the Practice™

Companion Workbook

This workbook belongs to:

Barb Schmidt
Founder of Peaceful Mind Peaceful Life

Exercises for Deepening The Practice
HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Thank you for downloading this workbook, which is intended to help you deepen your understanding and experience of The Practice. This companion workbook is to be used together with my book *The Practice: Simple Tools for Managing Stress, Finding Inner Peace, and Uncovering Happiness*, as there will be occasions for you to refer to certain portions of the book before engaging in the exercises and activities presented here. You can print out the entire workbook or just the pages on which you are prompted to write.

“Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakens.”

—CARL JUNG
STRUCTURING YOUR DAY

The Practice provides you with a framework around which you can easily structure your day—no matter how busy you are—so that you can take the time to go within and tap into your source of strength, courage, wisdom, peace, and compassion. You may think you really do not have enough time in the day to make spiritual practices a priority, but if you wish to cultivate an inner life of strength, confidence, and peace with less stress and with attainment of your personal goals and ideals, you must find time in your day to make this a priority.

It is true: Most of the time we are so busy that we hardly have a moment to think about our goals and priorities. At times, it might even feel like our life is not really our own and that we are spread so thin there is not a spare moment available to sit quietly and reflect on where our life is going. Before we know it, our life has passed. Where did the time go? What was it all about? Did we make the best use of it?

On average, we sleep 8 hours, eat 2 hours, dress 1 hour, travel 2 hours, work 8 hours, do chores 1.5 hours, and engage in leisure activities 1.5 hours every day. How do you currently spend your time? In the spaces below, fill out, on average, how much time you spend on each of the following in a 24-hour day.

Sleeping: ______________ Leisure: ______________ Chores: ______________
Dressing: ______________ Eating: ______________ Other: ______________
Work: ________________ Travel: ______________

How closely did your estimates reflect the average? Think about each moment of your day. What are you exchanging your moments for? Did you trade any of your precious time away for thoughts of anger, greed, fear, worrying, or brooding? Did you turn in your time for a valuable trade, such as quality time with your family or with yourself? Did you spend some time deciding in which direction you wish to go? Remember, you have to know where you are going and how you are going to get there before you can even get started.
The key to making spiritual time a priority is to evaluate its importance to you in relation to the rest of the time you spend on this earth. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important would you rate a spiritual practice? My guess is that you would rate it on the higher end of the scale; otherwise, you probably would not be using this workbook. So, be assured, it truly is possible to fit The Practice into your day with a little ingenuity.

Revise your schedule below. Record how much time you really need for each of the following tasks and set aside enough time for your spiritual practices.

Sleeping: ______________  Leisure: _____________  Chores: _______________
Dressing: ______________  Eating: _____________  Other: _________________
Work: _________________  Travel: _____________  Spiritual practices: _________

In addition to the above worksheet, you might find it helpful to use a day calendar to set aside blocks of time throughout your day specifically devoted to The Practice. In the space below, structure your typical day hour by hour, being sure to schedule in some time for you personally and your spiritual pursuits.

6:00 am _________________________________________________________________
7:00 am _________________________________________________________________
8:00 am _________________________________________________________________
9:00 am _________________________________________________________________
10:00 am ________________________________________________________________
11:00 am ________________________________________________________________
12:00 pm ________________________________________________________________
1:00 pm _________________________________________________________________
2:00 pm _________________________________________________________________
3:00 pm _________________________________________________________________
4:00 pm _________________________________________________________________
5:00 pm _________________________________________________________________
If you need a reminder of why we should schedule time to meditate, practice focused attention, read for inspiration, and reflect at the end of the day, go to page 11 of The Practice and review the many benefits. Then, in the space below, respond to the following prompt:

These are some of the changes I would like to make and/or the benefits I would like to experience by following the framework of The Practice:

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As you learned in Chapter 1 of The Practice, meditating first thing in the morning is such a beautiful way to begin the day. In the checklist below, check off the top three benefits you feel would be most beneficial in your life if you were to make meditation part of your morning routine:

- Improved concentration throughout the day.
- Calmer mind and less mental chatter.
- Deeper relaxation and less stress.
- Easier to “let things go.”
- Slower breathing.
- Increased awareness of thoughts.
- A wider perspective.
- Less restlessness.
- Staying centered.
- Getting in touch with innermost self.

When I was first introduced to meditation, I found it difficult to make it a regular practice in my life. Then, while on retreat one day, the teacher said, “Once you make the decision to meditate, you no longer have to make the decision again!” This touched me deeply, and on that day, I made the decision to meditate every morning. Years later, I continue to meditate every morning no matter what my mind comes up with to get me to do something “more urgent.”
If you make the decision to meditate and stay true to your commitment, the hard part is over. As Gandhi said, “The only failure in meditation is the failure to meditate.” Respond to the following to make this commitment to yourself.

When it comes to my morning meditation, I commit to do the following:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

When I meditate: ___________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Where I meditate: _________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How long I meditate: _______________________________________________________

My posture for meditation is: _____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

My meditation method is: _________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

It was not until I started meditating that I realized how much my mind has to say! It is always talking and thinking and talking and thinking! In getting to know our mind through the regular practice of meditation, the greatest thing to happen is that we become aware of how it keeps us from living in the present moment by making up stories about the past and future. However, with this awareness, we will now have the ability to choose and change our thinking to ultimately create our most magnificent life.
MIND CLUTTER

If you want your mind to be peaceful and present in the moment, you need to become aware of its chatter and learn to clear away all of the mental clutter. Take another look at the illustration of the mind on page 59 of The Practice for a reminder of how messy it can get up there! It is time to reorganize! Like cleaning out a closet, you cannot do this in the dark. So to shine some light on what is going on in your mind, write down all of your thoughts, concerns, worries, hopes, and expectations in the thought bubble below. Fit as many as you can! This is not about judging your thoughts as good or bad; it is just about becoming aware of them, so that you can change them if you would like to.
PUTTING WORRIES INTO PERSPECTIVE

It is normal to worry, but a lot of the time we end up worrying about things that have already happened, will never happen, or will not be as “bad” as we think they will be. Our minds stir up the worries, and they literally start spiraling out of control, keeping us from living our lives fully.

For this exercise, make a list of things you are worried might happen in the coming week in the space provided below. Jot down the best- and worst-case scenarios. A week from now, come back to this list and review it. Chances are you will discover that seldom, if ever, do things turn out the way you expect. Doing this exercise helps us to see just how much time and energy we waste worrying about things that never materialize. It saps our energy and strength, leaving us tired and drained!
As you learned in Chapter 2 of *The Practice*, your Sacred Mantra is like a good friend, coming to you in times of trouble as well as in times of joy. It is there to support you all throughout your life, no matter where you are or what is going on. Having a tool like this is empowering and comforting. Have you chosen a Sacred Mantra for your personal use in *The Practice*? If so, in the space below, record your Sacred Mantra:

**My Sacred Mantra is:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

In the checklist below, check off the top benefits you feel would be most beneficial in your life if you were to make the Sacred Mantra part of your daily routine:

- Attention on the present moment.
- Reduced anxiety.
- Less mental chatter.
- Less intense negative emotions.
- Decreased nervous energy.
- Personal transformation.
- Connection to my deep spiritual source.
- More compassion, love, and forgiveness.
- Ability to recognize that we are all one.

This is what my Sacred Mantra means to me:

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These are the feelings my Sacred Mantra elicits:

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SACRED MANTRA WRITING

A wonderful way to use the Sacred Mantra is to write it down. Read about this in The Practice on page 141. To do this activity, choose one concern or worry you have and write it on the first line below. Then, begin writing your Sacred Mantra with as much Focused Attention as you can. Go ahead and fill the page! As you write, repeat your mantra in your head, holding the intention of sending loving energy to the situation.
SACRED MANTRA ART

A deeply satisfying and intimate way to use the Sacred Mantra is through the creation of artwork. Read more about this in *The Practice* on page 147. For this activity, you will need thin-tipped colored markers, gel pens, or sharp colored pencils. Write your mantra in the white spaces in one of the sample line drawings below and on the following pages, filling as much of the white space as possible with the words. Repeat the mantra to yourself as you write it. Plan your colors, switching off as necessary to create the look you want.
As you learned in Chapter 2 of The Practice, Focused Attention is the practice of being 100 percent present to whatever it is you are doing in the moment—whether that is washing dishes, talking with a friend, participating in a business meeting, and so on. Focused Attention deeply enriches the moments at hand. In the checklist below, check off the top benefits you feel would be most beneficial in your life if you were to make Focused Attention part of your daily routine:

- Increased energy.
- Improved memory.
- Fewer negative thoughts.
- Increased patience and efficiency.
- More communication.
- Deepened personal connections.
- Less stress.
- Helps me to see my blessings.

These things interfere with my Focused Attention (my mind wanders when . . .):

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This is the pattern I have noticed:

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This is how I plan to regain my focus when my mind wanders:

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LISTENING PRACTICE

Doesn’t it feel great when someone you are with gives you his or her Focused Attention—that is, you know that when you are speaking to that person, he or she is really listening to you? That is something we would all like to experience and give back to others. But like most things, giving someone our undivided attention takes practice.

To try this listening activity, you will need one or more partners. Each of you will take turns sharing whatever it is that you want to share with the other person or people. It can be anything: something that happened that day, something about your life, or whatever comes to mind.

Each person speaks for two minutes. (Use a gentle timer.) During the two minutes, the listeners simply listen without asking questions. When the timer goes off, the next person goes. After each person has had an opportunity to take a turn, answer the following questions:

How did it feel to give someone my full attention?

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Did my mind wander? Did I feel like I was listening closely?

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When I was the speaker, was I speaking with full attention?

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How did it feel to receive Focused Attention?

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The great benefit of this activity is gaining firsthand awareness of what it feels like to be fully present for another person and how wonderful it feels for another person to be fully present to you! Knowing how it feels to give someone your undivided attention makes it easier to shift your focus back to the present when your mind starts wandering or commenting.

READING FOR INSPIRATION

As you read in Chapter 2 of The Practice, Reading for Inspiration is an important part of any spiritual practice. The great masters, saints, and mystics of the past have important guidance for us on the spiritual path. When we read their words, it is like having them as traveling companions on our journey toward greater peace and well-being. In the checklist below, check off the top benefits you feel would be most beneficial in your life if you were to set aside time every day to read for inspiration:

- Support for overcoming challenges in my own life.
- Shows me that I am not alone in my trials and tribulations.
- Gives me a chance to relax my body while exercising my mind spiritually.
- Helps to strengthen my resolve to make positive changes.
- Opens my mind to different points of view and possibilities.
- Strengthens my devotion and discipline.
- Nourishes my mind with positive messages.
- Helps me feel a real sense of love.
STUDYING WITH THE MASTERS

Choose a book from your personal library that you find particularly inspirational. (For help choosing books, see the recommended reading list on page 175 of The Practice.) Read until you come across a paragraph that speaks to you. Copy it down in the space provided on the following page. Below that paragraph, jot down your own thoughts on its meaning. What do you think that great sage, mystic, master, or teacher is saying? Write whatever comes to mind.

As you continue reading this book, identify and copy other inspirational paragraphs as well and continue to add your own commentary. (You can keep a notebook for this purpose.) After a time of doing this, you will find that it is almost as if you are in class with that particular teacher! It is wonderfully uplifting to feel this close to the masters.
“Life is unsatisfactory because it is always changing. It does not have this solid core which we always hope to grasp. We want security, and we believe that our happiness lies in being secure. And so we try to make things permanent. We get houses which seem very permanent and we furnish them. We get ourselves into relationships which we hope will last forever. We have children and hope they may also consolidate this idea of an identity, something which will be constant. We have children, and we love our children, so our children will love us, and this will carry on for a long, long time all through our lives. Our children are our security.”

My Interpretation:

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Practicing the Power of Now
Eckhart Tolle

“Are you always trying to get somewhere other than where you are? Is most of your doing just a means to an end? Is fulfillment always just around the corner or confined to short-lived pleasures, such as sex, food, drink, drugs, or thrills and excitement? Are you always focused on becoming, achieving, and attaining, or alternatively chasing some new thrill or pleasure? Do you believe that if you acquire more things you will become more fulfilled, good enough, or psychologically complete? Are you waiting for a man or woman to give meaning to your life?”

My Interpretation:

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“Meditation provides a similar solution to the problems of life: it does not eliminate them, but it gives us a new angle of vision, a new perspective. It takes us above the sphere of the physical world so we can enter regions of peace and bliss. Contact with this inner intoxication is so fulfilling that we no longer look at problems of this world in the same light. They begin to dissipate as vaporous bubbles. We carry this inner ecstasy with us and can tap into it anytime we wish. This inner bliss helps us to become oblivious to our pains and sorrows. We realize there is more to life than this physical world. When we realize that our life in this world is but a temporary stay of fifty, sixty, or a hundred years, and that there is a life beyond, a higher reality, the problems of life do not seem to affect us as much. We recognize that the little idiosyncrasies of other people, the difficulties that bother us in our jobs, homes, or neighborhoods, are as passing storms, and we know that there is a realm of blue, clear skies filled with radiant Light shining above the clouds.”

My Interpretation:

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When Things Fall Apart
Pema Chödrön

“In order to feel compassion for other people, we have to feel compassion for ourselves. In particular, to care about people who are fearful, angry, jealous, overpowered by addictions of all kinds, arrogant, proud, miserly, selfish, mean, you name it—to have compassion and to care for these people means not to run from the pain of finding these things in ourselves. In fact, our whole attitude toward pain can change. Instead of fending it off and hiding from it, we could open our hearts and allow ourselves to feel that pain, feel it as something that will soften and purify us and make us far more loving and kind.”

My Interpretation:


“Things are changing quickly in the world, and there is no sense we are headed in a more serene direction anytime soon. Getting on top of things at this time has less to do with mastering particular skills or gaining specific knowledge than with mastering our own ability to find serenity and quiet in the midst of raging storms. Otherwise, we will be thrown off our game with every drama that the world has to offer.”

My Interpretation:

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In Chapter 3 of *The Practice*, you learned the importance of letting go of “the good with the bad” at the end of the day so that you can have a restful sleep and wake up without pining for, or regretting, yesterday through the practice of Reflection. In the checklist below, check off the top benefits you feel would be most beneficial in your life if you were to make Letting Go part of your daily routine:

- Reduces guilt I may have felt as a result of my actions or inactions that day.
- Reveals the blessings and gifts in my daily life so that I can feel gratitude.
- Increases my self-awareness so that I can start to know myself better.
- Changes unhealthy behaviors in the day to follow.
- Feel more present in the new day and unattached to yesterday.
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

The following are some questions you can use when performing your nightly review. When responding to the questions, just observe your answers without judgment. These questions are intended to help you acknowledge and release the day. Although it is not recommended that you write your answers every night, space is provided here for a written response for one night to give you a feel for how this exercise will play out in your mind on subsequent nights.

Did I give my full attention to the people in my life?

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Was I present for them? Was I patient with them?

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How was my interaction with my family and friends?

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How was my interaction with my coworkers and acquaintances?

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Did I make eye contact with people?

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Did I listen to what they had to say?

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Did I use The Practice in my day? How did it help?

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Did I turn to my Sacred Mantra for support?

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What went well today?

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What did not go well today?

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What are my blessings?

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WRITING YOUR OWN REFLECTION AFFIRMATION

The most important part of Reflection is to truly let go and “leave the day in the day.” We are never certain we will have another day tomorrow. This is why it is so important to make peace with the day and to feel good about letting go. Doing so with your own words of release and gratitude further enhances this experience.

When writing your own Reflection Affirmation, the only guidelines are that it be positive (avoid negative wording) and acknowledges your gratefulness for the day and your readiness to let it go. Keep it short if that is your preference or write several lines. Begin by jotting down some thoughts here without editing, allowing your affirmation to come to you naturally. You can edit later.

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When you really think about it, patience is at the root of our happiness. An impatient approach to things often results in hard feelings, agitation, mistakes, accidents, and so on. That is why more patience is something we all want. In fact, we are really practicing patience when we take the time to just sit still and be—no matter how much we think we want to get up and get going. In the ordinary course of a day, when our patience is put to the test, this ability can come in quite handy! When we have more patience, we are less stressed and less anxious. We are generally more forgiving and accepting as well. The writing prompts in this part of the workbook are intended to help you cultivate more patience in your life.

When our expectations are not met, we often become impatient and frustrated. Our mind is so busy being offended that we forget to step back, take a breath, and tap into our inner source of understanding and compassion where we are better able to see the truth of a situation. Quite often we feel entitled to having our expectations met, and we become very attached to that idea. In our culture, our sense of entitlement is great, but that does not give us a right to always have things turn out the way we want them to. When we let go of this idea of entitlement, we are more open and accepting of changing circumstances and people’s failings.

What type of circumstances trigger and/or contribute to your impatience? (Some general examples include delays, mistakes, and inconveniences. Contributing factors may be physical, such as not getting enough sleep or being hungry.)
Are there certain times of the day and/or certain situations (such as work, shopping, or traveling) when you feel less patient? What are they?

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What are some of the signs/symptoms of impatience, both personal and general? (Some examples include feeling hot, shortness of breath, and raising your voice.)

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Impatience has a lot to do with our desire to control things. We really do not like being out of control, do we? But the truth is that more often than not we are not in control. No matter what we do to make things go the way we want, we can never really know what is going to happen next! It is this fear of the unknown that tends to make us anxious. The idea is to develop curiosity about the unknown and to take a more accepting stance when things do not go our way. When we let go of our desire to control the outcome, we make room for patience, and we are better able to manage any stress we may be feeling.

What are some things you can do in the moment when you notice that you are being impatient?

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Aside from practicing being patient in those moments when we feel our impatience rising, regularly engaging in a meditation practice in which we train our mind by letting the thoughts come and go teaches us patience and tolerance. Little by little, this training is teaching us to be still and to be patient and accepting in the face of our thoughts as they are coming and going. In turn, we become more mindful and accepting of things as they are.

Through meditation we begin to discover that there are many points of view. We uncover a new level of awareness that allows us to see more possibilities than the ones we have become accustomed to. Our perspective widens; we truly become more open and receptive in all areas of our life. This enables us to be more present to the moments of our lives as well as to the people and situations we encounter.

As we develop our Focused Attention, we really start to become aware of what is going on around us and know at a deep level that we cannot change or control external circumstances. As this awareness grows, we learn to manage our stress and make important choices that lead to a life of great depth and meaning.

As we become more mindful through a regular spiritual practice, our expectations become preferences and anticipation becomes choice. It is simply a matter of changing our vocabulary. This subtle shift in language reduces that sense of entitlement the mind is so often hooked on. Instead of taking the position that “We want or need this to happen,” we take the position of preference: “We prefer this or that.” If we end up with what we prefer, we are grateful. And if we do not, well, that is okay too. In acceptance lies peace and deep meaning.

List some strategies for practicing patience throughout the day:

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PARTING THOUGHTS

As we conclude this workbook, I would like for you to jot down some of your own parting thoughts about The Practice and your spiritual journey in general. Which part of The Practice resonates with you the most? What are some of the benefits you have noticed in your life? What were some of your favorite activities and exercises in this workbook? By the way, feel free to enjoy these exercises again and again! The more you engage—and disengage—your mind, the more you will uncover and the deeper your connection to your inner self will grow.

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“May today and all the days that follow be full of wonderment and joy. May you always have peace of mind, strength of body and happiness in all that you do. May your travels take you to amazing places and may you always recognize the beauty that surrounds you. May you always find yourself among friends.”

—Irish Blessing
Peaceful Mind Peaceful Life is a non-profit organization, resource, and community that helps people incorporate spiritual tools into their lives that promote a peaceful mind and a happy, loving, and peaceful life. Founded in 2011 by philanthropist and lifelong seeker Barb Schmidt, Peaceful Mind Peaceful Life serves as an ongoing support system, teacher, advisor, and friend to guide people in the community along the path of living from within.

Visit www.peacefulmindpeacefullife.org to connect with others on the spiritual path.

Barb Schmidt is a businesswoman, philanthropist, and spiritual teacher with over thirty years devoted to spiritual development. For the past ten years, she has been offering workshops, classes, and lectures on spiritual practices. In 2011, Barb founded Peaceful Mind Peaceful Life through which she teaches The Practice—a three-part guide to practical spirituality in today’s modern world. Visit www.barbschmidt.com.