



Meditation has helped Caitlin slow down and improve her physical and mental health.

*'You have to make a choice between*



WELLBEING

# WAITING TO EXHALE

*Caitlin Cady always liked being in control, so the thought of meditating scared her. But once she sat down and let her thoughts leave her mind, it proved to be incredibly important to her health.*

*She shares her journey*

**L**ike many of us, Caitlin Cady tried and fell off the meditation wagon several times before it clicked for her, but she says that once it did, it was utterly and profoundly life changing. In this edited extract from her new book *Heavily Meditated*, she shares how she learned to let go, what it's done for her, and easy techniques to make it part of your own daily routine.

## KEEPING CONTROL

Terrified of meditating? I know, sounds ridiculous. Like being afraid of a kitten. But on a fundamental, subconscious level, I was absolutely petrified of taking my foot off the gas and loosening my grip on the steering wheel. I was afraid that if I let my guard down, my life would fall to pieces.

I was quite sure that if I slowed my roll, even for a moment, I'd lose my job, my friends and my boyfriend in quick succession. I'd balloon up to 200kg and spend my days lolling about in a muumu (and not a cute retro one, either). Without a job you can forget paying rent, much less a mortgage, so I'd probably have to live in a cardboard box. I'd never reach my full potential. Meditation symbolised relaxing and letting go. And therefore, meditation symbolised a loss of

control and all the terrifyingly bad things that would come with that. Without all that doing and achieving, who would I be? That was a scary thought. So my mind threw up a million and one reasons why I couldn't and shouldn't meditate. The resistance was strong.

## PARTING WITH PERFECTION

But here's the thing about resistance: it tells you that it's keeping you safe, but it's really keeping you small. Resistance stands in the way of your growth, your expansion, the actualisation of your full potential. And ultimately, you have to make a choice between believing the resistance or breaking through it and stepping into your potential.

I didn't want to be sick and stressed for the rest of my life. So I chose my potential...

And it worked. Meditating helped me slow my roll and calm down. And that opened the space for my body and mind to realign and get back on track. I said sayonara to the spin-cycles of stress and anxiety. I parted ways with perfectionism and that persistent, paralysing fear of failure. My nervous system found a way to reboot, and my immune system reset itself. Want some concrete evidence? There's not a trace of the Lyme disease I used to suffer from in my blood now. >>

Edited extract from *Heavily Meditated* by Caitlin Cady (Hardie Grant Books, \$30) Available where all good books are sold.



*believing the resistance or breaking through it*



## 'Meditation has become a tool for exploring



Caillin's dedication to meditation intensified when she became a mother.

more compassion for myself and others, and develop a built-in attitude of gratitude. For me, that means less anger, less angst and less nail biting. My mood is stable. My feathers don't get ruffled very often, and I rarely get my panties in a bunch (which is a lot more comfortable than the alternative). At night, I sleep like a log.

I totally didn't see this one coming, but meditation also paved the way for a healed relationship with my body, exercise and food. Long gone are regimented routines, endless cycles of restrictive diets, or battles with binge-y behaviour. I eat and move intuitively now, which keeps my body in a state of sustainable, holistic harmony and balance.

### IN THE MOMENT

When I became a mother, my dedication to meditation intensified. I now have three very high-stakes reasons to meditate: my children.

For me, being a distracted mother is the surest way to a shame spiral at the end of the day. Parenting is the highest stakes (and most humbling, honouring and challenging) job I've ever had. So when I feel like I've left some parenting potential on the table, or haven't shown up fully for my kids, I'm left heartbroken and feeling like a failure.

I'm a working mother, so distractions are pervasive, patience wears thin, multitasking can feel like the only way, and presence is something that can feel like it comes at a price. At my core, I know that multitasking is a bullshit way of working (and living), that distractions be damned, and that whatever the price of my presence is (missed emails, a pile of laundry), it's most certainly not worth it.

Meditation helps me stay present for my kids, and show up in the moments that matter – and it's usually the small moments that matter most. Meditation helps me listen better and deepen my wells of patience. It has trained me to remain mindful in all my interactions and experiences. I still make mistakes and have slip-ups, but the more I meditate, the more I succeed in the art of being. I'm a better mother, wife, and person for it. ✨

### MY MOTIVATION

It wasn't easy. It's an ongoing commitment, a perpetual learning curve. But I can tell you this. Come rain or shine, come sick or well, come screaming babies, aeroplanes, hospital stays or holidays, come pressing deadlines or alarm-clock fails, I show up and meditate. I'm a straight-up meditation junkie. It's a non-negotiable in my day. That doesn't mean that my meditation practice looks exactly the same every single day. But I show up, whether it's for 20 minutes or just 10 breaths.

Initially, my motivation for meditating was about slowing down so I could be well. But once my health was on track,

my reasons for showing up every day multiplied. Meditation has become a tool for exploring the edges of my potential. I want to be the best woman, mother, wife, friend, daughter, sister, boss, writer, creator and co-worker that I can be. I want to be the highest version of myself. Meditation helps me do that.

Through my meditation practice, I've discovered supercharged creativity, heightened intuition and inner guidance, as well as the confidence and certainty to trust myself (see ya later, self-doubt). Because of this, I feel aligned. I have more meaning and purpose in my life. I've found work that I'm passionate about, and have the courage to go after the things that excite me. Meditation has also helped me cultivate



WELLBEING

*the edges of my potential'*

## YOUR MEDITATION PROCESS

### Step-by-step

#### 1. Pick it and stick it

This catchphrase works wonders when it comes to avoiding hangovers (pick your poison and stick with it, mate – tequila and red wine don't mix!), but is also helpful when talking meditation.

##### PICK IT

Before you sit down to practise, commit to a length of time and a technique. Set your timer (I recommend seven minutes as a solid starting place. From there, you can build to 11 minutes, then 15 minutes, and ultimately 20–30 minutes when you're ready) or tee up a guided meditation track of your choice.

##### STICK IT

Once you've locked in your plan, stick to it and see it through. Why is this so critical? Let's say you sit down and think, 'Hey, I'll freestyle this today. I'll just do meditation on the breath until I'm ready to stop.' But then your mind starts wandering and you get frustrated AF. So you either quit or your mind tells you that this technique sucks and you need to do something else, and you shift gears into, say, a mantra meditation. And then you feel like that's not quite doing the trick, so you think, 'Stuff this, that's enough, I'm done', or you think, 'Well, I guess I'll try a body scan...' See where this is going? Without making a commitment to the time and technique in advance, you're setting yourself up for a wash of a meditation with a dissatisfaction hangover to prove it. So pick it and stick with it.

#### 2. Take a seat

Sit in a comfortable upright position. The goal is a still body, a straight spine and a feeling of being relaxed but alert.

#### 3. Start

It's helpful to draw a line in the sand to symbolise the start of your practice. What I mean by this is an expression, activity or gesture that serves as a cue that your meditation is beginning – something that creates a little barrier between regular life and meditation, between doing and being. Then, whatever happens next is meditation.

##### HERE ARE SOME IDEAS:

- Light a candle
- Put your phone on aeroplane mode
- Ring a chime or gong
- Set an intention or make a dedication (perhaps you'd like to set an intention to enjoy the process and relish the mini-holiday from doing, or to dedicate your practice to someone you love!)
- Even just starting your timer or pressing play on your guided meditation is enough to create that barrier.

#### 4. Focus

Close your eyes and give yourself a moment to land in your body. Become fully present to this moment. Noticing sensations in your body and taking a few deep, full-belly breaths is a great way to land. Once you're settled, bring to mind your chosen technique. Train your attention to your focal point, whether it's the breath, sounds, sensations, a mantra, a visualisation – or the instructions in the guided meditation of your choice.

#### 5. Mind the gap

In time, as you meditate, you may get a sneak peek into the space between your thoughts. Enjoy that gorgeous gap. It might be super brief or you might find yourself luxuriating in that liminal space. For me, it feels like peace, joy,

spaciousness and contentment all at once. It's like I get a glimpse into my full potential. I feel expansive and limitless. My troubles and worries are cut down to size and put into perspective. Positivity reclaims my perspective, washing away anxiety, worries and fear. An overriding sense of compassion erases any pettiness or judgements. I feel blanketed in deep calm and trust. That's a lot of good vibes packed into an instant, isn't it? Meditation gives you a lot of bang for your buck, no matter how small the gap.

#### 6. Drift happens

You may also notice that your attention drifts. Getting distracted is normal. You may find your mind rehearsing, replaying, fantasising, planning or imagining. You may find yourself getting intrigued by sounds in your environment. When you notice your attention drifting, just recognise that your mind has wandered (you can even mentally say to yourself: 'thinking') and then return your attention to your technique or focal point. Remind yourself that you are the sky, not the clouds. You'll find yourself repeating this cycle of 're-mindfulness' over and over. That's okay. This isn't military boot camp, yo. Lighten up, smile at your wandering mind, and give yourself a mental high five whenever you 're-mind' yourself to return to the technique at hand, always without judgement.

#### 7. High fives and high vibes

When the bell rings or the guided meditation ends, don't judge! It doesn't matter if it wasn't perfect. You got it done. So give yourself high fives and high vibes only.