



7 DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR WOMEN

BREATHE

EMBRACING GRATITUDE & JOY

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*For my sisters who are listening to their
heart and heeding its call. For strong
and beautiful women who are seeking,
striving, wondering, adventuring, risking,
loving, hurting, and hoping.
This book is for you.*

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INTRODUCTION

Beautiful Sister,

I am grateful you chose to read my free ebook, *Breathe*, and I am so excited for you to begin this spiritual journey. My intention with this meditation guide is to create a simple and easy way for you to begin incorporating a spiritual practice into each and every day of your life.

We are spiritual beings, and our hearts and souls desperately need to connect with our creator...with God...with our source. This world is filled with distractions, demands, and the static of busy lives. Technology, work, kids, spouses, friends, and commitments all fight for our time and attention. We need to realign our spirits and connect with God every day to cut through the chaos and tap into the limitless reservoir of peace, love, joy, hope and contentment available to us.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge that many women in this world have experienced horrendous hurt and loss, while others are suffering from depression or other mental illness. Please know this book does not in any way attempt to make light of your experience, nor do I offer it as a guaranteed “seven easy steps to improve your life” solution. In many situations, counseling or medication are appropriate, powerful, and important next steps in moving towards recovery. *Breathe* is a culmination of twenty five years of reading, journaling, processing, and spiritual growth. These are strategies that have worked for me and transformed my outlook on life, and I’m honored to share what I’ve learned with you. I hope this guide and these practices will make a difference in your life, as it has in mine.

You, my dear sister, are beautiful, courageous, and strong. You are powerful, full of wisdom, and made for unique and special plans and purposes only you can fulfill. Your soul is so worthy of your love, time and attention. You are about to begin a beautiful daily practice of giving your spirit tender love and care, connecting with God, and embracing your soul’s deepest yearnings for the sacred.

By tapping into the endless love you have within you, you can begin to experience a more abundant life. You have an opportunity every day to choose to live in the light. To push away fear and embrace the beauty all around you. You can choose each day to be grateful, to live in the moment, to see the magic in your everyday life. And this guide will help you do just that.

Each of the seven daily readings covers a key topic, such as Freedom, Love, and Gratitude. You can read through them in order each week, or use the Table of Contents to find the topic you feel most drawn to on any given day.

The daily readings are broken down into five sections.

1. My Commentary on the Topic of the Day
2. Sacred Breath
3. Meditation
4. Positive Affirmation
5. Guided Journaling (Optional)

The first four elements should take no more than ten minutes, so it is a very quick and easy way to incorporate a spiritual practice into your life. The fifth element, guided journaling, which is entirely optional, is simply a question or two related to the topic of the day, which may spur some additional deep thought you may wish to journal about. Sections 2 through 5 are explained in more detail below.

Sacred Breath

When is the last time you took a really deep - from the gut - breath? Maybe you feel like you haven't breathed deeply in years. Life can be chaotic, with so many things fighting for your time and attention. It's time to start breathing again, sister. You need and deserve a respite, and a few moments of deep breathing can do wonders for your state of mind.

The most important benefit of deep breathing is that it activates your parasympathetic nervous system, telling your body that it's time to relax and calm down. In fact, there is a group of neurons that transfer respiratory information to your brain, connecting your breathing to states of being, such as anxiety, excitement, and relaxation. These cells are

responsible for the calming effect experienced during meditation and deep breathing. Other benefits include:

- muscles relax and physical tension lessens
- oxygen delivery improves, increasing body system functions and improving mental concentration
- blood vessels dilate and blood pressure goes down
- endorphins are released, increasing feelings of well-being and offering pain relief
- detoxification improves, helping the lymphatic system function properly and encouraging the release of harmful toxins

When you take time to breathe deeply, you become more aware of your body and what is going on inside of you. As you begin to practice mindfulness of your body, you will also become more aware of the emotions you are experiencing. And once you are aware of your emotions, you can begin to deal with situations that were previously too stressful to address. You will focus more attention on your *whole* self...mind, body *and* spirit.

Sacred breath is turning the practice of deep breathing into a spiritual exercise by connecting with your spirit. We will practice deep breathing in each of our daily exercises, focusing on clearing our mind of other thoughts. To aid our efforts and to begin to get into the correct mindset for our meditation, you will repeat a couple of words - our Sacred Breath Words - as you breathe in and out.

Meditation

Meditation is focused thinking, a thoughtful and structured attempt to still our mind, connect with God, and create space to hear from Spirit. My experience has been that prayer is proactive - talking to God, praising and worshipping God; while meditation is receiving, hearing from God. I have prayed regularly for most of my adult life, but it has only been the last few years that I've incorporated more disciplined, regular meditation into my life. We must quiet our minds, hearts and souls to hear from God, connect deeply with Spirit, and receive clarity and guidance.

Our lives are so busy and hectic and filled with so much noise. Literal noise as in children laughing, talking or, at times, screaming. Televisions, ringing phones, electronic devices, cars, planes,

dishwashers - the hustle and bustle of our lives. We also experience *internal* noise - the dialogue within. The laundry list of what you have to do, self-doubt, self-criticism, worry, regret, guilt. This noise - both external and internal - can make it hard to connect with God in a meaningful way or to hear from Spirit. Meditation is a practice of choosing to seek out a quiet spot, turn off or limit the noise in our environment, and attempt to quiet our thoughts and turn inward.

Meditation takes practice, and initially it may seem difficult to do. You'll find that random thoughts pass through your mind. What you need to buy at the grocery store, what you're cooking for dinner, an errand you need to run. If you find this is happening often, it might be helpful to grab a spiral notebook and, before you begin these readings and meditations in the morning, jot down everything that comes to mind. Release it all on paper.

Be gentle with yourself. It's a new practice, and it does take time to learn to clear your mind and focus. There is no perfect way to meditate, so don't feel like it has to be done a certain way. The goal here is to go inward, connect with your soul and with God, breathe deeply, and create space to reflect and receive guidance.

Our daily meditation will guide your body, mind and spirit into a relaxed, peaceful state to allow you to connect, still your heart and mind, and listen for what God and the Holy Spirit may have for you. You may want to continue to read the meditation I've provided for several days and weeks, but as you get the hang of it, you can develop your own personal meditation practice. Another option is to search the internet for "guided meditation videos" and find one that works for you.

Positive Affirmation

Affirmations are positive statements that describe a desired outcome or goal. These positive statements are repeated often, in order to impress them on the subconscious mind. I challenge you to take one day to really focus on your thoughts and your words. Record them in a notebook. Are they mostly positive or mostly negative? Much of what you say and think may be quite negative, which affects your choices during the day and how you treat others or react to others.

Are you a glass half full or glass half empty kind of person? We are what we think and speak. We can create our reality by speaking it into existence. Our words are powerful. We must retrain our thinking and speaking into positive patterns, which can have a huge impact on the quality of our lives. Any activity, when performed repeatedly, has been shown by research to change the structure of the brain. New neural pathways are formed. You can “rewire” your thinking to look at the world through rose colored glasses, choosing to see the good in situations, and believe the best about others and yourself.

Do your words, your thoughts, your reactions come from a place of love or from a place of fear? All of the positive emotions we feel derive from love, while all of the negative emotions we feel derive, on some level, from fear. We need to start speaking positively over our world - over our environment, our homes, our bodies, our spouses, our children, our relationships, and our work.

I’ve been so inspired by the security guard in the housing development where we live. George is innately joyful. He smiles and waves at everyone, and his enthusiasm for his job is contagious. He picks a flower every day and puts it in his buttonhole. “How could I not be happy when I get to walk around this beautiful community every day and see the flowers and hear the birds sing,” he said to me one day. He is so joyful, and an example of how our attitude - no matter what we’re doing - is everything!

I started this process of rewiring my thoughts many years ago, and positive affirmations have been a life changer for me. It definitely can take time and practice to get to a point of consistency. But it is worth the effort. I’ve noticed my outlook on life has changed dramatically since I incorporated the practice of positive affirmations. I certainly have my negative moments like everyone else, and can find my thoughts turning sour. However, not only am I filled with an underlying feeling of peace and happiness (even despite sad or frustrated moments), but I’ve learned to quickly catch when my thoughts are turning negative, and refocus on gratitude and joy. My overall sense of calm and contentment is because of my mindset. I speak positively over myself and my life on a daily basis, and I am mindful about not allowing myself to ruminate on negative thoughts.

I instilled this practice into my children as well. Each morning when I would drop off my boys at school, we recited the following positive affirmation together: “I’m smart and I’m strong. I can and I will. I’m a leader, not a follower.” I wanted my boys to know their mindset is everything. Believe you can and you will. My husband and I don’t allow them to speak negatively about themselves or others. It happens at times of course, but it’s always a learning lesson about how powerful words can be. And once you’ve released them into the world, you can’t take them back.

Our daily exercises in this guide will include a short paragraph of positive affirmations related to the subject of the day. I would encourage you to repeat some of the phrases to yourself throughout the day, and begin to come up with your own daily positive affirmations. At the end of each positive affirmation section, I have included a one sentence affirmation that aligns with the topic of the day. You may wish to write this positive affirmation (or create your own) on a slip of paper and carry it with you in your wallet or pocket, or post it somewhere you will see it throughout the day.

Guided Journaling (Optional)

Journaling - the process of writing down your thoughts - clears your emotions, helps you process decisions, and can also reduce stress, according to research studies. It can help you tap into your creative potential, increase your chances of achieving goals, aid recovery, provide clarity, and expand gratitude.

Although the journaling section is entirely optional, I recommend writing - even a little bit - every day, as it is such a beneficial practice. You may find that you have a lot more to say than you would ever guess! Once you put pen to paper, it can feel great to clear your mind. Each daily journaling exercise will follow the topic of the day, asking one or two open ended questions that should prompt additional thought or reflection.

I am so excited for you to begin this journey! Thank you for entrusting me with your beautiful spirit. I am honored and humbled to be joining you on your sacred path.

With Gratitude and Love,

Sara Christenson

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DAY ONE

SOLITUDE

Certain springs are tapped only when we are alone.

*Women need solitude in order to find again the true essence of themselves;
that firm strand which will be the indispensable center of a whole web of human
relationships.*

-Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Solitude provides an opportunity to turn inward and let go of striving, to release fears and judgement, allowing us to see more clearly and receive God's guidance. Practicing solitude gives us the space to examine our thoughts, feelings, fears, and worries. We are free to clear our mind, cut out all distractions, and listen to our heart and soul.

Underneath all of our desires is a desire for God, for connection to Spirit and to ourselves. Solitude gives us the quiet we need to connect and satisfy the empty place in our soul. Many of us are starved for rest, but not physical rest. Soul rest; quiet for the soul. We need to give undivided attention to God, to spirit, to our soul. We must tune in and listen to our inner thoughts and dialogue.

You may wish to create a sacred space for your solitude. Cut out all distractions and unplug from electronics, if only for a short time. Grab a journal, and create time and space for God to speak. I've carved out a corner in my office for my quiet time. I have a comfy chair, a pillow and a soft blanket, as well as a portable back massager. Next to my chair is a small side table with a tabletop water fountain and an oil diffuser, as well as a stack of inspirational books and my journal. I also have a small wireless speaker, and during my quiet time I play gregorian chants or 432 hz music (supposedly the "sound of creation"). I find both to be calming and soothing to my soul.

It may be helpful to begin your quiet time by doing a brain dump (see our guided journaling exercise for today). Use your journal or a separate notebook to write down all of your to do's, cares, concerns, worries or fears. Get it all out. Clear your mind. Notice your inner thoughts and fears.

Creating space and time for solitude is the first step in your spiritual practice. It sets the stage for the rest of the spiritual practices we will incorporate in this meditation guide. Give yourself an opportunity to experience God's presence. Stop striving, stop trying to control everything or "work it out." Give God space to speak and for you to receive guidance, to hear the still small voice of God. Spirit will provide so much clarity for you. Your spirit, your soul will guide you, if you'll only take some time to listen.

Embrace the practice of solitude, get to know God, get to know Spirit, and get to know your authentic self. Go inward, dear one. I'm so excited for what you will discover!

Sacred Breath

Find a quiet spot, and make sure you are seated in a comfortable position. Relax your body, and clear your mind. Inhale deeply through your nose as you count to seven. Now exhale through your nose as you count to seven. Do this several times until you are comfortable with the rhythm. Then, as you are breathing in, speak this word internally - *Solitude*. As you exhale - *Peace*. Continue breathing and repeating your Sacred Breath Words for a minute or two. Or, continue longer if you wish, until you feel you have reached a place of calm and connectedness.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day:

Inhale - Solitude

Exhale - Peace

Meditation

As we begin this meditation, allow your breath to follow its natural rhythm. Feel your breath as it flows in and out of your chest. If your mind starts to wander, don't worry, it's normal. Be intentional about acknowledging the thought, but let it go, and return to observing your breath.

If you are finding it challenging to quiet your mind, it may help to focus - with your eyes remaining closed - on your nose or the space between your eyes to help maintain your connection. Or, you may return to your

Sacred Breath, inhaling and exhaling deeply for seven counts each. You may also repeat the Sacred Breath Words of the day.

This is your time, Dear Sister, to go within, to connect with God, and to receive clarity. As you meditate, you may “hear” a word from God, or sense a “knowingness” about a topic on which you needed guidance. This is God speaking to you.

Let your muscles become loose and relaxed. Start by wiggling your toes, then focus on relaxing your feet, your ankles, then the lower part of your legs, your knees, your thighs, your pelvis, up to your stomach, your back, your shoulders, and your chest. Now wiggle your fingers, relax your hands, your lower arms, your elbows, your upper arms, your neck. Move your attention to your face and relax your cheeks and lips, your forehead, and the top of your head. Feel your body, relaxed from head to toe.

Envision a brilliant bright light, God’s light, filling every pore and cell of your body, from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet, expanding and shining brightly to everything and everyone around you. Imagine the light shining out of the soles of your feet and the palms of your hand, to fill the room you are in, and then shining beyond the room, to fill your whole house, your neighborhood, your city, your state, your country, and to the entire world. Imagine the entire earth glowing with light, as bright as the sun.

Now that you are in a relaxed, beautiful state of connection, continue to meditate for a few minutes, breathing and connecting. Breathe naturally, and “just be” in the moment, with your mind clear and open to receive. Stay in this state as long as is comfortable for you. Soak up God's presence, and enjoy your sacred time with the divine, dear sister.

As this meditation time comes to an end, take a few deep, cleansing breaths. Inhale through your nose, exhale through your nose. Now begin moving your fingers and toes, now your hands and feet. Gently move your head side to side, and then up and down. Now very slowly open your eyes. Offer thanks to God for the beautiful time you’ve just shared.

Note: You may wish to keep a journal next to you during meditation, so you can jot down anything important that may come to you during your sacred time with God.

Positive Affirmation

I'm grateful for this time alone with you, God. I bask in the peace of this morning, as I connect with you and restore my soul. I'm grateful for this time of solitude to focus on what's important. Fill my heart with serenity. Help me to let go of those things I cannot control. I choose this day to embrace a sense of calm, as I allow your love to fill me up from head to toe. I can and I will allow my connection with you to carry me through this day, to be my guiding compass. Thank you, Spirit, for a peace that passes all understanding, allowing me to weather any storm this day.

Affirmation of the Day: I am peaceful and I am calm, no matter what this day holds for me.

Note: You may want to write each Affirmation of the Day on a slip of paper and carry it with you, repeating it to yourself throughout the day.

Guided Journaling (Optional)

Let's practice a brain dump. Pull out a journal or a separate notebook, as you may not want to save these notes in your journal. Write down any thought that comes to mind. This exercise is an opportunity to clear your mind of all the miscellaneous thoughts running around in your brain, which tend to hijack your ability to practice solitude. It may also be helpful to journal your thoughts and feelings about solitude. Do you feel lonely when you are alone? Are you restless or do you find comfort in the silence, left alone to your thoughts? If so, why? Write as long as you'd like, until you feel you've cleared your mind.

DAY TWO

FREEDOM

*We must be free not because we claim freedom,
but because we practice it.
-William Faulkner*

Freedom is the openness to follow my soul's cry; the passions that call to me from the core of my being. Freedom is not a place but a state of being, the willingness to express one's self, to focus on nurturing our own souls, and to invest in self care. What do you love to do? What brings you joy? Give yourself permission to take time to indulge.

What is holding you captive? Self doubt? Fear? Negative self talk? Release yourself from the control of fear and past hurts, and let go of self-judgment and condemnation. Does money - or negative beliefs about money - keep you from experiencing abundance? I don't necessarily mean getting more money (although of course that would be wonderful), but from *feeling* abundance. Maybe you need to free yourself from the control money has over you.

Many of us are trying to live up to expectations that were placed on our shoulders by well meaning parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses, friends, or society. Free yourself from the self-imposed ideals of what you should do and should be. Embrace the freedom to be real - with yourself and others. Imagine your life free of stress, anxiety and judgement.

I believe one way to begin to experience freedom (besides the spiritual practices we will go through in this guide) is to physically connect with nature. We are one with mother earth and it's so important that we spend time connecting. Our bodies and our souls need it.

Whether it's the beach, mountain, woods, plains or desert, there's a freedom in the great outdoors, a wildness to creation, that permeates the soul and calls to a long forgotten part of us. Embrace and commune with mother nature. Feel the wind in your hair, the sun on your face. Listen to the sweet song of the birds...maybe you've never noticed them before. It's easy to tune them out when your mind is filled with negative

thoughts or a long list of to dos. Take a walk, go for a hike, find a park. Feel the sun on your face. Listen to the birds. Take off your shoes and walk in the grass, sand or dirt. If it's winter where you are, take a walk in the snow. Immerse yourself in nature, and embrace the freedom that fills your soul. We are part of creation. We are one with this earth. Our bodies, our souls, and our minds need to connect with that which can and will nurture us and sustain us.

You've been carrying around so much for so many years - so much baggage and so many expectations. It's time to let it all go. Release it and let the whispering wind carry it away forever.

Inhale deeply filling every part of your lungs with breath, with life. Now, release a very, very deep sigh that's been a long time coming. Embrace your wildness, sister, and bask in the freedom.

Sacred Breath

Please refer to the instructions for Sacred Breath included on Day One.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day:

Inhale - Freedom

Exhale - Let go

Meditation

Move into your meditation time, as outlined in Day One.

1. Allow your breathing to return to its natural rhythm.
2. Let your muscles become loose and relaxed, from toes to head. Imagine a bright light filling your body, shining outwardly.
3. Continue to meditate for a few minutes or more. Soak up God's presence!
4. If your mind wanders, return to your Sacred Breath, inhaling and exhaling for seven counts or repeating the Sacred Breath Words of the day.
5. End by taking a few deep breaths and move your hands, feet and head.
6. Open your eyes.
7. Journal any revelations

Please refer to Day One for full instructions for the guided meditation time. Given this is a new practice you are cultivating, we will stick with the same meditation throughout the seven days to allow yourself to become familiar and comfortable with the process, rather than trying to follow new instructions every day.

Positive Affirmation

I am grateful this morning for my uniqueness. Thank you, God, for creating me with special talents and abilities that only I can share with the world. I embrace freedom and choose to step into my soul's calling, letting go of any burdens I'm carrying that don't belong to me. I release fear, guilt and judgement. Each morning is an opportunity to start again, and I thank you, Spirit, for the gift of this new day. My soul is crying out to be set free, to live a life with wild abandon, embracing my gifts, loving fiercely, and sharing my true heart with the world.

Affirmation of the Day: I am free to be me, and I choose to let my brilliant light shine today.

Guided Journaling (Optional)

What are some fears or past hurts that you need to let go of? What expectations - either yours or others - have you carried with you all these years? Do you have any dreams or goals you've hidden away? Is there something that seems silly or crazy you really want to do? What if you gave yourself permission to pursue it?

DAY THREE

JOY

*Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves
to recognize how good things really are.*

— Marianne Williamson

Joy is more a state of being than an emotion. It comes from the soul; an orientation towards a deep contentment that is not dependent on external circumstances. Joy is an attitude of the heart and spirit, present inside of us at all times, providing a reservoir we can tap into at any time. We can be unhappy in a *moment*, but still feel joy in our soul.

I'm sure you're asking, how can I create more joy in my life? I believe it starts with taking an inventory of how amazing, how simply abundant, your life is right now. What are you grateful for? These can be large or small things. Who are the most important people in your life and why are they important to you? Give thanks for your home, a warm bed to sleep in, and good food to fill your belly. Do you have a faithful dog or cat that's always at your side? Feel the joy and gratitude and give him or her an extra dose of love.

And secondly, what do you love to do? What makes you happy, elated, and content? What creates a feeling of warmth in your belly? That cup of tea or coffee in the morning? Sit down for a moment with no distractions, savor it, express thanks during those few moments for all the good in your life. Do you go for walks or hikes? Feel the cool breeze on your face, the warmth of the sun, notice the crisp beauty of newly fallen snow. Don't just walk mindlessly with earbuds and music, checking Facebook or making calls. Turn off the ringer and put your device away or leave it at home. Look around, breathe deeply, thank God for all you see around you. Marvel at nature. Listen to the birds sing. Be present in the moment.

Every time I see a hummingbird - and I see them everywhere, every day - I stop and soak up the moment. They're amazing creatures with the most beautiful song. I watch them dance, hover, and play. I listen to their sweet music, chirps and chatter. I've been brought to tears more

times than I can count. They absolutely *fill* me with joy, and remind me to embrace each and every moment.

Several years ago, I put together a list of some of my favorite things. I call it my Joy List. It reminds me to focus on the simple things that bring me joy, and helps me to be intentional about including them in my life on a daily basis. Self care is so important, ladies! We are nurturers, caretakers, usually moving at hyperspeed, and juggling a hundred things at once. We need to take care of our souls, embrace moments that make us happy, and the Joy List is a great reminder to do just that. In the daily journaling exercise below, you'll have the opportunity to start your own Joy List.

When I'm feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed, it's more often than not because I haven't indulged in self care, or I've been rushing through life without taking time to be present or express gratitude. As a result, I'm running on an empty tank. I'm an introvert, so I restore myself by being alone. If I don't make space to regroup, relax, and exhale deeply, I'm not much fun to be around. But even when I don't have the opportunity to get away or spend much time alone, there's something powerful about stopping for a second to acknowledge the joy in an everyday moment. Breathing in deeply, recognizing the beauty of what's before me in that moment, and savoring the happiness it brings is invigorating for my soul.

Sacred Breath

Please refer to the instructions for Sacred Breath included on Day One.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day: Inhale - Joy
Exhale - Wonder

Meditation

Please refer to Day One for full instructions for the guided meditation time.

Positive Affirmation

Thank you, God, for the breath in my lungs. As I begin this day, in the sanctuary and quiet of the morning, I am grateful for life, for the promise of a new day dawning. Thank you for the pleasure of the simple things in life you have created for my enjoyment - the feeling of the warm sun on my face, the soft caress of a gentle breeze, the music of a lovely song bird, the intricate beauty of a flower blooming, the tapestry of freshly fallen snow. I choose to find solace and happiness in this day. I am expecting wonder and joy in everyday moments, to delight in my friends and family, and to find humor in unexpected or difficult moments. I'm calling down a bit of heaven on earth today, God. Thank you for the laughter and bliss I am about to experience.

Affirmation of the Day: I am strong and beautiful, and today I choose joy!

Guided Journaling (Optional)

Create your own Joy List. What are five to ten (or more) activities or things that bring you great joy - moments of calm, peace or elation - and how can you incorporate them into your life on a more regular basis?

DAY FOUR

GRATITUDE

*Gratitude, warm, sincere, intense, when it takes possession of the bosom,
fills the soul to overflowing and scarce leaves room for any other sentiment or thought.*
- John Quincy Adams

Gratitude is an appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to you. It is an affirmation of goodness, a recognition and acknowledgement of the good things in our lives that we value. Living with gratitude means attempting to maintain a state of thankfulness and appreciation at all times.

It doesn't mean that life is perfect. We all experience anger, sadness and frustration. That's life. It's tough and messy sometimes. I certainly have my ugly moments. I snap at my husband, yell at the kids, stress about finances, worry about my health, regret a moment when I could have been nicer to someone. And many of you may be in the middle of some really tough stuff - divorce, death, terminal illness. I'm not asking you to mask your pain or pretend hard moments don't exist. Rather, amidst the sadness, anger and disappointment, being grateful means we also look for beauty and goodness to appreciate. As we train ourselves to look for good things - in the midst of the messiness - our hearts and minds are filled with love, and joy begins to coexist in tough times.

The benefits of practicing gratitude are substantial and have been studied widely. People who regularly practice gratitude by being mindful and noticing the things they're thankful for experience many of the following: more positive emotions, lower blood pressure, better sleep, stronger immune systems, feeling more alive, feeling more joy, less loneliness, and an ability to express more compassion and kindness.

There are many ways to practice gratitude. You can start each day by writing a list of what you're grateful for in your journal, or purchase a gratitude journal tailored to help you express more gratitude (also available in children's editions). Another idea is to start a gratitude jar. Any jar or container will do. Label it "Gratitude Jar," and place some small pieces of paper and a pen next to it. Everytime you think of

something you're grateful for, write it on a slip of paper, fold it up, and place it in the jar. You could do this yourself or with your family. Once each week or month, sit down and read all the gratitude notes. Or, if you have a family, incorporate gratitude into your daily routine by starting your evening meal with each person sharing one thing for which they're grateful. Another idea is to write gratitude letters to people who have impacted your life, or send gratitude notes each week or month to someone who has done something nice for you. You get the idea. There are numerous options for expressing gratitude; the important point is to develop a consistent habit.

I've found this practice to be profoundly impactful in my life. When I'm having a bad day or in a foul mood, which happens to us all, it's quite amazing how quickly I can turn things around by taking a moment to express gratitude for all that is good in my life. It quickly minimizes whatever issue was getting me down. Each morning, I spend time on my back patio, sipping a mocha, talking to my hummingbirds, and either writing or thinking grateful thoughts. My journals are filled with lists of things for which I'm grateful. It's a great way to start the day - a heart full of gratitude.

Sacred Breath

Please refer to the instructions for Sacred Breath included on Day One.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day: Inhale - Grateful
Exhale - Thankful

Meditation

Please refer to Day One for full instructions for the guided meditation time.

Positive Affirmation

I am grateful this morning for being alive. There is no one else on this planet like me, and I possess beautiful and unique gifts to offer to this world. Thank you, God, for the sun that brightens our days, and the moon that glows at night. I'm thankful I can breathe deeply and set my intentions for a wonderful day. I'm full of gratitude for who I am, for all of

the experiences I've had, and for the people I've met that have made me the woman I am today. I choose to be grateful, knowing that God has a plan and purpose to use my special blueprint and tapestry of wisdom for divine good in this world. I'm grateful for all of the beauty in my life, and I choose to open my eyes to see more of it every day. I am overwhelmed with thankfulness.

Affirmation of the Day: I have so much to be thankful for. Today I choose gratitude!

Guided Journaling (Optional)

What are you most grateful for in your life? Create a gratitude list. It may contain five items or fifty - include as many as possible. Once you begin, I guarantee you'll find so many things for which to be grateful. Girl, your blessings are many!

DAY FIVE

ABUNDANCE

Not what we have but what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance.
-Epicurus, Greek Philosopher

Living an abundant life has everything to do with our outlook. It means we live life with a focus on joy and gratitude for all we have, rather than ruminating on feelings of lack or dissatisfaction.

Abundance has nothing to do with money. It's a state of mind. You have everything you need to live an abundant life.

Take an inventory and acknowledge all the abundance in your life right now. Yesterday you began creating a gratitude list. A life well lived is in the small details. Do you have a home, enough food, a warm bed? Are you surrounded by family? Do you have dear friends to do life with? I'm blessed to have a tribe of incredible women in my life, with whom I connect at a deep level and can share my heart and innermost thoughts. Their friendship feels lavishly abundant to me.

There are so many sweet moments and gifts in our daily lives we can miss if we're not present. Being mindful of blessings in your life and acknowledging them as such will increase your feelings of abundance. A house strewn with toys means you're blessed with children. A sink full of dirty dishes means you have plenty of food to eat. When work seems stressful, express gratitude for the financial means to support yourself and your family.

At times, balancing home, career, husband, two active boys, a dog, and the responsibilities of daily life can overwhelm me. I've learned to create moments of reflection and rest throughout the day, taking time to stop and ponder, be present, express thanks, and appreciate my life in all its busyness. The sound of laughter when my boys are playing together is the sweetest music, and an opportunity to give thanks for motherhood. A quick walk around the neighborhood at lunchtime gives me fifteen minutes to breathe deep and express gratitude for the birds, the trees, and the community where I live. Build more moments like these into your daily life, and your feelings of abundance will begin to grow.

Look out your window and marvel at the trees, warm sun, flowers, birds singing, or a glistening blanket of fresh snow. Do you have a loving pet who is always by your side? A partner who's been there with you in both the darkness and the sunshine, the weeds and the flowers? Feel the breath in your lungs and thank your body that works so hard on your behalf. Give your body love and gratitude.

One of the greatest realizations you'll ever make is that you already have everything you need to be happy. You possess inside - right now - everything you need to achieve all of your dreams and desires, to be who you want to be. You are smart, strong, capable, wise and creative. Ask Spirit to open up your eyes to the abundance that is already yours.

Begin offering thankfulness and appreciation for everything you already have. Carve out small moments in your days to stop, go inward, and offer thankfulness. When you wake up in the morning, before you even get out of bed, start expressing gratitude for the abundance in your life. Thank you, Spirit, for the breath in my lungs, for my body that works so hard for me (even if you have ailments, we're speaking *positively* over our world), for my family and friends. Thank you for this beautiful day, a fresh start, a new beginning. Thank you for all the amazing opportunities that are going to come my way today. Open my eyes to see them, to embrace them, and to be grateful.

Abundance is a state of mind. What has been surprising and powerful to me is that when I embraced my life - exactly as it was - and began focusing on the abundance I already had, more abundance began to show up! It's not a magic formula nor supernatural forces at work. When we have an "abundant mindset" we're able to see blessings and gifts for what they are. It's like when you buy a new car, and suddenly you see that make and model everywhere. You had no idea there were so many cars just like yours on the road! Your eyes have been opened. You're recognizing something you never noticed before. Abundance works the same way.

We have a choice in how we view ourselves, our life, our circumstances, our job, and our relationships. Give it a try, sister. Make a choice today to begin seeing your life as abundant! Take stock of all the good in your life. Recognize how capable, strong and creative you are. Acknowledge

the gift of each day, of your unique and special lifepath, full of blessings and joy!

Sacred Breath

Please refer to the instructions for Sacred Breath included on Day One.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day: Inhale - Abundance
Exhale - Grateful

Meditation

Please refer to Day One for full instructions for the guided meditation time.

Positive Affirmation

Thank you, God, for all of the abundance in my life. I invite more of what is important into my life - family, friends, relationships, health, joy, laughter, smiles, good food, wonderful experiences, travel, and blessings, large and small. Open my eyes, Spirit, to all that I have to be grateful for. Help me to see your blessings, every day, in the ordinary and simple activities of my life. I choose joy. I choose gratitude. I choose appreciation. I choose to see abundance.

Affirmation of the Day: My life is abundant and full of blessings.

Guided Journaling (Optional)

Create a list of the abundance in your life. List anything, large or small, that comes to mind. It may be something physical, emotional or spiritual. For example: My life is abundant because I have family and friends that love me. My life is abundant because I have a home and warm bed to sleep in. My life is abundant because I feel connected to God. We have SO much to be thankful for! Life is SO good!

DAY SIX

CELEBRATE

*The more you praise and celebrate your life,
the more there is in life to celebrate.*

-Oprah Winfrey

As we've been reflecting on the past couple days, gratitude is being thankful and living life with a readiness to show appreciation. The only moment we're promised is this one we're living right now - it's the only one that's absolutely guaranteed. So let's truly embrace *this* moment, celebrate being alive, and express gratitude for all we have.

We created our Joy Lists in our day three journaling exercise. What are your joy inducing moments? Indulge in those activities as often as you can. Focus on celebrating big and small accomplishments, or no accomplishments at all, just the joy of being alive. Go out to lunch by yourself at your favorite restaurant. Or order take out and eat it at your favorite spot. Have lunch outside on your patio, feeling the wind in your hair and the sun on your face, chewing slowly and expressing gratitude for the beauty of the day. Maybe it's a long bath, meditation or certain music that makes you happy. I love chai tea and blueberry muffins, and once a week I buy myself these treats, take them to a park nearby, sit in the sun, and savor every sip and bite. Take a blanket to a park with your journal and bask in the sun for a half hour. Take a much needed nap. Indulge in a massage and pedicure. Find a beautiful view point, or stroll around an art museum, arboretum or botanical garden. Take a long walk or hike a couple times a week. Nature is God's creation. Celebrate the beauty, the majesty, the wildness of nature, and connect with your soul.

Granted I live in California and the weather usually cooperates, but I'm intentional about stepping away from my desk and bringing my lunch outside and taking at least a half hour to eat slowly, savor my food, breathe deeply and enjoy the outdoors. I'm grateful to have three to five hummingbirds that live in my trees in my backyard. I can't tell you how much joy it brings me to see them buzzing about, chattering, and drinking the sweet nectar from my feeders. Just a few days ago, my favorite, Pip (short for Pretty in Pink, because she has a fuschia head) came within a foot of my face, directly in front of me, and hovered there

for about 10 seconds. It was exhilarating to be eye to eye with her, seeing every last detail of her delicate features. To me, this is celebrating life.

Another way I celebrate life is to head to my favorite rooftop restaurant once or twice a month to treat myself to lunch, and work outside on their patio all day. Good food and a change of scenery spark inspiration and can quickly get you out of the work “blahs.” My best friend, Niki, and I schedule one day “retreats” to a beachside resort several times a year. We talk, journal, have lunch, meditate, laugh, cry, and celebrate our friendship and the joy of being alive.

Offer gratitude, praise and worship for how God has worked in your life. Acknowledge to yourself all you’ve accomplished, what you’ve been through, how far you’ve come, and where you’re at right now. You are doing so well, my sister. I’m so proud of you. You’ve been on quite a journey throughout your life, and you have learned so much. You’re amazing! Commit today to creating space and time to celebrate your life!

Sacred Breath

Please refer to the instructions for Sacred Breath included on Day One.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day:

Inhale - Celebrate

Exhale - Praise

Meditation

Please refer to Day One for full instructions for the guided meditation time.

Positive Affirmation

Today, I celebrate being alive. Thank you, God, for this amazing life I get to live. I’m grateful for the breath in my lungs, a body that works so hard, eyes with which to see the beauty of this world. I breathe deeply, embracing the possibilities that await me today. There is so much to celebrate! I will find moments to pause today, and express gratitude for all the good things in my life.

Affirmation of the Day: I love my life. Today I will take time to praise God and celebrate life.

Guided Journaling (Optional)

Today you'll create a list of ways you can celebrate life and your accomplishments. Write down five to ten (or more) celebratory activities you enjoy that would be easy to incorporate into your daily schedule. It may be "turning off my cell phone and having lunch outside on my patio or in a park," or "picking up a latte and heading to my favorite spot for some quiet time," or "getting a massage on my lunch hour a couple times a month." Did something exciting happen at work? Treat yourself to that expensive bottle of wine you never buy. Or maybe you want to indulge in a more extravagant celebration like "booking a weekend retreat I've been thinking about," or "renting a cabin on Airbnb for my family for a little getaway." The more celebrations we can build into our daily lives, the more joyful and abundant our life will feel. You're amazing and you've accomplished so much. Your heart and soul are so worthy of love and attention, and you deserve a celebration, sister!

DAY SEVEN

EASE

Ego says, 'Once everything falls into place, I'll feel peace.'
Spirit says, 'Find your peace, and then everything will fall into place.'
-Marianne Williamson

Have you ever had a day where everything just seemed to go right for you? A day when you were “in the flow,” things fell into place, synchronicities were everywhere, and time seemed to fly?

Every day can be like that. How? Many of us think “when this or that happens” then I’ll feel peace. But life doesn’t work like that. You CAN have the life you want. Right now. But it starts with shifting your perspective and embracing all the good in your life.

We can create a beautiful life, girlfriend, by changing our mindset. It is not dependent on how much money is in your bank account, or your love life (or lack thereof), or what job you have. There is so much in this life we can’t control. People come and go, money ebbs and flows, objects break, relationships dissolve, jobs are lost, dreams don’t materialize. The one thing we do have control over is our mind. We *must* choose joy. We *must* choose gratitude. We *must* choose to invest in our self care. We *must* choose to connect with our creator and feed our soul.

Commit to loving yourself and embracing your life, right now, no matter what it looks like. Make the effort to let go of expectations, to choose love over fear, to find peace within yourself. Express gratitude for even the smallest little thing. Acknowledge the abundance you already have in your life. Start small. Maybe initially your gratitude list only contains an item or two. Maybe you don’t even know what brings you joy. I guarantee as you begin to incorporate the practices we’ve covered this past week into your life, you’ll find more and more things for which to be grateful, and your joy list will continue to grow.

Ease is what happens when these spiritual practices become an effortless part of your daily life. Live with a grateful heart. Let go of your fears and worries. Forgive those who have wronged you. Open your heart and embrace love. Celebrate life and participate in activities that

bring you great joy. Create a sacred space for meditation and reflection. Invest time in solitude. Connect with God. Open your soul and spirit to what God has for you. Surrender to God and the mystery of what might happen. Open yourself to new experiences and new possibilities.

Instead of saying no, say yes! Yes to life. Yes to love. Yes to beauty. Yes to joy.

I promise you, as you begin to live life with joy and gratitude, you will begin to experience a new reality. Your life will feel abundant. You've got this, sister!

Sacred Breath

Please refer to the instructions for Sacred Breath included on Day One.

Sacred Breath Words of the Day:

Inhale - Ease

Exhale - Calm

Meditation

Please refer to Day One for full instructions for the guided meditation time.

Positive Affirmation

Thank you, God, for the quietness and tranquility of this beautiful morning. I am grateful for the love and joy that fill my heart. I know that when I do the important work, which is spending time connecting with my inner being, with you, with my life source, that everything begins to fall into place. Life becomes effortless, as my eyes are opened and I begin to see the beauty and the abundance that surrounds me everywhere. Thank you for the ease I feel. I choose to see the divine in everyday moments. I will look into the eyes of every person I meet today, smile and glimpse their souls, knowing they are a spiritual being, seeking an opportunity for connection. Thank you, God, for blessings and abundance flowing effortlessly to me.

Affirmation of the Day: I am content and calm, and today I choose ease.

Guided Journaling (Optional)

Imagine the perfect day, full of joy and happiness, where everything went right. What would it look like? What would you be doing? How would you feel? Journal about your perfect day in as much detail as you can. Imagine it. Believe it. Achieve it.

DEAR SISTER,

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING MY MEDITATION GUIDE. I HOPE YOU ENJOYED IT AND THAT THE PRACTICES HAVE GIVEN YOU SOME STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING MORE JOY AND GRATITUDE INTO YOUR LIFE.

NOW THAT YOU'VE FINISHED, YOU MAY WISH TO READ THROUGH THE GUIDE AGAIN FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT IT TAKES 21 DAYS TO FORM A HABIT. AT THE END OF THREE WEEKS, YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE SHOULD BE A NEW WAY OF LIFE!

I WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

REACH OUT VIA MY WEBSITE:

WWW.THRIVEWELLNESS.COACH

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE,

SARA

XOXO