective, to **calm the mind**, and to **take stock** of the situation. To reject circumstances is to cling to them. This only prolongs them and slows down the evolution, the resolution.

It is better to say to yourself: This is my reality at the moment, okay. *It will pass too!*

According to the great principle of meditation, welcoming opens up to experience and learning. If I dare to consider that everything that happens to me can *ultimately* contribute to my good, I will seek the **gift** of the situation!

Some questions to ask yourself:

- What can I learn or heal through this experience?
- In which cases do I act like the other?
- On the stage of life, which character does the other play in my scenario?
- Is it an already identified pattern? A repetitive attitude?
- Is there a cause, an unconscious motivation that leads me to behave as I did, or to be in this circumstance?
- What is the hidden benefit?

Hidden benefit

If we consider that things do not happen by chance, that we have a creative power over our lives, it is interesting to ask **why** I am in this situation, especially if it reoccurs regularly.

Beyond the visible disadvantages, there is undoubtedly a **self-interest** in being in this situation.

Example for someone who is ill: apart from the multiple inconveniences, the hidden benefit may be to be able to be pampered, to see loved ones, to rest or have leisure activities, to escape from work or school...

Another example, more specific, but frequent: provoking a break-up

with a loved one, makes it possible to avoid the emotional intensity generated by the relationship or to stop the fear that the relationship will end. The unconscious mind has chosen sadness over apprehension and stress.

Mirror effect

Often the situation brings the additional gift of knowing oneself better. The mirror effect invites us to contemplate the other person to see which aspects of myself they reflect.

In general, what bothers the other person about me is what they **reject** about themselves. I will then look at what, about myself, is disturbing for the other person, or others, in order to potentially improve myself.

I will also see in the other person what bothers me and what I do not accept in myself, so that I can know myself better, welcome what can be perfectible, and transform it, improve it if possible.

5 - Forgiveness

The previous steps help to gain distance, to see the situation better from a **global** perspective, and to clear the emotional fog.

Instead of posing as an avenging vigilante, I meditate again to gain a bird's eye view.

Let he who is without sin cast the first stone. Bible (John 8:7)

Forgiving the other

Properly speaking, in forgiveness, if reproach is aimed at someone else, it is recommended to start by turning towards them in intention, possibly visualising them in front of me and asking myself:

- What did the other person feel? How do I imagine they feel now?
- Can I see their suffering?
- Do I recognise the right of the other person to have fears, wounds...?

- Do I recognise their right to make mistakes? To a defensive or protective reaction, even if they have to learn to manage them?
- Can I admit that the other may have done their best, according to their history, values, suffering, consciousness, and unconsciousness?
- What was their need? What is their current need?
- Can I recognise the humanity of the other, with their strengths and weaknesses?
- Do I see that, in this, they resemble me? Am I not also a *tormentor* sometimes?

I am probably unaware of the real **cause**, the injury or the weakness, that made them behave like they did, and perhaps they too are unaware of it.

The other might have acted in the same way with someone else. Maybe I was passing by and got caught in the crossfire; it was not aimed at me?

And even if it were a personal offence, will I continue to carry it for much longer? For what purpose?

Gradually, I let go of my attachment to my wound, to my entitlement, to my resentment, even to my vengeance.

It is a **decision** to move towards **understanding**, and eventually to compassion.

The *tormentor* sometimes suffers as much as the *victim*. And it is not unusual for the roles to alternate. Seeing the similarities between the other person and myself, allows me to reject them less and to soften my heart.

Stepping out of the victim role reveals one's own wrongs. It is then easier to go and ask for forgiveness directly to the person concerned, without waiting for them to ask for forgiveness first. It is a mark of humility or maturity to take the first step.

To understand is not to justify, nor to validate, nor to accept as normal. The relationship with the other, and with oneself, will probably no longer be the same. The project is peace, within oneself and towards the other, with or without the other.

I can **reconcile** myself with the *other person's soul*, while deciding not to see them again, because a friendship doesn't seem possible, or a relationship no longer makes sense to me.

To forgive is to decide to leave the past in the past, to bury the hatchet, and to lay down the emotional burden.

Meditation helps to **welcome** the other as they are.

Even in the absence of the other person, it is possible to ask them for forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a path that is travelled as the ability to love grows.

Forgiving yourself

An essential and delicate moment arrives. I face myself, I dive into myself.

I am looking for the answers to the questions:

- Have I ever acted in a similar way?
- Do I give myself the right to make mistakes?
- What are my escape-aggression mechanisms, to defend myself, to protect myself?
- Can I bear in the other (specifically or in general) what I reject in myself? And vice versa (even if I, alone, am involved in this ARC).
- Where does this rejection come from?

I scrutinise what I might be reproaching myself for. Perhaps I am not satisfied with the way I have managed to:

- guarantee my integrity
- assert myself, command respect
- set my limits, express my needs
- know what to say, how to act.

I forgive myself for having entered into a conflict, as well as for not having been able to enter it. I forgive myself for having acted, reacted, for having allowed myself to be manipulated, attacked...

I probably did my best, but anyway, the past is past. The right question is: "What do I learn from it?"

The answer will lead to a request to oneself, a **promise** for the future.

Meditation leads to looking at oneself with kindness and compassion, to the point of forgiving oneself for having entered into conflict, for not having succeeded in doing better.

To forgive oneself is also to trust in the request one has made to oneself: I will not do it again, I will not let myself be manipulated, insulted...

Internal Conflict

The process is similar. It is applied, in this case, as if a reproach is to oneself. There is then a **distancing** to better observe and understand oneself.

The dialogue is no longer conducted in front of the other, but in front of oneself.

Forgiving life

Finally, turn to life.

There is often unconscious reproach: how could you do this, to me?

Holding onto reproach would lead to a loss of confidence in the future and repeated victimisation.

Do not hesitate to start a **dialogue**, even if it means both asking and answering the questions.

A good way to forgive life is to look beyond appearances to find the gift, the learning, the lesson.

In general, remembering the gifts received helps in finding a good perspective and returning to gratitude.

6 - Blessing

Blessing results from, or can facilitate, a peaceful and **kind** state of mind. That is why it may succeed forgiveness, or sometimes predispose to it.

It manifests itself readily in meditation through positive thoughts, or

by sending love, tenderness, a perfume, a colour... or by visualising, for example, flowers, butterflies, light, a shower of glitter... depending on the inspiration of the moment.

It is offered freely to others, because they need it. It is also a way of thanking them for playing their part so well on the stage of life's theatre, for having delivered their lines in my film, for helping me to learn and grow. The blessing wishes them **well on a fulfilling journey**.

It is also addressed to oneself, simply to **honour** and recognise oneself, and even to thank oneself for the **courage** to face reality with as much lucidity as possible.

It is a way of congratulating oneself on the determination to face one's emotions and wounds, to go through suffering, to forgive, and finally to renounce a grudge in order to choose love.

7 - Gratitude

Finally, a time of **joyful and serene celebration** welcomes this sense of **release** from the burden of emotional tension. Celebration warms the heart.

It invites one to see the positive side of things, to find meaning in one's existence, to appreciate life with gratitude.

Identify the **gift** of the lived experience.

For example, I learned to:

- forgive, **love further**.
- communicate, build a more harmonious relationship, with someone and/or with myself.
- understand the stakes of situations and interactions, decentre myself, consider the suffering of the other (instead of focusing on my own), reconcile with myself.
- set my limits, formulate a clear request, respect myself, dare to speak up, take a stand, promise myself to manage circumstances and relationships better.
- build my inner peace, my **emotional security**, build a fulfilling **relational future...**

Finally, a feeling of gratitude can be born towards Life, which sent me this situation to learn to love better, in order to be more **fulfilled** and in **harmony**. It allowed me to go through this experience to be **stronger, wiser, happier**.

The drama has changed into comedy, so that I can recognise and welcome the gift, which always contributes in better taking my place in the great dance of life.

Gratitude to the other who played a role in my learning scenario.
Gratitude to myself for having walked this path.

Integration

Then comes the time of integration, to "tidy up", to perpetuate the gift. It is a time of absorption, of retention, to imprint emotions or understandings, and to remember them.

By contemplating the path walked, this time is used to **memorise** the teaching, the teachings, and to promise oneself to change. It allows one to prepare for the next time, just in case...

Writing serves to clarify and to keep track, to be able to reread and retrieve what might well be forgotten. I like inking on paper, with gestures and calligraphy.

Meditation helps a lot in this process, by anchoring in the body, to act appropriately, and to find the right attitude.

Finally, depending on the situation and the emotional implications, certain stages can be omitted or, on the contrary, developed.

This overall process can be followed to **forgive all of one's relationships** along one's life path, those present or absent, those who have passed away, parents, spouses, children, friends, teachers, colleagues, superiors, rulers, the Divine, and especially oneself.

List of needs

A classification and prioritisation of needs has been established by Maslow (1916-1972, USA). It is represented by a pyramid, from the base to the top.

Here, each need is associated with an area of the body, to potentially help identify and clarify the need according to the feelings experienced during meditation. There is no prioritisation.

Sensations can also be associated with emotions.



Comprehension: head

Love, relationships: thorax

Self-esteem: solar plexus

Basic physiology: belly

Safety, protection: pelvis

On the other hand, Tony Robbins and Chloé Madanes do not classify needs in order of necessity, but consider more the specificity of the individual, their globality and the situation:

- certainty,
- uncertainty/variety,
- meaning/importance,
- love and connection,

and two spiritual needs:

- growing/evolving,
- contributing.

Numerous other lists of varying length have been compiled (Manfred Max-Neef, Michael Anthony...).

Marshall Rosenberg's caring communication or Nonviolent Communication (NVC) has developed a more detailed list that can support an understanding and clarification of one's own needs.

The list presented here is not exhaustive. It has been compiled from my own perspective.

There is no ranking, as priorities are individual and circumstantial.

Physical body

Air, water, food
Safety, housing
Trust
Physical activity
Rest, sleep, recovery
Harmony
Softness, sensuality, chocolate 😊

Emotional body

Love, tenderness
Kindness, compassion, empathy
Relationships, belonging
Solitude
Sharing: giving, receiving
Contact, sexuality, sensuality
Pleasure, satisfaction
Parties, celebrations, joy

Mental body

Comprehension, meaning, hope, projects
Learning, fulfilment
Peace, tranquillity

Choice, freedom
Poetry, culture, art, aesthetics
Self-respect: setting limits, self-assertion
Communication, dialogue
Humour, play

Spiritual body

Connection to Life
Truth
Nature
Beauty
Creativity, expression
Pardon: forgiving
Grieving process
Gratitude
Wonder...

Respect

Respect is not presented as a need, strictly speaking, but is rather approached as an ability to set expectations, and even to defend oneself.

The notion is cultural and individual.

In truth, I need to respect myself and learn to express my needs.

I cannot make the other person responsible for my needs, including respect.

My need is to implement the means available to me so that the other person respects my values, my functioning, my autonomy...

Paradoxically, I would lose my autonomy if I set the need for the other to respect me. I am co-responsible for what I consider to be their respect.

The real need is to know and be able to set **limits**, to clearly indicate what is experienced as disrespect, and to negotiate what is desired and acceptable to each. That is why, in the list, self-respect, **self-assertion** and safety are featured.

The difficulty tied with respect is the fear of rejection, judgement and conflict.

For example: for some people it is disrespectful to blow one's nose in front of someone (in Japan for example).

Instead of being reproachful: "You are being disrespectful to me", a formulation could be: "I do not feel respected when you blow your nose in front of me. Could you go into another room?"

The negotiation can go towards: "Would you be content if I turn my back to you when I blow my nose... How do you feel about my suggestion?"

Each person considers when the situation becomes acceptable to them, in order to find the best way to live with each other. Respect then becomes a co-creation.

In reality, the need and the difficulty often lie in respecting oneself.

Emotional indicators

Especially in a discussion, a few signs indicate that a need is not being met, that one feels insecure, or angry:

Body :

- physical restlessness, desire to move,
- change in colour: paleness or redness,
- cold or hot, sweating,
- weakness, dizziness.

Speech:

- the voice is higher,
- volume increases,
- faster word flow,
- cuts off the other.

When these signals come on, it is useful to have the reflex to slow down the rate of speech, lower the voice, and re-centre oneself.

Sometimes, it is necessary to know when to take a break, or even to withdraw and postpone the discussion. It is a good time to go and meditate a little.

Blessing

From the Latin *bene dicere*, literally: to speak well of, and ultimately, to be in kindness.

Blessing expresses a positive attitude, a caring intention, an impulse to wish the other person happiness, a form of love.

It is a way of sharing, of opening one's heart, of connecting with others, individually or collectively. It is often addressed preferentially to those we love. It can also be directed towards all those who need it, even those who are further away, in order to widen our capacity for love.

The Simple Art of Blessing, by Pierre Pradervand, talks about this very well.

Blessing is not limited by time and space. That is why it is also useful for reconciliation, with oneself and with another.

Here again the meditator takes the time to change their position, their point of view on circumstances, people, and actions, to look at them calmly, unencumbered by emotions and judgements.

Blessing leads onto the path of welcoming the other, by offering them one's kindness, without expecting anything from them.

In meditation, the art of blessing can be expressed according to one's own creativity, for example by visualising a shower of petals, feathers, glitter, gold, kisses, light...

The *gift* can be presented in the form of a breath, a colour, a perfume, an incense, a flower, a leaf, a pearl, a song...

Some address words, a mantra, a symbol, a landscape, an atmosphere...

Meditation develops many forms of blessing. The practical part of this book offers a variety of suggestions.

Blessing does not replace the kind act, it predisposes to it.

Blessing invites love in action!

Service

Service is a manifestation of love in action. Meditation helps a great deal in serving with pleasure and lightness. In fact it allows the transformation of a chore into an active meditation.

This time offered to the other is also used for oneself, to *dance with life*, to have fun in movement, to fill oneself with the feeling of giving, of being thus in connection, in relationship with someone through an action.

It is a change of attitude that makes life completely different. When you are new to this practice, meditative centring requires you to go a little slower, but it makes an activity more efficient and time is quickly regained. Not being distracted by other thoughts, but being present to what you are doing, there is less error, breakage, waste, less back and forth.

This attitude of kindness and meditative consciousness can also be experienced at work, at home, on all occasions, including towards oneself, and even towards animals.

There is more happiness in giving than in receiving. Paraphrasing from the Bible (Acts 20:35).

Meditation offers a meta-positional view, in which it is possible to observe oneself and better savour each situation.

Serving becomes a pleasure, in which the gift is not an object, but an action, a talent, a skill, a knowledge, a disposition, a presence.

Service is one of the ways of yoga, called *Seva*, to get out of navel-gazing, out of the pride of believing oneself to be the centre of the world, out of the restlessness to respond to one's desires and the rush to satisfy one's impulses. Service leads to the gradual dissolution of the ego and illusion, to find the meaning of one's life.

Meditation allows us to clarify our intentions. If I act in the hope of receiving something in return, I am bartering, selling labour. This normal activity allows for exchange and interaction, but it is no longer a question of service, in the sense of a free, disinterested act, detached from the fruit of the action.

Do not expect thanks from the flower you water, but rejoice in its blossoming!

Service, on the other hand, brings a very specific joy, which is accompanied by peace, in the awareness of having done a just and kind act.

It is important to be clear about one's motivations, to know what one is experiencing, barter or service, and what one is going to receive, money or serenity. Both have their function, but do not replace each other. Let's be clear.

It is a genuine way of learning to love, seeking only the good of the other person and whose main reward is to feel one's heart opening, filling up with happiness and serenity.

Meditation teaches one to welcome what is, to savour the present moment, and helps one not to become attached to the benefits gained from an action, to a result that does not yet exist.

If I feed my cat to get its affection, if I educate my children so that they pay for my retirement, if I take care of the elderly for my own gratification, I am likely to be greatly disappointed, to inflict suffering upon myself, that will grow bigger due to the frustration that I will feel, all of which will ruin the relationship, even if I try not to express it.

Service does not mean forgetting one's own needs, on the contrary, it is offering one's sensitivity to others as well, giving meaning to one's life, in order to be happier and better connected to life.

Meditation facilitates an awareness of what one is truly ready to offer: to whom, in what way, when? By avoiding becoming drained and exhausted, it instead enables one to live fully the satisfaction of a balanced, useful and joyful life.

Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray. Sathya Sai Baba

Attentive listening is possible thanks to a good mental calm, and a mind focused on the other, freed from its own preoccupations. This specific service opens hearts to outpouring, gives importance to the other and fulfils a vital need for authentic connection.

By settling down in tranquillity, the meditator can better discern all of the needs around them, near and far, and make themselves available to serve, to savour contributing to the well-being of another, to find meaning in their life, to be part of the community, to be in constructive relationships.

There is so much to do on earth, we might as well do it with joy.

Fruits

The fruits of meditation ripen over time. They are many and varied, and are harvested in all areas of existence. In previous chapters, we have mentioned freedom, emotional management, happiness, courage, perseverance, humility, determination, welcoming oneself and others, forgiveness, the art of blessing, love and service. We will now look at a few more.

Let's start with a physiological aspect, the resting state of the nervous system. Brain waves change during meditation, entering a state of modified consciousness. Thoughts become progressively calmer, over the course of practice. Falling asleep becomes easier, and sleep is deeper, more restful.

Because an hour of meditation is well worth an hour of sleep, some people easily shorten their night in order to meditate before going to bed and they are not more tired, quite the contrary.

In the morning, meditation helps one to be calmer, more focused of course, but also more dynamic, more efficient, and as a consequence, one tires oneself less.

This is why some companies facilitate meditation courses for their employees, so that there is a better working atmosphere, more productivity, fewer mistakes, fewer absences...

Likewise in some schools, not only for concentration and ease of learning, meditation is also used to promote calmness and respect for others.

In some hospitals and treatment centres, it is useful for reducing anxiety, calming certain behavioural disorders, increasing self-esteem and regaining strength.

A positive effect on health is also found in the area of diet. Meditation appeases stress, emotional lack and other factors of dietary imbalance. When calmer, more aware of the messages of one's body, it is easier to know one's needs, to feel the sensations of one's stomach, in order to better adjust one's diet, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

One of the unexpected benefits of meditation is the elimination of chores. It is possible to meditate in advance on household or professional tasks, for example, to visualise them, to prepare oneself for them, a little like precise sporting movements made by high-level athletes in training.

When the time comes to carry them out, the body and mind are already prepared to respond, to be more efficient, less stressed, and to experience it as a game, with pleasure!

It is possible to have a meditative attitude in the accomplishment of daily activities, and that simple, even boring tasks become times of revitalisation. It is an ergonomic practice to feel one's own breathing, to be attentive to what one is doing, aware of one's feelings and body, while washing dishes or vacuuming, during a team meeting or a bike ride.

Meditation allows one to observe one's own reactions and those of others, in order to look at situations while being centred, without identifying with one's emotions. It teaches one to be sensitive, to welcome everything that happens within oneself, including what is painful or gives rise to shame, in order to make room for serenity and true joy.

So, there is no drama. Suffering is not a drama. Happiness is rooted in oneself.

Relationships flourish in authenticity, empathy and understanding. It is possible to welcome oneself and to welcome the other person as they are, without reproach and without wanting to change them.

The lucidity offered by meditation indicates the way out of the *Bermuda triangle*, where the actors are in turn: victim, tormentor or saviour. The roles are unmasked.

The players realise the painful farce of this dramatic comedy and decide to stop tearing each other apart, as in Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*, but rather to help each other.

I have been able to harvest some of these fruits over the years. I would specifically mention patience, however imperfect it may be, but so important in relationships. It has been so useful in raising my children, even as they have become adults. It helps me with my friends, at

work, and in many situations. What would have made me boil or explode was either taken straight away with a smile, or quickly brought back to its rightful proportion. A lot of unnecessary hurt and arguments were thus avoided.

Meditation invites one to position oneself both as an inner observer of one's reactions, emotions and thoughts, and as an outer observer, as if looking at the situation from an aeroplane. It allows one to better appreciate the beauty of life and of its gifts.

I see with the eyes of the heart, I listen to its voice, I find my way.

Awakening is perhaps simply seeing beyond illusions, realising that there is another reality behind appearances. Gaining perspective allows one to dis-identify oneself from a character, from a role. To awaken is also to find meaning in life, in one's own life.

Some speak of a sudden awakening, others of a gradual awakening. A time of adaptation is perhaps necessary for the eyes to bear the bright light of knowledge and consciousness.

The spiritual path lasts a lifetime and I hope that the ability to evolve, to learn, to grow in wisdom, lasts until the last breath.

In the following chapters, we will touch on some more fruits: intuition, gratitude and wonder, joy and celebration.

Intuition

Intuition is a precious fruit of meditation. It is compared to a GPS for navigating oneself through the forest of circumstances and the fog of illusions which we have already mentioned. The little voice within knows how to avoid bumping into obstacles, how to steer, how to behave, how to choose. It lavishes one with advice and encouragement.

Meditation is a path to intuition. It predisposes one to be in inner silence, to welcome what is, without judgement, and to centre oneself in one's heart to listen to the intuition there. Its messages express themselves in words, images, feelings or simply by direct knowledge.

A good way to learn to listen to the wisdom of the heart is to develop inner dialogue. To tame the language of intuition, ask questions and listen to your body, your sensations. If you know someone who has reliable intuition, it is reassuring to check your intuition with them.

Otherwise, ask questions inwardly, the answers to which will be verified later. It is an exercise in patience, trial and error, taming and perseverance, to be experienced as a game that can yield a nice gift.

People who are used to listening to their intuition possess the capacity of a pipe or a cable that lets information pass through, as objectively as possible, in a relaxed happy-go-lucky attitude, i.e. without controlling, just by listening to what is being lived. South American shamans compare themselves to hollow trees, like tubes, with their heads in the sky and their roots in the earth.

Such people can guide the learning of inner listening.

People who are more sensitive perceive their intuition more easily. On the other hand, they are also more exposed to suffering from the violence of the world. This is why meditation can help them to manage their sensitivity so that a positive ability to perceive does not become a burden, but remains a tool to better embrace reality, understand others, and adapt to one's environment in order to contribute to its improvement.

In the yoga tradition, meditation allows one to go as far as clairvoyance or other paranormal abilities, called *siddhi*. This is not the purpose of meditation. The search for acquiring these can be a trap. It is preferable to develop empathy and kindness as a priority, so that intuition may serve life.

A story comes to mind. A master who was close to death summoned his closest disciple. He said to him, "As I am going to die, if you wish, I can pass on all my *siddhis* to you."

The disciple thought for a moment and asked him, "Master, will this be useful to me on my spiritual path?" The master replied, "That is why you are my closest disciple, because you have asked the right question.

No, it will be an obstacle, because then the pride of showing them will lurk. When the heart is ready, if you need them to accomplish your task, they will be given to you. If you were to receive them beforehand, they would feed your vanity and prevent you from opening your heart and mind."

This theme is also adopted in the *Star Wars* films, with the training of the warriors of justice and the wisdom of the teacher.

A strong mind is an advantage in organising, solving complex problems, understanding and memorising. It can be an obstacle to intuition, by expressing itself louder than the heart.

The mind naturally tends to face outward, towards what it can grasp. To each element, each *organ*, its use.

It is not an enemy at all. It is indispensable to daily life. It becomes problematic when it is used by the ego and takes up all the space in a disorderly agitation. Meditation will calm it down and teach it to collaborate and to notably let the heart and body have their say.

The mind will analyse the map, intuition will enable the journey!

The meditator learns to observe what they think, without identifying with the thoughts themselves: I am not my thoughts, I do not go along with my thoughts. Gradually, the quantity, dispersion, agitation and hubbub of one's own thoughts diminish, while the speed and efficiency of the mind increase.

When put at the service of life, and intuition, the mind enables creativity and moving into action.

The right positioning in relation to intuition is simplicity. Letting oneself be guided by the voice of the heart, by considering oneself to be the receiver. The radio is important, without it there is no music that plays, but it remembers that it does not create the music, but transmits it as best as it can, to play it and let it resonate all around, manifesting in attitude and actions.

The meditator evolves through a path of introspection, consciousness and humility in order to shed themselves internally of fears, judgements and limitations of thought. They open themselves up to intuition and truth. To become a wider channel of life, rather than seeking to expand, the meditator empties themselves of their ego.

Intuition leads to the freedom of enlightened choice. It enables one to live in harmony with the flow of life.

It is no longer me speaking, it is the intuition speaking through me. Thus I can be carried, guided, by intuition.

Gratitude and Wonder

There are sometimes great lessons in small circumstances. Small things can bring great happiness. Meditation helps to discover them. Gratitude is born of the ability to discover the gifts and wonders of life.

Gratitude is a source of happiness and serenity.

Wonder is a faculty developed through the contemplative aspect of meditation. Wonder leads to gratitude and happiness. It is the path guided by the innocence of childhood, the ability to rediscover, poetry, the eye of the artist, the tourist, the outsider.

This is a formidable virtue, too often forgotten.

Meditation with closed eyes invites inner images or memories. Creativity and imagination thus find their full strength and space to transport us into a nourishing wonderment.

In addition, open-eyed meditation allows us to contemplate the beauty that surrounds us: a flight of birds, a sunrise or sunset, a landscape, an animal, a plant, a mineral, an object of art or of everyday life.

It is also possible to meditate on one's own image, on a person, or even to look at one another. Sometimes the gaze is turned towards the very small, a blade of grass, an insect, or towards the very large, the clouds, the stars.

Traditionally, the practitioner turns to a flame, a spiritual representation, a mandala (an often complex, geometric and coloured drawing, inviting to meditation), a symbol, a mountain.

The meditator can pay attention to music, a song, or simply the sounds of the city, nature, or birdsong.

They can choose one of their sensations and watch it unfold as if they were experiencing it for the first time. In this way, the meditator opens up a path towards the discovery of a renewed sensitivity.

Japanese tradition has codified the art of woody perfumes in kōdō. The West has developed very elaborate and refined techniques.

Meditation welcomes all scents, and chooses to settle on the one that suits it, from those of nature to those of city life.

Meditative walking in the forest, for example, combines the beauty of nature, its scents, the sounds of the wind and animals, and the sensations of the body's movements with the ground beneath the feet. The sources of admiration and recognition are constantly renewed.

Amongst the opportunities to revel, let's not forget flavours. The meal can become meditative. It is very enjoyable to savour a food, a dish, even a simple one, as if it were something new, a precious dish. Gradually, the ability to eat consciously develops, to rediscover the pleasure of eating, the texture, the smell, the taste, even the aesthetics.

Pleasure regained, wonder enhances the time spent tasting. In this gustatory meditation, it is not the quantity that counts, but the attention and gratitude. It is no longer a question of absorbing calories to survive, but of savouring the present moment. This meditation is satisfied with healthy food in moderate proportions.

In this spirit, traditional Chinese medicine advises to drink what we eat, because the food has been so thoroughly chewed, and to eat what we drink, because the liquid has been so thoroughly savoured. The Japanese tradition has raised the preparation and tasting of tea to a high level of ceremony, a true art. It is one of the delights that sates my gratitude daily.

Food meditation offers the opportunity to remember with gratitude where food comes from, to connect oneself with the earth, the sun, the wind, the rain, and hence all forces of nature.

To eat is also to absorb their energy, *prana* in Sanskrit, literally: force in constant movement. I would translate it as: that which nourishes and strengthens vitality. Ultimately, everything is light, or energy (ref. Einstein).

The meditative meal is also a potential moment of gratitude for all those who have contributed to this food being on my plate, from the farmer for example, to the shopkeeper, or the baker.

We can also think of those who have fed us in the past.

Various activities can equally benefit from my awareness, my gratitude, my admiration, such as cooking, washing up, cleaning, tidying, decorating, watering plants...

Beauty is the food of the soul.

All forms of beauty are conducive to meditation. Wonder relishes the magnificence of nature as much as the arts, from painting, sculpture and dance to poetry, architecture, calligraphy and music. The meditation of ikebana, the Japanese floral art mentioned earlier, is the conjunction of human and nature.

Meditation opens one up to the admiration of a new world, to rediscover what habit had erased.

So, let us take a meditative moment each evening to look back on the events of the day. It is possible to record them.

For years, and even now, I write a few lines recounting the gifts of the day, what has amazed me, for what I am grateful, in a *gratitude journal*. It is an intimate book of dialogue with life that guides me towards joy and celebration, in wonder and gratitude.

Celebration

After having listed the aforementioned benefits of meditation, one can only rejoice. That is why this non-exhaustive list of the gifts of meditation finishes off with this chapter.

Meditation works over time, layer upon layer, to achieve more relaxation and depth, and to know oneself better. The path to the Self is increasingly unobstructed and easy to come back to, more natural. It leads to harmony and a good mood.

It happens, sometimes, either during meditation or at the end of a session, that laughter will rise like a wave. The invitation is to express it freely, even if it means welcoming *an epidemic of laughter*. It's good for morale and health!

Joy is an important positive indicator. In Chinese medicine, joy is the expression of the heart.

A specific source of joy can be found particularly in meditations which, thanks to breathing, visualising the circulation, being present in one's pelvis, one's belly or one's torso... encourage the sexual energies to rise towards the heart centre.

These practices, carried out alone or in partnership, considerably enhance physical, moral and mental fitness, towards a gentle and permanent joy, not circumstantial, which means independent of the external situation.

Meditation can extend to any activity, including sexual activities in a tantric approach. It increases the presence of what is being experienced, in oneself of course, but also in the other. It enables one to reach even greater states of communion, ecstasy and freedom.

Otherwise, joy can come simply from meditating on a pleasant subject such as a soothing landscape, a happy memory, a flower...

It readily arises when the meditation also turns towards others, for example by offering in intention flower petals, light or tenderness. This stage appears at the end of several of the meditations, as the reader will discover.

In meditation groups, I quite like to open a time for free expression. The happiness shared is thus amplified. Each can say a few words about their experience. It is an opportunity for me to answer a possible question and to relate the theory based on the practice, in the moment.

What has just been experienced is evanescent and can quickly dissipate in the return to everyday life. Putting it into words allows one to see the riches, the *pearls*, the lessons, the gifts and to guarantee their continuity. Sometimes even writing them down helps to amass them, especially if you are alone.

It is a form of celebration, in the sense of recognising the value of one's experience. If one is in a group, the intention is to *celebrate*, to rejoice together by recounting what is alive in you, what is happening inside. The positive aspects thus highlighted lead one to a state of gratitude and joy.

While speaking or listening, the meditation continues. One is asked to be present when listening to others. It is an exercise to prepare oneself to be able to meditate even in day to day interactions.

Serene joy is perhaps one of the most precious benefits of meditation. It enables one to savour the delights of life and become aware of its gifts.

Love

It is said it makes the world go round. No doubt we came into this great workshop to learn to love. What better *raison d'être*?

It is love that can motivate us to meditate; hence the title of this book. In the proposed meditations, it is only mentioned from time to time, perhaps out of modesty, in order to be more specific and not to abase it. However, its qualities are omnipresent: gentleness, gratitude, forgiveness, welcoming, patience...

I believe that life generally brings us what is good for us, even if it sometimes takes time to become aware of it beyond appearances and see the fruits of trust and evolution ripen.

The rejection of life's teachings leads directly to suffering, bitterness, sadness, selfishness, greed, fear of others, revenge, malice...

On the contrary, it is up to us to choose if we want to learn from circumstances the languages of love: compassion, patience, forgiveness, availability, care - both small and large, generosity, tenderness, gratitude...

Everyone wants love, but every one is afraid of it and runs away from it.

Love is also a matter of decisions.

Do we need a reason to love someone? Meditation helps one to see the other person from an appeased space, also to discern their qualities and sufferings.

Meditation inclines one to choose to love.

There are different levels of love, which can then be written with or without a capital letter, which sometimes requires talking about *loves*, to the point of asking if it is still love.

The opportunities to speak the languages of love are many, to others and to oneself, some of which are more appropriate depending on the context.

How do you express your love?

How Love Expresses Itself

Instinctive: maternal, paternal, filial, fraternal, family in the tribal sense, with certain close friends and relatives.

Possessive: passionate, with a notion of survival, subjugation, fear, lack, dependence.

Sexual: sexual urges, desires, pursuing orgasm, but also intimacy, sharing, up to sacred sexuality.

Tender: expressing a desire for connection, respect, gentleness, thoughtfulness, cuddling.

Friendship: sharing, confidence, trust, mutual support, loyalty, spending time together, playing and laughing together.

Kindness: taking care, looking after someone, pampering someone, being attentive, being considerate, seeking the happiness of the other person, their true needs (not necessarily to please them).

Welcome: loving the other as they are. Hence the refrain in the meditations, *I welcome myself as I am*. Rejecting neither the other, nor oneself, nor the circumstances, in order to help the other's fulfilment, their improvement.

Service, dedication: acting for the good of others, up to and including humanitarian action. It means caring, carrying, transporting, cleaning, tidying up, feeding... and in general performing tasks for the other, in their place or with them. It is love in action par excellence.

Generosity: materialised through gifts, but not only. It is also manifested by a generosity of the heart, investing oneself, one's time, one's attention, in the pleasure of giving, of pleasing.

Equity: hand in hand with generosity, in the search for fairness, for what is right for each person at a given time, for balance, in material and in action.

Confidence: believing in the other person, in their capacity to improve themselves, to evolve, to love. It is seeing the good and

the beauty in the other, the seed before the fruit.

Sincerity: authenticity, truth, the basis of: trust and closeness, intimacy, lasting quality of love, fluidity of the relationship.

Support: valuing who the other is and what they do, what they have, what they bring. Being able to recognise and emphasise the qualities of the other person, encouraging them, accompanying them in their challenges and daily life. Taking an interest in their lives, participating, helping.

Respect: listening to and welcoming the other person and their needs, limits, functioning and requests. This does not mean doing everything that pleases them, because self-respect is also a guarantee of solidity in the relationship.

Patience: giving the right to make mistakes, giving the time to learn, to start over even with mistakes. It means welcoming the other person with all their weaknesses, in their entirety.

Freedom: following respect, unconditional love, selflessness, tolerance, perseverance, patience, open-mindedness.

Forgiveness: a high form of love that gives the right to make mistakes, not necessarily to renew the same relationship, but to free oneself and the other from the burden of guilt, reproach and remorse.

Compassion: from empathy up to the ability to connect with what the other is experiencing, sharing one's feelings up to the impulse to support or rescue.

Blessing: wishing one well, sending kindness, positive thoughts.

Gratitude: the ability to see the positive, to be grateful, to be humble, to be amazed. To not consider the present, the service, the circumstances... as a due, an obligation, which takes away the merit of the other and erases the gift of life.

This list is neither classified nor exhaustive. It probably only touches on the beginnings of the qualities of love.

When one turns to others, but finds it difficult to love and care for oneself, to give oneself attention, to respect oneself, the risk is to be distracting oneself from oneself, running away from one's own lack of love. In this situation, where one has unformulated needs, there are often hidden expectations, the gift is only being lent and not offered in a selfless way. Unconsciously, one acts to be loved, recognised, valued. This is often one of the motivations for humanitarian action and dedication, whatever the cause supported.

The action is good, but the positioning is not aligned, the deep motivation is not identified, not as altruistic as imagined. This is not a drama. The proposal of meditation is simply to be aware of it so as not to delude oneself.

Love for ourselves goes hand in hand with love for others and welcoming the love of others.

The Languages of Love

Words: written, spoken, sung.

Body: touch, sexuality, massage, caress, embrace.

Material: gifts, items bought or hand-made, cooking!

Action: service, help, care, DIY, sewing, cleaning, or making music, dancing, singing.

Time: spending time together, even doing nothing, or sharing an activity, a sport, a film.

Attitude: the look on one's face, one's posture, listening, patience, availability.

Teaching: explaining, training, showing, telling the truth, accompanying.

Should we choose to give flowers or chocolate? It is important to know one's sensibility, to understand well the other person's functioning and one's own, which will make one feel loved.

Some people “speak” or understand one expression better than another, to each their own sensibility and references. For example, a

favour or a walk may be preferred to chocolates or a small card. It is a whole process of learning to use all languages to speak love to the other, and to oneself.

One way to love oneself is indeed to meditate, to give oneself time, attention, to recharge oneself, to reunite with oneself, to find oneself, to feel oneself, to be in dialogue with one's being, one's body, to listen to one's feelings and emotions.

Meditation enables one to contact one's deepest needs in order to be able to respond to them and to know how to love oneself.

To meditate is to learn to love oneself, to learn to love.

What about me, how do I express my love to myself? Here is a good meditation theme to do right now. I invite you to settle down with some writing material nearby. It is useful, even necessary, to take notes in order to visualise the result and to keep it for a while so that you can read it again. Start by centring yourself, breathing, contacting your body, your sensations.

It is possible to choose which relationship I will meditate on now. What do I offer? What do I receive? In what way? With what intention? With what intensity?

Sometimes it is simpler to welcome what comes, even if it means dividing it into several chapters.

I let what comes to me emerge, memories, emotions, remarks, answers, projects. If possible, I write as I go along, while remaining in a state of meditation.

When the writing dries up, I calmly dive back into myself. I come back to the awareness of my body and my breathing.

What is the diversity, the extent, the nature of my love?
How, in what direction do I want to see it evolve?

This assessment of the love offered to others, received from others, received from oneself, is to be revisited over several sessions in order to address all of one's relationships, starting with those closest, including oneself. It is an evolving and dynamic process, which allows one to celebrate what already exists and to envisage a blossoming, with new expressions of love.

Meditation is a path leading to truly loving oneself, starting with oneself, in order to be available to the other.

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance. Oscar Wilde.

Meditation on the heart centre contributes powerfully to this. It really is a classic. It also enables one to connect to one's intuition, one's real needs and to universal love. It enables knowing oneself better.

The inner voice thus helps to discern the right action, the right behaviour and the right attitude, with respect for oneself and for others.

Building Your Meditation

Ingredients and Method

What do I need in order to meditate?

A meditation cushion?

A quiet place?

Time?

*Above all, I need to **decide to meditate!***

Location

Whether at home, on public transport, at work, in nature, in a place of contemplation... theoretically, it is possible to meditate anywhere.

For some, peripheral agitation is even helpful to internalise oneself, whether it is noise, smoke, images, smells, crowds... But, generally, it complicates the exercise.

In this case, and even at home, imagining a bubble to one's liking or another shape that suits one at that moment (for example a pyramid, a flower, a cocoon...) around oneself can help to feel more peaceful, more in intimacy with oneself.

The idea is to create an atmosphere for oneself, a space conducive to interiorisation.

At home, it is pleasant to arrange an appropriate place, with the decoration, objects or plants that one likes. Some put on music, bird song, the sound of a stream or the ocean. Others perfume the room with incense or essential oils... The light can be subdued or coloured. It is up to each person to create their own cocktail, their own nest.

The training begins in a setting devoted to meditation, and then transposes itself gradually to all moments of the day, to arrive at an increasingly continuous state of consciousness, including during a walk in nature, a household task, a meal, a time of cuddling, a moment of dance, music, or crafts.

Some are even conscious in their dreams, and know that they are sleeping.

If possible, during this time for oneself, one's telephone also enjoys resting in silence.

Position

It is enjoyable to find a comfortable position.
Sitting is the most common position.

If tired, or when it is not possible to sit, it is good to stand to help with vigilance, to enjoy one's meditation and to keep one's feet on the ground.

The ability to meditate while standing enables one to practise discreetly, in many circumstances, while waiting for a ride, at work, while doing household chores, while walking...

Some types of meditation require not moving at all, sometimes for a long time. Stillness of the body helps stillness of the mind.

The yoga position of lotus, *padmasana*: legs folded, heels tucked into the groin, back straight, provides great stability. The blood flows less through the legs and more towards the upper body. But it is difficult to access and is fortunately not recommended in this book. It requires the knees to be well bent before opening the hips, so as not to twist the knee joints.

In Japanese, Za = sitting, zen = meditation. Zazen is a very good exercise for mastering meditation stripped bare, sitting with the legs folded on the ground.

The neologism zenitude indicates composure and serenity.

There are low stools inspired by Japanese culture, Shoggi, sat on with one's legs bent backwards to help keep the back straight.

There are also firm circular cushions, *zafu*, for sitting cross-legged on the floor. To each their own!

If pain or discomfort is experienced during meditation, it is possible to focus on the area and make it an object of meditation. Sometimes,

by focusing elsewhere, the painful sensation can be forgotten, or a relaxation can occur and the pain subsides.

It can also happen that nothing hurts at first and that it is the position that causes pain. Or the discomfort may have been present before, but ignored because of the day's activities, and attention to the body reveals it.

In any case, it is up to the meditator to choose their strategy at the time. I often advise to adjust the position, possibly with an extra cushion, or to change the position, even if it means standing or moving.

The practice helps to simply welcome pain and to live it as an experience. Meditation de-dramatises discomfort and puts it in its proper place. That said, there are enough distractions so, in order to avoid complicating meditation, especially at the beginning, make it comfortable.

However, soft armchairs and lying down are not recommended, especially for people who tend to fall asleep during the sessions. They are well suited for relaxation... or a nap.

In meditation circles, I invite people to sit on a chair or stool to include those who cannot sit comfortably on the floor.

On a chair, it is advisable to move forward a little on the seat, in order to free oneself from the backrest and to develop one's back muscles. In case of back pain however, it is relieving to lean back, alternate one's position, or even to add a cushion.

Stools are very conducive to meditation, because the flexibility of the hips is not invoked and the absence of backrest very quickly reveals sleepiness. The meditator thus takes advantage of developing gently and gradually the musculature of the back and the belly.

In most traditions, the back is kept very straight, to promote muscle tone, stimulation of the nervous system, circulation of energy, and awareness of what is being experienced.

On other occasions, this verticality helps to better enjoy a concert, a lecture, a film...

On a chair or stool, the feet are usually placed on the floor, which gives a stable position, in relation to the earth, but this is not necessarily required.

Comfort is important and a change of position is welcome.

Meditation is practised not only in stillness, but also in movement or action.

One can also meditate in yoga poses, even upside down if one likes, or while swimming, walking or even running. Especially in the beginning, it is easier to move slowly. Haste or speed decentralises and hinders attention to what is being experienced, both inside and out.

It's up to us to find what we like, to build our practice according to the need or the desire of the day, with regularity or fantasy.

Meditation is a path to permanent happiness.

This path is strewn with simple pleasures through attention, to oneself, to others, to circumstances, to beauty...

Tips and Recommendations

Meditation is awareness of the present moment.

It is good to remember the experience of sunrise or sunset. There is no point in getting agitated to speed up, slow down, or change the show.

Patience is the mother of all virtues.

The invitation is to repeat the different meditations several times, adapting them, with eyes open or closed, sitting or standing, still or in slow movement or at normal speed, alone or in a group, in order to transpose the meditative state better and better into daily activities, in different places.

To reopen one's eyes, instead of raising the eyelids directly, some prefer to place their hands in the shape of a cup, little finger against little finger, in front of the eyes. The eyelids open in the darkness. The hands are then gently moved away, so that the eyes gradually become accustomed to the light.

The phrase I often use is: I see outside, I look inside.

It makes the meaning of open-eye meditation clearer and is a continual invitation to remain aware of one's feelings, one's inner life, including during activities throughout the day.

In addition, it is often advisable and enjoyable to have a glass of water or a hot drink ready to sip quietly as a transition before carrying on with one's activities, with the rest of the day.

Starting Your Meditation

The principle is to welcome what is, to welcome myself as I am.

I sit at my convenience. A straight back helps me to stay vigilant.

If there is agitation, it is usually preferable to close your eyes.

If I feel sleepiness approaching, I straighten my back, and pull back my chin to straighten my neck. I can also open my eyes for a moment.

Falling asleep is not uncommon and is not a drama. It happens even more to people who are stressed, tense, and therefore relax suddenly. If I realize my attention is gone, I am already coming back from sleep. The advice is vigilance of course, but also welcoming.

We start with an overview of one's situation. I observe my thoughts.

The brain gives off a background noise that is likely to drown out the music of life. But wanting to chase away thoughts is like shouting to cover up noise, or getting agitated and chasing shadows.

Fighting against thoughts would be counterproductive and distract the meditator.

Accepting oneself and letting the mind settle enables one to focus on one's meditation, even if in some cases it means writing down one's preoccupation for a moment and then peacefully resuming.

Calmness is found by patiently gathering the herd rather than scattering it by stirring in all directions. The ocean gradually washes away superfluous thoughts to calm their flow.

Thoughts can be compared to clouds in the sky, blown by the wind. I am the sky that lets the clouds pass. I am the one who observes the thoughts.

They can also be compared to a restless dog. I watch it play until it tires and sits down. If it is not necessary to stop thinking, it is useful to be a spectator, in order to calm them down, to guide them, to master them effectively.

Meditation thus invites the welcoming of preoccupations. The *relaxation* of the brain helps to let solutions emerge, possibilities that could not be worked out while the mind was agitated and confused.

The image is that of cloudy water that shows the depths once it has settled.

Sometimes the solution comes from doing nothing!

It is not necessary to wait until the mind is calm to start meditating, on the contrary, it is when the mind is agitated that it is most useful to meditate.

The aim is to come back to oneself, to turn the mind inwards, to know what is being experienced inside.

Then, I observe my emotions, my inner atmosphere.

How do I feel? What emotion lives in me? And in what area of my body? I can go and stroke the emotion like a little cat that becomes my friend.

Finally, I scan through my body, in one direction or another, in order to take stock of my sensations and to welcome my reality. I can pay more attention to an area, or to structures: bones, joints, muscles, digestive or respiratory system...

Centring

It is a transitional phase between the hustle and bustle of busy life, with a mind focused on the hubbub of the outside world, to inner tranquillity, and calm well-being. This time usually includes a reconnection to the body, a body scan.

The great secret of meditation is observation, without wanting to change or reject what is. That's why I don't say: "Let go of this, do that, relax" or "Stop thinking". The instruction is simply to welcome the inner and outer circumstances.

Relaxation comes by itself, sometimes timidly, quietly, on tiptoe.

The advantage of scanning the body at the beginning of meditation is that you become aware of neglected tensions, so they can be released. This is one of the benefits of being present to the body. It often happens in the course of practice that pains disappear in this way.

Some always like to start by following the same protocol, using the same words in precisely the same order, like a ritual that facilitates a calming reflex through habit, and induces an automatic relaxation.

Others need diversity to avoid monotony, even if repetition and similarity are inevitable.

It is up to each person to choose what suits them. Routine is supportive, but weariness precedes abandonment.

In the following examples, the awareness of the body will follow different paths in order to discover and honour various areas and organs.

This exploration stage is especially detailed in the first meditations, showing the way. I try to use simple anatomical vocabulary, which I hope is easily understandable.

A diversified approach to one's body allows one to get to know it better, to get accustomed to it, to accept it and to love it. Then, it will be easier to take a healthy distance and to dis-identify from it. I don't limit myself to this body. It does not define me. It is simply my home, my vehicle, precious and perishable. I have no other and I need it. I respect it and honour it with gratitude and discernment.

The intention of the connection to the body is to link meditation with the concrete world of matter and action. Meditation does not aim to escape reality, but to make it more conscious, i.e. to better see it in its entirety, to better understand it, to better accept it, to live it, to enjoy it, and to flourish.

Breathing

Breathing meditations help to slow down thoughts, so that the mind is a helpful friend and not an incoherent tyrant. The breath is a base for many meditations, in very diverse contexts. It probably well deserves this little chapter.

Breathing is life, hence the well-known advice: Breathe a little!

The use of breathing meditations is present in many traditions.

It is an integral part of yoga and is developed through *pranayama*, a set of varied breathing exercises. It calms the senses and the thoughts, as the breath connects the inside with the outside.

Those who master their breath master their emotions and their mind.

To make it easier to pay attention and listen to the breath, it is possible to make the air flow slightly noisy, like the *Ujjayi* in yoga, but to do so moderately. The air only passes through the nose and produces a sound similar to that of the sleeper, but not the snorer!

Pauses with empty lungs tame the fear of emptiness, of lack, of solitude, of death. Pauses with full lungs teach one to receive, without the fear of loss, of being confined, overwhelmed, indebted.

Both teach the need for change. Any attempt to stay in one situation quickly becomes uncomfortable.

Inhaling reflects welcoming, receiving, nurturing, taking one's place. There may be a link with creativity in being inspired to action.

Exhaling leads to letting go, to cleansing, to generosity, to trusting that if I give what I have, what I am, I won't be lacking, but that there will still be enough, like the promise of a new breath. It is also a little death: a deadline expires when it comes to an end, or when taking one's final breath.

The longer duration of inhalation and retention on full lungs than the duration of exhalation and pause on empty lungs, *brahmana*, has an invigorating effect and is recommended especially in the morning and in cases of fatigue.

The opposite, longer exhalation and empty lungs, *langhana*, has a soothing, relaxing effect, and is recommended in the evening or in case of agitation. It prepares one for sleep.

To find one's rhythm, one can count with numbers. I find it more pleasant to repeat a syllable at one's convenience. As a yogi, Om seems appropriate to me. For example 4-2-3-1 means breathing in 4 beats, full lungs 2 beats, breathing out 3 beats, empty lungs 1 beat. It is up to each person to find their own tempo.

The duration of the beat, the speed, is adjusted if necessary, to remain comfortable and enjoyable.

It can be suggested to breathe by alternating attention to one side and then the other. It is common in yoga to help oneself by blocking the nostril that is not breathing. There are many ways to do this.

One possibility is to bend a finger, such as the index finger, and position the nose in the space between the middle finger and the thumb. By turning the wrist slightly, one nostril will be blocked by the thumb, and alternately the other by the middle finger.

Some people bend the index and middle fingers, and then use the thumb and ring finger.

Others extend the index finger over the forehead and block the nostrils alternately with the thumb and middle finger. It's up to you to find what is comfortable.

There is a wide range of variations of these exercises, including the way one breathes in and out.

It is possible to combine breathing with static or dynamic postures.

Various practices combine visualisations of journeys, such as on ferries to and fro, or downriver. Sounds can naturally accompany the breathing. It is up to each one to find their preference, amongst the suggestions, according to the mood of the moment.

High-Low Balancing

Breathing is also associated with awareness of verticality, for example, with images of lift rides or the like. When the breath accompanies awareness beyond the body, what is above is sometimes called heaven-father and what is below is called earth-mother.

The notion of earth is often used to welcome incarnation, daily activities and connection to nature. It connects us to minerals, plants and animals. The earth is also seen as a living being.

This point of view allows us to consider humankind as being one of the organs of the earth, connected to others and interdependent.

The sky, of course, is a reminder of our sacred and vast nature, an aspiration to infinity and a higher dimension.

Meditation is not about escaping from material reality, but about approaching it with a constructive and kind serenity. It aims to enable humans to find their place and their function, so that they might become a link between heaven and earth, between the spiritual and the material.

Many speak of energy centres, such as the chakras of the Indian yogic tradition. There are numerous representations and diverse approaches.

Frequently, there are seven main chakras described, from bottom to top, to which are potentially added chakra zero, the earth, and chakra eight, above the head, connecting to the sky.

In meditations, I connect the sixth chakra to the face and the sense of perception, rather than limiting it only to the lower forehead and the space between the eyebrows. This means that the seventh chakra occupies approximately the space of the brain above the ears, instead of just the upper part.

The colours attributed to the chakras may vary according to different points of view. The colours suggested in the meditations are the ones most frequently described in the reference books. The colour at the centre of a chakra may be different than its periphery, which explains varying perceptions.

Spontaneously, it could happen to be a flower, a fruit, or a mineral that bears the colour, or that represents it. For example, for the colour green, some will imagine a forest, others an emerald... to each their own representation, their own iconography.

Colour meditation is ancient. It could have a beneficial effect similar to that of chromotherapy, which treats precisely through colours. Depending on the inspiration of the moment, it is possible to develop one colour rather than another, to experiment and to follow one's feelings and creativity.

Front-Back Balancing

The *small celestial circulation* balances not only the top and bottom, but also the front and back. It is represented by a river flowing up along the spine to the top of the skull, before flowing down along the front of the body, to the pelvis. The image can be that of a wheel, circle, ring or *ouroboros* (from the Greek, snake that bites its tail).

This meditation is described in more detail in the meditations Shared Loop, Om Sweet Om and Column of Light.

Going in the opposite direction is also used to slow down this circulation.

In the yogic tradition, the tip of the tongue gently touches the front of the palate, behind the upper teeth, to facilitate a connection between the Chinese acupuncture meridians Du Mai and Ren Mai.

Du Mai is called the governing vessel, or sea of yang meridians, like rivers that perpetually pour into and spring up from the sea. It rises from the perineum through the middle of the back and head, to the upper lip.

Ren Mai, the conception vessel, sea of the yin meridians, goes from the perineum via the front, through the middle of the trunk to the lower lip.

The front-back harmonisation also includes the relationship to the other, in horizontality. The front represents the future and descendants. The back represents the past and ancestors.

Right-Left Balancing

The image of a pourer holding a pot in each hand and transferring water from one pot to the other helps one to grasp the principle of right-left balancing.

Not everyone has the same feelings on the right and left. It can be organic or symbolic. Feelings evolve from one session to the next depending on our disposition. Listening to one's body helps to understand oneself better, and to react better to the circumstances one is going through.

Dynamic meditation, by twisting the back in alternation via rotation of the shoulders, combined with the breath, furthers awareness of both sides and their balance.

It's as if the mind is cleansed, wrung out and tranquilised. The belly and the diaphragm are massaged and relaxed.

According to Chinese tradition, the left side is associated with yin, tranquillity, receptivity, the feminine, the past, inspiration.

The right side corresponds to yang, movement, action, giving, the masculine, the future, expiration.

An example of balanced breathing, in relation to this right-left balancing, is 3-1-3-1, which means 3 beats breathing in, 1 beat with full lungs, 3 beats breathing out and 1 beat with empty lungs.

Depending on one's cardio-pulmonary capacity, on the day and on one's mood, the duration can be longer or shorter, of course.

Following the same principle 4-2-4-2 is slightly more demanding. There are many variations.

When in a group, I usually suggest a left-to-right flow, but it might sometimes change. I also like to start the harmonisation with the left side. It is up to you to feel what suits your body that day, letting yourself be guided by fluidity and well-being.

To feel invigorated, it is possible to inhale or hold the breath longer. On the contrary, a longer exhale and a pause with empty lungs is calming.

One of the great benefits of meditation, harmonisation, can be seen as therapeutic or simply a way of life.

Mantras

Many traditions use repeating phrases, mantras. In yoga, one of the best known is probably Om. It is presented as the primordial syllable, universality, space and time, the origin and end of things, the alpha and omega. It can also be written AUM, or even AVM, sometimes represented in superimposed letters.

Reputed to be a primordial vibration, it is also pronounced aum. From Indian tradition, it is close to the Christian Amen or the Egyptian Amon. In Aramaic, Awoun can be translated as Parent.

Short mantras are easy to practise. The *Om mani padme hung*, repeated for centuries in Asia, calls for compassion. It is a heart mantra par excellence.

It can be associated with the visualisation of a crystal, a lotus, a symbol... It can be chanted over 4 beats while inhaling and 4 beats while exhaling, possibly with pauses on full or empty lungs.

Mantras are usually used in static meditation, but also while walking and during various activities. Some use a rosary, or mala, and recite the mantra at each bead.

A mantra can be recited aloud, whispered, thought of, sung or written. Calligraphy can be a form of meditation. The point is to calm the mind so that thoughts settle, for it to become clear and powerful.

Indian tradition tells approximately this story:

A man found himself distraught after a storm destroyed his home. He turned to heaven and begged for help.

Then nature brought a great ape out of the nearby forest, who came to him and said, "Master, I will serve you if you wish, but if you accept my services, you must always keep me busy, for if I have nothing to do, I will turn against you to harm you."

The delighted man immediately asked him to build him a house. When it was finished, the ape returned to the man to ask him for the next task. So the ape built the furniture, the dishes, and all the things the man needed.

But it became more and more difficult to imagine other activities,

because the man soon had no need for anything else. One day, when the man was looking in vain for something to ask, the ape became more and more threatening.

Then the man had the idea of asking the ape to continually climb up and down a pole until he needed him again.

This little parable thus compares the occupation of the ape to the recitation of mantras to calm the mind, to teach it to remain available, and to activate it only when necessary.

A mantra is traditionally chosen by the teacher according to the needs of the meditator. A force is granted to it, coming from the repetitions performed by previous practitioners.

The mantra can be reduced to a single word. Some are very long and difficult to remember. Traditionally, they are memorised through oral repetition in a group.

Without stopping at the meaning of the phrase, some mantras, for example in Sanskrit or Tibetan, do not need to be translated. Chanting the mantra is enough to fascinate the mind. The repetition has the ability to hypnotise it, similar to soothing music.

It is also possible to construct one's own mantras, in one's own language, according to one's needs and inspiration of the moment. For example: I love myself as I am. I love you as you are. I am grateful and in awe. Welcome to life. To all my relationships...

Music and Dancing

For group meditations, I rarely use music, not only because of the difficulty of finding music that suits everyone, but also so as not to drown out my voice, and to leave each person free to hear their own inner music. In an individual context, there is nothing to prevent those who wish to add background sounds to the meditations below, including while using the recordings.

Sometimes, however, within meditations, there are moments specifically devoted to listening to music. This allows you to practise meditating consciously during concerts or any other kind of listening, including if you play an instrument yourself.

Let yourself be surprised by different music, depending on your inspiration in the moment. The sound of a Tibetan bowl, a drum, a didgeridoo, bells... are favourable classics. But what a joy to also enjoy the music of nature: wind, forest, animals, rivers, oceans... Don't hesitate to invite pleasure and amusement.

I regularly propose a time of free, spontaneous singing, in the form of vocalisations to facilitate an adequate expression of one's feelings, of one's inner atmosphere. It is important to let go of musicality, the search for aesthetics and to give up the usual standards, especially when with several people.

The aim is to connect with what is going on inside, with freedom of expression and the right to play, without any obligation to achieve results. It is possible to choose a known song, with words, a mantra for example, or even *the music of silence*, i.e. not to sing, but to listen.

Similarly for dancing, there are open moments to let the body move freely, on the spot or moving around, sometimes to the sound of music or a song, sometimes in silence. This last option is regularly proposed, because in the absence of external music, the dance is not framed by a defined rhythm, it can take the form of slow and wide movements... It evolves at its own pace and according to its own imagination.

The essential thing is to be present to one's feelings. The movement is then the manifestation of the meditation, without any obligation to achieve results, without any search for aesthetics or validation. The body is simply free to express what is being experienced inside.

The body is danced by the movement of meditation.

Once a possible moment of shyness has passed, pleasure and playfulness usually appear. This experience can be very relaxing and bring about a deep sense of well-being, complicity with one's body, harmony with oneself and continuity with the world.

With or without music, this danced meditation is quite simple to put in place regularly at home, even for a short time, either in the morning as a way of easing into movement, anchoring oneself and getting in touch with one's body, or in the evening when one comes home from work, for example, as a way of relaxing and energising oneself, in order to shake off any fatigue and better enjoy the evening.

Distractions

Preparing to accept all circumstances allows one to be undisturbed, even to enjoy such circumstances and what is happening with humour: external noises of all kinds, and internal noises such as borborygmus (gurgling), yawning (no need to put a hand in front of the mouth), itching and tickling, wandering thoughts, emotions, discomfort, sleepiness.

In meditation, alone or in a group, the drama is turned into a smile when a phone rings, someone moves, or a child cries. The meditator then becomes more softened than irritated. They learn patience and kindness.

Gurgling indicates that the belly is working, naturally. This is often a good sign during meditation, because in addition to the organic aspect, it may be about digesting events, emotions, stresses... which are also being assimilated at the same time.

Noises in particular can be meditative, or on the contrary dispersive, depending on one's mood at the time and what one decides to do with them. Even an ambulance siren or a dog's bark can be welcome in meditation, if one can greet them like birdsong, as a return to oneself and to the present moment.

Attitude is the key to appreciating the situation and seeing the gift in it. One participant thanked the person who had left their phone ringing for having brought them a very nice experience in the end, first of annoyance, then of welcome, relaxation and finally of joy.

During a group meditation, I remember one participant being very annoyed by the continuous barking of a dog outside, while others did not even hear it.

In welcoming, there is no option to *mess up* one's meditation, nor to reproach oneself, nor to reproach oneself for reproaching oneself! There is no risk of failure, of error, of guilt, because one is there for one's own good. Being there is already a gift.

In welcoming what is, the meditation of the moment is always the best!

Sleepiness

Meditation sometimes comes close to sleep. The brain vibrates at different frequencies, a bit like a radio, depending on its activities, and the phases of sleep. Meditation can bring it into frequencies useful to its harmony and rest. Even when almost asleep, as long as one remains present, it is still meditation and it is very rejuvenating, although it then comes closer to relaxation.

Sometimes one can get carried away, dreaming, indulging in a little moment of escape. The intention is then to gently take oneself by the hand to bring oneself back to one's meditation.

Sometimes meditation becomes a time for organising the week, which is not the objective, but it is not time wasted, especially if the planning contains a time for meditation.

Meditation can approach an altered state of consciousness, a deep relaxation, but it stops before the nap!

Drowsiness is common. This is an opportunity to rest. It happens easily to those who are tense and suddenly relax. A slight torpor can help to let go, and to enter a meditative state. If it is in the evening, it can promote falling asleep quicker and a restorative sleep.

The concentration exercises specific to *yoga nidra*, done lying down, lead to deep conscious sleep. Meditation may predispose to it, but it is not its direct purpose.

When one returns from sleepiness or a wandering thought, the important thing is to realise that one has been absent. This awareness immediately plunges the meditator back into their meditation.

If I do not often give the instruction to relax in meditations it is because, not only will it happen in due course, if it does happen, but especially, because for some it will be experienced as an injunction, one more thing to succeed.

Some people already believe that they have to do everything perfectly in order to be loved, to be lovable. They impose on themselves the obligation and the pressure of an unattainable and illusory perfection. In fact, the liberating attitude proposes: *I welcome my tensions.*

During meditation, the accumulated tensions are naturally relaxed as one goes along, allowing the release of contained, repressed or undigested elements.

Sometimes there are feelings of heat, cold, restlessness or sleepiness, which may be followed by a renewed energy shortly afterwards, or even the next day, because sleep has been better.

Gently placing the tip of the tongue just behind the upper teeth allows one to assess the harmony between alertness and relaxation, in addition to the front-back connection already seen. If the tongue is pressing down hard, this reflects tension, a tightening. If the tongue is lifting off, there may be a relaxation leaning towards sleepiness.

Meditations with a body scan from top to bottom are more relaxing and well suited for restless people.

There are fewer of these in this book, as they are often accompanied by sleepiness, and the groups I lead usually meet at the end of the day, when tiredness has already built up.

Good posture helps greatly to stay alert: the back straight, without touching the backrest, possibly on a stool, or even standing. Do not hesitate to open the eyes intermittently, or to move a little.

In any case, meditation that happens in unexpected ways is an opportunity to learn to love oneself unconditionally.

Use of meditations

The appended meditations are inspired and adapted from guided group sessions.

The actual meditation time usually lasts between 30 and 45 minutes. Each person is free to find their own rhythm, what is possible, enjoyable and pleasant for them. Sometimes the meditation is split up or shortened, or on the contrary extended by pauses prolonging certain moments to be savoured.

Some structures propose to exchange with another meditator, with or without contact, to hold hands, to touch the shoulder or the sternum. It is always done by respecting what is appropriate for each other.

When letting go of a neighbour's hand, instead of saying "we're going to leave each other" or using the word *separation* at the end of the exchange, it is suggested instead that a space of communication be created between the hands that are moving away.

A solution is thus found to maintain continuity. The phrase: *we stay in touch* makes it easier to accept the change in the relationship.

We may not see each other, but we remain on the same earth!

This not only makes it possible to de-dramatise the distancing, but also to dissolve the illusion of separation, solitude and isolation.

If you are alone

The proposals in pairs can be made virtually with a partner of your choice, by inviting them in intention.

I do not say by inviting in thought, so as not to risk encouraging the acceleration of the mind.

I do not speak of imagination or visualisation, because for some people the presence of the other will be more auditory, tactile even.

Some feel the presence of the guest, through a subtle perception, without actually seeing them.

So you can visualise them, like a hologram, or feel them, or just tell yourself that they are simply there. The other's company can feel pleasant and suit me, even without their physical, bodily presence.

This invitation is respectful of the other person's wishes and of their way of functioning, in a spirit of listening and kindness. If I think that such an invitation might displease them, I refrain.

In case of doubt, if possible, why not check. When inviting, it is possible to ask for consent by a sign, a nod, a word, depending on one's preference.

The invited person is often someone close to us. Sometimes it can also be a person who is a reference for us and whom we have not known, a master of wisdom and love.

Some invite a spiritual being, an angel, or an animal, an imaginary being, according to one's own beliefs and freedom.

If you are in a group, it is of course also possible to invite in intention, one or more meditation partners in addition to those physically present.

The notion of a *virtual guest* opens up many possibilities.

It may simply be an opportunity to offer a moment of meditation and sharing to a friend, or even to several people, with a stimulating and supportive effect. The interactive meditation described in this book is often an original recreational activity, an enriching and enjoyable discovery.

All of these meditations are conceived as suggestions! The use of the word "I" is a reminder that one is not asked to follow the instructions scrupulously, but rather to adjust them as one sees fit, and to let one's meditation unfold in pleasure. Thus I often provide several alternatives.

My intention is to offer a direction while respecting individual creativity, to let each person compose their own menu with the materials at hand, as with a well-stocked buffet, or as a painter creates their canvas with the colours at hand.

The notion of beauty has its place, including when I can, in the very formulation of the propositions. Beauty nourishes the soul and supports meditation.

Some people will be more sensitive at certain times to one element or another. When the proposition does not speak to you, dare to transpose it. Some will choose a perfume instead of a colour, or imagine a countryside landscape instead of a mountain, whatever suits. Visualisations are supports, and it is up to each person to adapt them according to their metaphorical vocabulary.

Similarly, do not hesitate to change position if necessary, even to stand up, or on the contrary, to sit down when standing for a long time is too uncomfortable.

As a reminder, meditation cannot always take place in the desired quiet setting. If there is noise or agitation, the invitation is to welcome

it and integrate it into the meditation. If you are lucky enough to be able to meditate outdoors, the pleasure can be even more delightful!

Of course, the idea is to remain tranquil, still, silent. However, if needed, I ask the participants to allow themselves to cough, sneeze, blow their nose, yawn without putting their hand in front of their mouth...

In strictly still and silent meditations, I have experienced having a runny nose and deciding not to worry about it, until I forget about it or it becomes a kind of game, or a subject of meditation. As a habit, I put a handkerchief on my lap beforehand.

Outside of this rigorous framework, it is possible to try the experience of stillness or simply to blow one's nose quietly, while trying to remain present to one's sensations, in a meditative state, rather than getting angry at one's nose or feeling frustrated.

Reading

The text of the meditations below can also be read in fragments, like a recipe. Each step is experienced as one goes along, with the added pleasure of following one's own rhythm.

This is particularly true of the body anchoring that runs through the anatomical regions and organs at the beginning of the meditations. The aim is for the meditation to also benefit the body, and for the meditator to be in the here and now. The advantage is to have precise support, a step by step guide.

Another approach is to read the whole session's text in one sitting, aloud or internally, once or several times, in order to absorb and memorise more or less the main thread.

Then, with eyes closed, the meditator draws on their memories of the text as a framework with which to build their meditation.

If there are omissions or confusions: it does not matter. There will always be an experience, perhaps the best one for oneself at that moment. In any case, the meditations can be repeated as many times as desired.

If you are in a group, it is possible for one person to read for the others

and meditate at the same time themselves as they go along, but with their eyes open.

Recorded meditations are at one's disposal. They have the advantage of avoiding reading on one's own and of facilitating concentration, as the voice regularly brings us back to the meditation.

If the pace is too fast for some, it is always possible to pause, if it is too long, to split it.

The invitation is to try out different possibilities, even varying one's method according to the mood of the day and the conditions.

Some of them have been created during specific circumstances such as rain, a particular season, a full moon, the solstice...

Each is free to choose, once familiarised with the book, which meditation corresponds to their need or mood at the time. The titles often give an idea of the theme.

Some practices are repeated several times in order to be better assimilated and to establish a foundation.

The meditations are taken from live recordings that have been typed up and then adapted or rephrased.

The spontaneity of the spoken word is partly preserved at the expense of the literary aspect, out of a desire for authenticity.

The lines between the paragraphs often correspond to times of silence, visualisation and feeling. It is suggested that one takes a pause, of length that suits one's own rhythm.

Regularly, it is indicated *I breathe*, in order to become aware of the movements of the diaphragm and the rib cage, the rocking of the belly and the back, the air that enters and leaves, and to return to an attention, a presence to one's body.

The aim is not to change one's breathing, unless it is not suitable because it is too fast, a source of stress.

By peacefully focusing attention on the breath, the mind calms down. It is then easier to be aware of one's physical and emotional feelings.

Sharing Turn

In group meditations, I usually offer an expression circle to anchor, memorise, and celebrate with gratitude the experiences that have just taken place. It is presented as a break, in the middle or at the end of the session, sometimes both.

A whole hour of meditation can be a long time for some people, especially for beginners, until the pleasure of meditating makes you want to do longer sessions.

This allows participants to remember their experience better by clarifying it and to be able to repeat it more easily at home.

This is a moment that participants generally enjoy. It facilitates the conviviality of a time of exchange afterwards, all the while encouraging motivation, sharing of experience and moments of practice in pairs for example, beyond the group setting.

It is sometimes an opportunity to briefly answer a question. I may take the liberty of offering some feedback to provide theoretical information or practical insights if necessary.

Meditation continues during this time, to practise a meditative state with open eyes, whether listening or speaking. This skill develops over time and turns out to be quite useful for everyday life.

Therefore, the invitation during this moment is to not move too much, or doing so calmly, to remain centred, i.e. to continue to savour one's sensations, to breathe, without letting oneself be carried away by wandering thoughts. The aim is to remain aware of what is happening inside, while being available for what is happening around oneself.

The sharing turn is an opportunity to recall the course of the experience, and to potentially clarify any feelings and learning.

Expressing a few words about it allows one to take out the *pearls*, the most precious elements with which to leave. Memorising the path taken during the session makes it easier to repeat it later at home.

It is also a time to celebrate what has just happened, what one has just offered oneself, and to increase one's joy by sharing it with others.

What is said remains confidential and belongs to the present moment and the place. It is neither repeated, recorded nor transcribed.

Such circles after meditation are not part of a yogic tradition. The risk would be to agitate the mind, to chatter, to analyse or to palaver endlessly. Here, everyone stays in the body, breathes, continues to meditate whether talking or listening.

Each person speaks of their own experience, expresses themselves as *I*, i.e. avoids the *we*, *you*, *us*, which improperly generalise, and prevent facing oneself in order to be able to evolve.

There is no room to intervene on the testimony of another, in order to avoid judgements and advice given without request, by placing oneself as superior. At most, the facilitator says a few words, if necessary, about what has been said and gives some indications about the meditation.

The utility is to validate one's experience, to celebrate one's gifts and to bring the participants together to build a supportive and welcoming group dynamic.

The practice in these circles is to go around from the first person who wishes to speak. Each indicates their first name and speaks if they wish to do so, and is allowed to pass their turn or to postpone their moment of expression, which happens from time to time.

When a person has finished speaking, they indicate this with the formula of their choice, for example: I have spoken, that's it, I'm done, thank you.

Thank you is encouraged, to foster gratitude to those who have listened, but also to oneself, for having offered oneself this moment.

When what is said echoes the listener's experience, they can raise their hand like a mirror to indicate that it resonates with them. This is a respectful way to express oneself, to interact, without interrupting the speaker.

Outside of a group, if you also wish to share your experience, the gift offered by meditation, it is wise to choose an open ear, who will know how to listen without judgement, with kindness, to celebrate with you.

To expose one's meditation is to talk about one's secret garden, one's personal intimacy.

Sharing one's gift does not mean trying to push the other to seek the same, to each their own happiness. It is essential to respect the right to choose one's experiences and path.

Experiences are like dishes set on the table, each one serves themselves as they please, no one insists that the other one tastes it!

Finally, during the sharing, two volunteers kindly serve herbal tea prepared before the start of the session. The objective is conviviality and hydration. Moreover, according to the work of Masaru Emoto (Japanese researcher, 1943-2014), the water that has vibrated with us helps us to integrate the fruits of our meditation.

Order or disorder

The fifty-two meditations allow the discovery of one per week, for a whole year. They are numbered to simplify the presentation. They are not arranged in chronological order and are not sequenced. They are not listed in a recommended order.

There is a form of progression, not so much in difficulty as in presentation. Certain recurring themes have been deliberately spaced out for the pleasure of alternating, even if they are approached differently.

Each is free to choose whether to follow the numbers in ascending order, or to rely on their intuition, their spontaneity, to discover them according to their curiosity.

In short, it is up to each reader to use this book as they wish.

I advocate a daily practice, even a modest one.

Reusing the same text does not mean reproducing the same experience

The objective is to appropriate the *materials*, the examples proposed, and then to use them, to assemble them in one's own way, to live them in one's own fashion, in renewed meditations.

Many of the meditations proposed here lead towards global consciousness, of belonging to a whole, of continuity with others, with nature and with life.

I wish you a beautiful discovery and delightful meditations!

52 Meditations

The method is in the previous chapter: Building Your Meditation.

For the moment the vocal recording is only available in French, as well as the full text of each meditation, on the website:

www.aucoeurmeditation.com

Click on the tab: **Le Livre**

The password is: **gratitude**

On this website you will also find a number of meditations of varying lengths that are freely accessible, in French.

The current website will be replaced by a more efficient one, currently under development. Please do not hesitate to contact us at the following email address:

mediter.aimer@gmail.com

- 1) Breathing
- 2) Snow Dance
- 3) Full Colour
- 4) Right-Left Balancing
- 5) Sunbathing
- 6) The Treasures of the Earth
- 7) So Ham
- 8) Flame of Joy
- 9) Flakes of Love
- 10) Breath of the Earth
- 11) Amongst the Stars
- 12) Shared Loop
- 13) Flowers and Colours
- 14) In My Egg
- 15) River of Life
- 16) So Ham Perfume
- 17) Honey Game
- 18) Om Sweet Om

- 19) Bubble of Light
- 20) Ribbon of Light
- 21) Rainbow Mirror
- 22) Sun in the Heart
- 23) Fountain of Youth
- 24) Gratitude to the Body
- 25) Ocean of Sweetness
- 26) Phoenix Dance
- 27) I Love Myself As I Am
- 28) Five Elements
- 29) Colours of Life
- 30) Chocolate and Gratitude
- 31) Cell and Fractal
- 32) Celestial Vacuum Cleaner
- 33) Going Swimmingly
- 34) I Receive, I Give
- 35) Like a Flower
- 36) Bonfire
- 37) Scent of Flowers
- 38) Beating Heart
- 39) Water Drop
- 40) Big Hug
- 41) Gold and Silver
- 42) Baobab
- 43) Theatre in the Sun
- 44) Flakes of Peace
- 45) King, Queen Within
- 46) Heart Radio
- 47) Cosmic Root
- 48) Flame of Transformation
- 49) Open the Windows
- 50) Animal Friend
- 51) Happiness Tea
- 52) Free Bird

It's up to you!

Meditations Summaries

These few lines presenting the meditations give the framework and the theme. They may guide you in your choice, depending on the mood of the moment.

You can also find them on the website, alongside the recordings. There you will also find the full text of the meditations.

Let yourself be carried away by meditation...

1) Breathing

In front of me, a bonfire or a perfume. I inhale its softness, its colour, its light... Filling myself with it little by little. On the exhale, I offer to the fire or the earth my worries, my tensions, my fears... A song of freedom, in connection with others.

2) Snow Dance

Snowflakes or feathers fall first on my body, then within me. The snow fills me with its soft calm. Then it covers the world in purity and softness, bringing comfort to all beings. In the end, I dance with the snow and can even sing.

3) Full Colour

From the earth to the sky, passing through my body, I contact a colour at each level, with its own atmosphere and benefits. Chromo-therapeutic harmonisation. I play with this palette to colour the world and situations.

4) Right-Left Balancing

Standing, if possible, I become aware of my body. Through the sole of one foot, I inhale the forces of the earth into half of my body. Through the other half, I exhale my tiredness and stress. Then, vice versa, I fill with light the half that has just been freed, and so on. In the end, a soft, warm sphere settles in my belly. Chant of *Om*.

5) Sunbathing

In front of me, a sun gradually fills me with its softness and warmth. Next it goes around to illuminate and relax my back. Eventually it

surrounds me and bathes me in love and serenity. It grows and benefits my loved ones and the whole world. Dance of the sun.

6) The Treasures of the Earth

Roots grow from the soles of my feet and branch out deeply. They draw the treasures of the earth into my whole body. Stable, rooted and with my head in the stars, I take a walk in space in silence or to music.

7) So Ham

On the inhale the air whispers *So*, on the exhale *Ham*, to remind me to welcome myself as I am. *So* brings joy, strength and purity. *Ham* brings lightness, freedom and trust. The mind calms. The whole body relaxes. I offer this welcome to the whole world.

8) Flame of Joy

I invite a gentle, joyful flame into me or in front of me. Gradually, it melts away my mental, emotional and physical tensions. It animates me into a liberating and joyful dance.

9) Flakes of Love

Flakes or feathers of peace and gentleness fall delicately around and within me. I fill myself with whiteness and trust. I offer others flakes of compassion and tenderness. For the whole earth, my body interprets the dance of the flakes of love.

10) Breath of the Earth

My feet rest on the ground. For a moment, it's as if I'm breathing in air from the earth through my left foot, and breathing out through my right foot, offering it a good compost made of my tensions and regrets. Then I reverse the movement, breathing in the joy and trust of the earth through my right foot. Finally, I share this game with another meditator or a person invited in intention.

11) Amongst the Stars

In my chest shines a light which gradually illuminates my whole body. It intensifies until I shine like a star. Every being is thus a star. Each of my cells is a little star. I place myself between the very small and the very large. Song of the stars.

12) Shared Loop

From my coccyx, a living spring flows upwards through my spine, to the top of my head, and then flows back down the middle, inside, through the front of my head and trunk, forming a circular channel. I play at sharing this circulation with someone (in person or intention), in a horizontal figure-eight.

13) Flowers and Colours

Between earth and sky, I travel through my body, welcoming a coloured flower at each level. I form a circle with others, in person or virtually. Sap and fragrance flow between the flowers. We sing *Om Mani Padme Hung* for the blossoming of each person's inner flowers.

14) In My Egg

First, I scan through my body. I'm in my egg. A star is pulsing in my chest. It transmits its rhythm to all my cells. Around me, a larger egg welcomes more and more people in intention. Smile from the stars. Free chant of *Om*.

15) River of Life

The left foot draws from a living, purifying spring to irrigate the whole left half of my body, then the water flows into the right half and pours out through the right foot into an underground sea. It also flows through a few loved ones. We form a circle. A river of love flows through our hands.

16) So Ham Perfume

In front of me, a source of fragrance releases its sweetness and lightness into me. It takes in my worries and tensions. The inhale says *So* and the exhale responds *Ham: I welcome life as it is, I love myself as I am*. I diffuse a fragrance of love and peace.

17) Honey Game

From my torso, coming from a flower, a fountain of loving honey fills my whole body. When it spills over the top of my head, it coats me with sweetness. I can offer it to someone else and play with it depending on my inspiration. A moment of listening to the vibration of the singing bowl.

18) Om Sweet Om

I become aware of my whole body. I amplify my breathing by repeating Om inwardly, like a *metronOme*. I play with varying breathing rhythms. I breathe in serenity and love. My mind calms down. The breath encompasses my whole body and far beyond. I'm connected to all those who breathe. Chant of Om.

19) Bubble of Light

A comfortable bubble surrounds me. A light shines in my chest. It illuminates and strengthens each of my cells, with gratitude. Like a light bulb, it shines around me. It brings peace and love to people everywhere. I walk all the way to the stars.

20) Ribbon of Light

A satin scarf caresses my body from heels to shoulders, to the head, then in front from chest to toes. Between back and front, I'm also between past and future. With a meditation partner, in person or virtual, I play at sharing ribbons of light, in connection and lightness.

21) Rainbow Mirror

Colours are applied to each area, from head to toe, from earth to sky. I stand facing someone (present or virtual), also adorned in colours. Gradually, we share our colours by level. Then, in a free dance, I offer my colours to others, I play at colouring the world.

22) Sun in the Heart

I visit my whole body. A sun shines in my chest. It illuminates every area of my body. Its light dissolves stress and transforms tension into joy and peace. With others, sun in the heart, we form a circle, like a star. Free song in the cosmos.

23) Fountain of Youth

My spine forms a channel. A fountain of clear water is born in my pelvis. It rises in my back and neck and collects in my head. From there, it gradually descends throughout my body, bringing relaxation and vigour. It then goes back up to regenerate itself in the pelvis to continue its circuit.

24) Gratitude to the Body

I welcome with kindness what I like and what works well in my body, and everything else too. We reconcile ourselves one area at a time, in a joyful reunion. I also recognise my qualities. I can see myself in the mirror as a gift from life. I honour it with free singing of *Thank you*.

25) Ocean of Softness

I gently immerse myself in a bath of light and tenderness. My body dances, rocked by the movements of the ocean. The water purifies and replenishes me. I share this wave of love with my loved ones. Gradually, the dance of life includes all sentient beings.

26) Phoenix Dance

From the inside, I inspect my body like a castle, taking a tour of the property. A flame of joy and transformation is born in my chest. It spreads quietly throughout my body until it carries me completely. My body performs the dance of the flame and renewal.

27) I Love Myself As I Am

I become aware of my right and left sides. I inhale from the front, exhale as I turn my shoulders to one side, return to the front and pivot to the other. The words resonate within me: *I love myself*, on the inhale, *as I am*, on the exhale. It's a declaration of love to myself, in front of others. They welcome me as I am.

28) Five Elements

I take root in the earth. The wind carries away my thoughts; it caresses my body and strengthens me. My roots plunge to replenish into pure, regenerating waters. The sun warms me deliciously. In the middle of my torso, a star, a source of love, fills my entire being with the fifth element. I offer this love to nature in a free dance.

29) Colours of Life

Before me is a palette of colours. I play at colouring myself inside and outside my body. I also spread colours around my living environment. I offer these colours to certain people. Together we can change the colours of the world, in a rainbow of peace and love.

30) Chocolate and Gratitude

I smell, chew and savour a piece of chocolate, with awareness, pleasure and gratitude. The aromas and benefits spread through my belly, my blood, until they coat my whole body. I remember the happy moments of my life. Chocolate brings appeasement to every pain. I share a little chocolate with those I love.

31) Cell and Fractal

My body resembles a big cell. The cells that make it up are so many individuals grouped into organs, united together in a harmonious collaboration. I pay tribute to them with gratitude. Then, I remember others, made up of cells like me. Together, we form the body of humanity. We are bathed in a *plasma of love*.

32) Celestial Vacuum Cleaner

At the top of my head, I connect to heaven, like a pipe. It sucks away burdens, tensions, bad memories... to make room for serenity and love. The pipe then cleanses my home, which becomes luminous and joyful. It rises further to remove pollution and aggressiveness, towards a reconciled, generous world.

33) Going Swimmingly

Near me, calm, clear waters. I gradually enter it to bathe. The water caresses me, purifies me, regenerates me. I invite in intention a few people to share a bath of joy and gentleness. We dance, then sing together.

34) I Receive, I Give

My breath whispers *I receive*, as I inhale, and *I give* as I exhale. In my whole body, I welcome strength and serenity, I offer fatigue and stress. I play with the waves of breath that pamper me. A cocoon of softness forms around me. I share this well-being with those who are dear to me, and then with the whole world.

35) Like a Flower

From the base of my spine, a root grows into the earth. A rich and beneficial sap rises throughout my body, as if in a canal, a stem. At the top of my head, a flower opens, giving off a fragrance of love and harmony, to welcome my loved ones and everyone else.

36) Bonfire

A light, a flame shines in the middle of my chest. It consumes restless thoughts, cumbersome emotions and limiting tensions. It radiates wisdom and humour. I invite friends to share this bonfire in their hearts. A similar fire dances at the centre of the earth. It brings peace and love to each and every one.

37) Scent of Flowers

I settle myself in the middle of a field of flowers. Their varied fragrances spread throughout my body, according to the local ambiance, playfulness or wisdom, calm or power. Once I am fulfilled, I offer flowers, beauty and love, all the way to the stars. I dance the celebration of flowers.

38) Beating Heart

Gradually, I become a tree. My roots grow and draw strength and trust from the earth. My trunk is broad and powerful. On my head a flower faces the sun and the moon. I breathe in and out, alternately towards the sky and the earth. My heart fills with wisdom and love. There, I find my balance, my inner voice. I can play a rhythm, a beat. The sky listens to the heart of the earth.

39) Water Drop

I see my body as a large drop of water. In the ribcage, a pearl sparkles, magical. It transmutes into joy and serenity, any worries, moods and tensions... I invite a loved one to join me. Our torsos let the water of life flow. We can dissolve in an ocean of love. We *are danced* by the waves.

40) Big Hug

I welcome myself as a dear friend. I invite a kind loved one to a playful and creative moment. First, I receive a massage, a hug, an expression of affection. Next, I can also offer tenderness to someone else, then from a distance to several people. Finally, I offer gentleness and peace to the whole world.

41) Gold and Silver

I melt into my body from top to bottom. Standing or sitting, a vertical axis runs from the top of my head to the middle of the perineum, passing through the spine and extending into the earth. I rotate

alternately: inhaling the strength of the sun from the right, the softness of the moon from the left. I sow this gold and silver for everyone all over the earth.

42) Baobab

I have the uprightness and strength of a baobab (or another tree). Deep in the earth, my roots draw strength and youth. Celestial roots rise from my head, towards the honey of the stars. I breathe alternately from heaven to earth and vice versa. Filled with love and light, I share with those who are dear to me.

43) Theatre in the Sun

I am in front of a theatre scene, where I am the main character. I admire the spectacle of my life. A cheerful sun shines in my chest, illuminating every part. It takes me peacefully to the centre of the earth. It illuminates my whole body and far beyond. It radiates peace and compassion over the comedy of life.

44) Flakes of Peace

Flakes of snow or cotton fall gently into me, bringing me their lightness and tenderness. From the outside, they caress my skin. They bring their silence and gentleness to my home and the surrounding area. Maybe with friends, I dance among these feathers of purity and peace that embrace the whole earth.

45) King, Queen Within

I realise how far I have come on this journey that led me here, up until now. Some encounters are like precious gems sprinkled along my path. Seated on a throne, I welcome their encouragement. I recognise the qualities they bestow on me. I thank them with flower petals or a free song. We celebrate life together with a joyful dance.

46) Heart Radio

I place my attention in my chest, a space of centring, from which I contemplate my body. My heart, like a transmitter-receiver, weaves a connection with nature and with others. I listen to this radio of life. I play a question-and-answer game. I harness my intuition. My heart sings for everyone.

47) Cosmic Root

My body is made up of the earth, I am an extension of it. A root descends from the sky to the top of my head. Gently, it grows throughout my body to drain toxins and frustrations towards the sky. Each cell receives a sap of peace and joy. The root comes from a magnificent tree in the sky. The same sap of compassion and love flows through every being.

4f8) Flame of Transformation

I welcome myself as the VIP of my life. In my pelvis, a gentle flame gradually lights up my inner space. It transforms my shadows, my insecurities and my complexes into vigour and lightness of being. I become this flame entirely. With other flames, we dance the fire of freedom and harmony.

49) Open the Windows

I step back from the theatre of my life. Behind me, a white light, pure air. In front of me, a beautiful bonfire. Gradually, from head to pelvis, windows open to ventilate the inner space, to the rhythm of the breath. I play at making air currents with a meditation partner (several suggestions).

50) Animal Friend

Comfortable in my bubble, I immerse myself in an inner landscape. I see or feel the presence of a specific animal or plant. We tame each other. Eventually, we talk to each other, cuddle, play and go on walks of discovery. They introduce me to their world and its resources. I may have found a friend for life.

51) Happiness Tea

Peacefully, I savour a fortifying, purifying and relaxing tea. It regenerates my whole body. I lovingly offer a cup of *Happiness Tea* to a guest invited in intention. The teapot then flows like a river. We plunge joyfully into it. It takes us into the sea, for a time of play and exploration.

52) Free Bird

I place myself in a protective and cosy egg. The sun hovers over me, incubating me. Its warmth and light gradually penetrate my whole body. I let myself hatch under the gentle sun. I take flight to admire

the scenery, carried by the wind of freedom. I can dance and sing thanks to life.

Conclusion: the adventure continues!

When seeking wisdom, first choose silence, second listen, third remember, fourth practice, fifth teach others. Paraphrasing Solomon Ibn Gabirol, Spanish philosopher and theologian of the 11th century.

Whatever stage you are at, I sincerely hope that this book has given you what you were looking for before you opened it, or what you need.

I hope it will inspire you to meditate, in one way or another, to reinvigorate your practice, and even to share your practice with others.

Meeting with friends over a coffee, a barbecue, for a board game or a walk is nice. So why not also have a moment of meditation, perhaps before or after?

This book is about facilitating access to meditation, by highlighting its playful and enjoyable aspects. I have tried to propose original, renewed and varied moments, if possible punctuated with surprises, adventure and creativity.

The objective is to kindle the desire, by making the practice attractive, enjoyable, light-hearted and engaging.

The meditations that have been proposed to you are designed to be practised, repeated, deepened, rediscovered time after time, modified, and shared. I wish you to discover its benefits in every aspect of your life.

One of the meditation groups I have been facilitating for years was initially called *Meditating for Pleasure*. The participants experienced that well-being, and all the fruits of meditation nourish perseverance.

Meditation also promotes a focused, appeased mind, from which ideas emerge easily. Thus, efficient action is promoted by inner calm and clarity of mind, and emotions are experienced without drama. Joy and serenity become the normal state.

Meditation brings intrinsic happiness, independent of circumstances.

It is a wonderful vehicle for looking within oneself, for being in relationships with others and for discovering what is alive and enriching in every situation.

On the temple of Apollo at Delphi was written a phrase later developed by Socrates: *Know thyself and thou shalt know the Universe and the Gods.*

Through introspection, meditation gradually allows one to know oneself deeply, to see one's fears and limiting thoughts in order to free oneself from them. It is then possible to access one's own potential for transformation.

Throughout our existence, there is an invitation to blossom, to open to our full potential: we become as we are being born into life.

Changing the world begins by changing oneself. Stated in a meditative way, it is to begin by recognising oneself, becoming aware of who one is, and then allowing oneself to be transformed by welcoming what is.

Becoming more conscious, more lucid, more objective, enables one to see others with serenity and kindness, changes one's relationship with the world, and in turn facilitates the evolution of those around one.

Everyone has the simple power to make their contribution. Offering a smile or a kind word can brighten the situation, bring lightness, hope, for the other and for oneself.

The greatest of journeys always begins with a first step. According to the *Tao Te Ching*, by Lao Tzu (China, 5th century BC).

Taking time to develop one's consciousness is to give oneself the means to develop one's determination and creativity in order to learn to love.

Contributing, at one's level, to change in and around oneself, is a step towards global evolution, towards a world that is more conscious of the interrelationships between beings, more respectful of the needs of each individual, taking care of beings and nature, in sharing and kindness.

The meditations presented here support you in a process of both individual and global love.

To illustrate the impact of meditation, the following experiment seems to me to be exemplary. It is taken from an article published in the New York Times ("Meditating to Try to Lower Crime Rate" 1 August 1993):

In 1993, John Hagelin, a renowned quantum physicist, supervised a study evaluating the impact of meditation on the crime rate in Washington DC. For the first five months of the year, crime had risen steadily and significantly.

He assembled a team of over 27 researchers and professionals from universities and local police.

Between 7 June and 30 July, a group of experienced meditators engaged in group meditation sessions at fixed times on a daily basis.

The principle of physics on which the experiment is based depends on the simultaneity and duration of meditation, and the quantity of meditators.

If a certain critical mass, *a necessary quantity*, of meditators is mobilised on a daily basis for a sufficiently long period of time, the positive effect of meditation should affect the entire population, with a decrease in violence and hostility, and an increase in creativity and positive feelings being observed.

And indeed, during this period, crime decreased by almost a quarter (-23%). No other influencing factors were found. The probability of a simple coincidence is one chance in five hundred million. Other similar experiments have produced similar results.

Meditation is a future tool for world peace and harmony, in and around yourself. This is what I have experienced throughout my life.

May this book inspire you to develop a daily personal practice.

An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching. Mahatma Gandhi

If it fits you, this book can become a faithful friend to accompany you every day on your path of meditation and fulfilment.

And why not create a friendly group to meditate with others, share experiences and encourage each other?

This book can be a gift to offer others the possibility of discovering meditation, broadening their practice or renewing it.

For the moment recordings are only available in French, as well as the full text of each of the book's meditation, on the website:

www.aucoeurmeditation.com

Click on the tab: **Le Livre**

The password is: **gratitude**

On this website you will also find a number of meditations of varying lengths that are freely accessible.

The current website will be replaced by a more efficient one, currently under development. Please do not hesitate to contact us at the following email address:

mediter.aimer@gmail.com

Of course, you are welcome to express yourself and enrich the website with your comments, suggestions and remarks.

There you will also find the opportunity to participate in meditation circles that I facilitate simultaneously in person and live on the internet.

This website is an evolving co-creation. Its purpose is to support those who need it, and to bring together those who desire it, to contribute to the collective consciousness.

I wish you serenity, joy and fulfilment.
With all my heart.

Rémi

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Meditate... Why? How?

A manual for loving oneself and others

Yes, meditation can bring joy and serenity. This book offers keys to understanding, tools for well-being and spirituality. It helps to move from the head to the heart, and to find meaning in one's life. It offers an opportunity to discover or rediscover an age-old practice from a broader perspective.

Through varied and recreational themes, it proposes a radically innovative and playful approach, based on creativity and rejuvenation. It explains how to save time by meditating!

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The author has been practising contemplative meditation since his childhood. As a teenager, he discovered yoga. Throughout his life, his practices have been enriched by the approach of different cultures. During meditations, he lets his inspiration guide him in creativity.

For many years now, he has been accompanying people on the path to happiness and self-knowledge. He is characterised by his kindness and good humour.