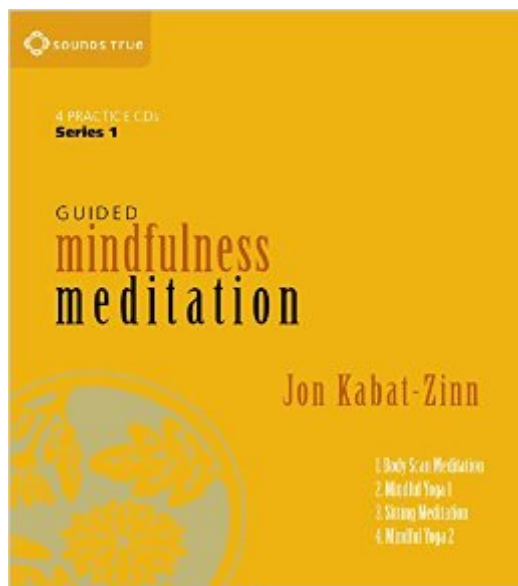


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# Guided Mindfulness Meditation: A Complete Guided Mindfulness Meditation Program From Jon Kabat-Zinn



## Synopsis

Perhaps no other person has done more to bring mindfulness meditation into the contemporary landscape of America than Jon Kabat-Zinn. Through a number of research studies, and through Kabat-Zinn's pioneering work at the University of Massachusetts Medical School where he is founder of its world-renowned Stress Reduction Clinic, mindfulness is finally being recognized as a highly effective tool for dealing with stress, chronic pain, and other illnesses. Now with this four-part home training course, Jon Kabat-Zinn offers listeners the definitive mindfulness meditation practice on CD. We are not trying to actively achieve a state of deep relaxation or any other state for that matter while practicing mindfulness, he teaches. But interestingly, by opening to an awareness of how things actually are in the present moment, we often taste very deep states of relaxation and well-being of both body and mind. Join the bestselling author of *Coming to Our Senses* (Hyperion, 2005) and *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (Hyperion 1995) to develop and deepen your personal mindfulness practice, and to taste the universal aspects of stillness, clarity, wisdom, compassion, and well-being that Guided Mindfulness Meditation offers.

Course objectives:

- Utilize body and mind meditations in daily practice
- Practice mindful yoga with clear, safe and simple instructions
- Describe the basic state of being which is present awareness
- Compare the results of unmoving, sitting meditation to a movement meditation such as mindful yoga

## Book Information

Series: Guided Mindfulness (Book 1)

Audio CD

Publisher: Sounds True; Unabridged edition (September 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1591793599

ISBN-13: 978-1591793595

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 5.2 x 5.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (180 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I have purchased this CD set despite some of the really bad reviews it got from some users. I have

just started using it, and I list some of the good and some of the not so good impressions about it:

**Good:-** The sessions are adequately long. 45 minutes is really required to achieve optimal state of relaxation and mindfulness. Many of the other meditation CDs I found way too short (eg. 10-15 minutes a session)- Kabat-Zinn is a renowned researcher in his field, he really knows what he's talking about. You can indeed reach deep levels of relaxation with his CDs.- The set mixes Mindfulness Meditation with Mindfulness Yoga. This is great, because it makes the practice more interesting.

**Not so good:-** I really like meditating with some ambient music in the background, to block out disturbing noises. This meditation CD set is recorded with narration only - there's no music. I have however resolved this easily by digitalizing the CDs and mixing them with David Miles Huber's excellent meditation music. This resulted in MP3s that are truly excellent to listen to on my MP3 player.

My advice is that you buy the companion book, "Full Catastrophe Living" from Kabat-Zinn. Read the book first, and then start practicing with the CDs. It is very important to understand how Kabat-Zinn recommends you approach meditation, and without reading the book you will not be able to take full advantage of the CD.

Finally, although some said that Jon Kabat-Zinn's voice is annoying, I did not find it so. It comes down to individual tastes I guess. Rather than concentrating on the quality of the voice, just listen to the message it carries. After all, meditation - among other things - is about being non-judgmental, right? :) More later, when I used the CDs for a couple of months.

**Update:** I promised I'd be back with another review once I completed the entire program of MBSR using this CD set and the book "Full Catastrophe Living" by Jon Kabat-Zinn. So, here I am, past 8 weeks and I am so glad I embarked on this journey. I have been struggling with stress for several years and a couple of months ago it got out of hand. That's what led me to this program. In 8 weeks I am off of prescription medication, I have about a tenth of the stress level I had before and I feel much more balanced and relaxed than ever before. If you have GAD, I truly believe this program can help you and bring dramatic changes to your life. All you have to do is stick with it and don't give up. No magic pills here - 8 weeks of dedicated practice is needed. Plus, as Jon Kabat-Zinn says in his book, the 8th week lasts the rest of your life. I'd say this program is probably designed for the novice meditator and it does a particularly good job in getting a novice meditator like me up to speed. Here's why I found it particularly helpful in starting my meditation practice:-

The CD set which is the subject of this review is just a part of the overall program material. "Full Catastrophe Living" is also an essential part of the program and I would say don't even start the practice with these CDs until you read the book at least once. Coupled with the insight you get from the book however, this CD set will be a very powerful tool.- The meditations are heavily guided and some lamented on this fact. On the other hand, for a novice meditator, it is this

"heavy" guidance that offers a tether to hold onto. For the novice, it is a blessing, rather than an annoyance.- I found that the mixture of yoga and meditation exercises on this CD set gives a great balance and variety to the meditation practice. I am glad to have learned about yoga at the same time. The Hatha yoga exercises are really easy, and for the first time I finally understood that yoga is not about flexibility of body, rather flexibility of mind.- Previously I commented that the lack of background ambient music was a negative. Actually, I have a different view on this now. Since the CDs have no background music, I am free to choose and mix my own background music with it. This is great, because I choose the exact music I like, rather than having just one choice - whatever the program comes with. In my opinion, this CD set coupled with the equally valuable book is an excellent introduction to meditation and mindfulness. Anybody deciding on starting a meditation practice would benefit enormously from Jon Kabat-Zinn's program. I tried meditation on my own, before I purchased this program. I successfully entered mindless states of trance every time, and even dozed off many times. Then I took Jon Kabat-Zinn's program, and finally I understand what is meant by the slogan they used on some T-shirts: "Meditation - it's not what you think!" Buy the book, buy the CDs and fall awake. This program is worth 10 times its price.

It is well known that Jon Kabat-Zinn is one of the biggest names in meditation instruction and has done much to give the field academic credibility and validation. His work is valuable and this CD is no exception. However, it seems to be overly ambitious and incomplete without other information to augment it. At the least, you need his book *FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING* to go along with it. For context, I am a former research scientist and taught physiology in a university and was a biochemist for Merck. I have a good background in yoga, meditation and have done graduate work in Integral Psychology which studies psychology within the context of the world's wisdom traditions. I also teach meditation as part of my living including using biofeedback and other western aids to learning these concepts. This context will help you to judge the merit of my interview and the point of view I'm writing it for. One thing I like about this CD is that in a sense it is one stop shopping. In one package, you get a Body Scan Meditation, A thorough Mindfulness Meditation methodology and some basic yoga instruction. This is a lot to get in one package and usually you don't get a Body Scan Meditation along with a Mindfulness practice in the same set. All of these meditations and the yoga instruction is useful, but while technically accurate Jon Kabat-Zinn doesn't have the most soothing voice, there was little thought to music of any aesthetic dimension which helps one to enter various mind states and there is a bit of a clinical feel the whole series. With respect to the yoga instruction, I think this information is useful for someone who has studied at least a little bit with a

teacher or who has attended classes. A lot of yoga has to do with body awareness and without a teacher to point out the things you think you are doing right, but are unaware of you can keep reinforcing bad habits or at worse hurt yourself. Also, giving yoga instruction via a book or audio CD is not the best way to learn it. It's highly visual and requires someone to look at what you are doing in three dimensions. However, if this gets people started with a yoga practice and curious about learning more, I'm all for it. Besides some classes or lessons, however, you may also want to explore a beginning yoga book such as **BACK CARE BASICS** or **30 ESSENTIAL YOGA POSES** by Judith Lasater. The first book is written by a physician and Iyengar practitioner and has a lot of good hints on how not to get hurt. The latter is a great introduction for beginners and can almost stand alone in its well written descriptions and safety tips. I agree with the other reviewers that the meditations are an ideal length for long time practice. Beginners may find this a bit overwhelming, but they augment their work with shorter more soothing meditation audios such as Jack Kornfield's **BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MEDITATION**. This CD is done from a Western Buddhist perspective, but Kornfield also is a Western clinical psychologist and does not push any religious agenda too hard. There are some comments in other reviews about a Buddhist orientation in this meditation set by Jon Kabat-Zinn. While I think this is true, I don't see that he is pushing a religious agenda. It just happens to be a fact that the Buddhists have been studying the nature of mind and experimenting with meditation for thousands of years. There are many writing about it within this tradition and they have a lot to tell us about what works and what doesn't. I have found this to be validated by my own experience. While this set is a good start for those beginning a practice, I would also consider one or both of the following books. First, **BREATH BY BREATH** by Rosenberg. This is an excellent, thorough and very readable introduction to a variety of meditation techniques in the Buddhist tradition. You don't have to be a Buddhist to benefit from them, however. If your desire is to go even deeper, then **MINDFULNESS WITH BREATHING** by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu will pick up where **BREATH BY BREATH** leaves off and go into more fine points that will help you to refine your attention even more and go deeper. One component of full stress reduction program that I feel is missing from these recordings is the potential health and stress reduction benefits of loving-kindness meditation. This affects heart rate variability, the reduction of the chronic stress hormone cortisol and the production of the anti-aging hormone DHEA. It is now a proven fact that the heart indirectly affects the brain and a lot of new research on this has been appearing in the *Journal of Cardiology* and others. You can get an introduction to this whole area by reading the book **HEART MATH** or you can explore loving-kindness meditation without reading up on the medical benefits. If you wish to take a very western approach, then the program **FREEZE FRAMER**

is an excellent investment! If you want to just get an introduction to this technique Shinzen Young has a set of five meditations including loving-kindness which is inexpensive and good. Salzberg also has written a book called Loving-Kindness from a Buddhist perspective and there is an inexpensive audio program by her and Goldstein called INSIGHT MEDITATION. Another practice that I think is particularly useful to Westerners, but missing from this program is walking meditation. This done VERY WELL in the INSIGHT MEDITATION series offered above. However, what Zinn offers that others don't is a well-rounded program for life time change. While I've made a lot of comments and suggestions above, I am not knocking this series. It is an ambitious endeavor and Zinn does a great job of covering a lot of ground. I wouldn't hesitate to buy this audio set, but at a minimum I would augment it with FULL CATASTROPHE LIVING and perhaps some of the other resources I mentioned above.

These guided meditations, relaxations and yoga routines were designed for use in Kabat-Zinn's stress-reduction clinic, and "go along with" his book Full Catastrophe Living. It contains four programs: a guided body scan relaxation (great), a guided sitting meditation (at over 35 minutes, this might be a bit long for beginners), and two gentle guided yoga routines. My only gripe is that the programs are pretty long (especially the sitting meditation), and they might not appeal to beginners. But the programs are excellent. Do understand that this is not only meditation, as the title suggests; it is also relaxation, and the 45-minute full body scan is probably worth the price of the set.

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