



Stillness

Melanated Meditation
for Healing & Self-care

candi dugas

an *interactive* experience





"Thou art made
for wholeness,
...
To make Heaven
where Hell is found."

~Howard Thurman



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"Stillness: Melanated Meditation for Healing & Self-care"
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Citations for quotes, unless otherwise noted, can be found in *Bootlicked to Balanced: Healing the Mind, Freeing the Spirit*.
dugas, candi (2009).

Images (unless otherwise noted): Pexels.com, Pixabay.com, Unsplash.com



This mini e-book is part of a digital series on meditation for Black Americans, including updated material from my very first book, *Bootlicked to Balanced: Healing the Mind, Freeing the Spirit* (2009). Beginning *and* seasoned practitioners can benefit from this content to help structure and ground a spiritual practice that can help heal us, contribute to daily self-care + build freedom.

May we be healed, whole ... and **fully free**.

"Thou art made for wholeness,
Body, mind, spirit:
one creative synthesis,
Moving in perfect harmony within, without,
With fellow man and nature all around
To make Heaven where Hell is found" ~Howard Thurman





stillness.

College Daze

I remember sitting at one of the most beautiful, oasis-like areas on the campus of the University of Florida sometime midway through my college years—wondering who the hell I was.

Time and time again I returned to those oases throughout campus, seeking answers and only finding more questions. I was a long way from the confident and creative, above-average student I'd always known myself to be.

I had no sense of where I was headed or how to get there.

I felt as if my life was falling apart and somewhere inside I felt wholly responsible for myself for the first time.

Furthermore, I felt disconnected from the Divine ...

I was seeking healing and wholeness, though I would not have used those words at the time. I did not consider myself sick or afflicted with dis-ease. I did not consider myself broken. Had someone presented those terms to me, I would have wholly rejected them. I would have found them to be a little too deep and involved . . . *and* negative. Nothing was *that* wrong with me. Yeah, right, I was just moping around campus, missing classes and spending my evenings among the underbrush next to pond water ...

It would be some years more before I discovered an expanded understanding of meditation as a spiritual practice beyond the contemplative introduction I had as a 5th grader receiving my first rosary. Meditation in my late 20s was key for me in reconnecting again to and tangibly experiencing Spirit. It unlocked access to who I AM inside – though not necessarily in that order. Meditation led me toward becoming **healed** and **whole** ... and **free** – to a fullness of being that I continue to pursue today.

Too often we only associate the need for healing with our bodies, ignoring that we also have a spirit and a soul (*more about this in the next mini e-book in this series*). Any or all of these three macro parts of ourselves can be injured and require healing. We will generally tend to our physical wounds, leaving those of the spirit and soul to linger, become “infected,” and wreak all kinds of havoc on our entire being. Finally, when these more obscure wounds finally affect our bodies, we begin to seek the source of our problem(s) - and by then, we usually have much more to deal with than if we'd tended to our initial wounds.



A photograph of a single red poppy flower in full bloom, positioned centrally. The flower is vibrant red with delicate, slightly crumpled petals. It sits atop a thin, dark green stem. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of many other tall, thin stems, some with buds, against a clear, pale blue sky. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

courage.



However, unfortunately, it tends to be that only when physical treatments are unsuccessful might we pursue deeper understanding of causes within our spirits and souls, despite the fact that "90 percent of all physical problems have psychological roots."³ Most of us live our lives – enduring challenges, disappointments and pains – accepting them as something inevitable, or worse, something we deserve. We suffer without inquiring about or understanding the impact on our beings of neglecting our feelings and intangible wounds. "Those feelings are NOT dead unless they are resolved. Those feelings from long ago have been and are still being registered at and in the cellular level of our Being."⁴

peace.

It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart.

(unknown)

For more Quotes: www.InspiringQuotes.in

Once I began heightening my awareness of my inner being, I was a healthier person. As a friend/family member, and as a minister/spiritual guide/executive staff member, I've always supported and encouraged people to engage counseling, contemplation, etc. However, it was not until I stepped up my own inner game that I became acutely conscious of how *critical* inner awareness really is for us to be at our best—for ourselves, and for those whom we love. (*Stepping up my inner game meant meditating at least twice a day, journaling daily {especially chronicling my dreams}, expanding my use of other kinds of meditative tools, etc.*)

Now, this process of becoming healthier also involves some uncomfortable moments - like triggered moments that lead to revelations which when handled well will heal us.

I remember when I discovered that I had a phobia. A phobia??? Again, like when I was in college, at the time of this discovery, I would have denied the presence of a phobia had someone presented it to me before the triggering moment. I was comfortable with words like scars and issues, but a phobia? Nope, that's for really imbalanced people. I was a meditative, counseling-seeking, self-aware woman of faith. One thing I was not, was phobic ... Ha! ;-)

Until the day that I almost hyperventilated in my car. I was on the phone with one of my dear friends as I suddenly felt a deep, gripping fear that I would be seriously hurt emotionally by a potential love interest. Now, we were not talking about this person I was interested in, or even about romantic relationships. But something in our conversation triggered me viscerally. (*So interesting how that works ...*)



fear.



There is a condition that extends beyond the usual and normal stresses in life that is closely related to [daily] STRESSORS. ... This condition often manifests in a person when unidentified and unresolved feelings—deep STRESSORS—are present in the body. This condition is known as a 'Phobia.' Whatever the feeling/belief may be that has created the phobia, it is usually rooted in some kind of FEAR. This fear has been stored, for who knows how long in the subconscious mind which is connected to the nervous system. When this fear is triggered quickly by a sight, a smell, a touch, or a sound, it arouses feelings of anxiety, fright, and panic—almost like someone has a gun to your head—and the nervous system jumps into action, responding to the trigger by supplying all the unpleasant reactions that have been created by the fear stored in the sub-conscious, and a wild imagination.”⁵

As a writer, I certainly have a vivid imagination! Seriously, though, even as I write this book (2008-2009), I am healing from some “deep STRESSORS” that first occurred in my life 30+ years ago. From them I developed abandonment issues. Fear of abandonment is one of the most common fears we have as human beings. Other common fears are of being alone, criticism, falling, illness, going crazy, rejection, and speaking in public.⁶ I first felt abandoned as a little girl when my mother was emotionally unavailable, and my father’s visits often turned out differently than I understood they would be. I visited with my father about three times a year. For the time in between visits I counted the months, weeks, and days until the next one – looking forward to my time with my daddy – just me and Daddy.



attraction

validation

cycles.

Usually, tho, it was not just me and Daddy. I had to share him with his latest love interest. He never told me ahead of time, of this requirement to share him until we were in the car on the way to "her place." In those moments, I always felt more than let down or disappointed. I later understood that I felt abandoned. And it happened over and over again. And. I never said anything about it. So, I was also abandoning myself.

So there I was in my car acting as if "someone [had] a gun to [my] head," from a totally, and I mean totally, unrelated conversation. I cannot explain at this point why that was the day, why that was the time. Maybe I will never know, and I am not sure that this knowledge is even relevant. I totally trust Divine timing. The days following that triggering moment were intense; I am not sure now that I was strong and deep and broad enough in my younger years to handle that kind of pain. As I wrote earlier, I am not completely healed yet as I complete this book (2008-2009). I am still working with myself and my counselor toward that end. I am confident, though, that the healing moment will come, and it will be complete at that time.

This experience and others I have had compel me to share my knowledge and to implore all with whom I come in contact to tend to our whole selves. We lose way too much as individuals, as families, as communities, as a world when we do not. Often we are not aware of what we have lost until, sometimes, it is too late to remedy our actions – or inaction.

[Excerpt from *Bootlicked to Balanced* (2009)]





pathway.

Watch:

9 Ways to Meditate



Then take some time to jot down which techniques appeal to you and why.

Consider exploring use of these techniques after reading through the following pages to create your own meditation/mindfulness practice that works best for you + your needs/goals.

Welcome to this meditation journey.

Early morning meditations practiced consistently over a specified period is most effective. Meditating in the morning yields sweet benefits. Among the benefits is the framing of our day. Meditation allows us to center our spirits as well as cause us to be still and to be better in-touch with our true selves. It sharpens attention, increases resiliency to stress, increases compassion, meaningfully assists in the improvement of mental health, positively impacts interpersonal relationships, reduces many biases, and contributes to overall good health, including physical health. Above all else, this experience ought not to cause any stress or strain. So, if you determine that morning simply will not work for you, select your best time and be still.

However, if you do choose the morning and you are not a morning person, practice waking up earlier than you are accustomed before you start your meditations. This practice will help you keep separate your ability to wake up early from your ability to meditate. We want our times of meditation to be beneficial and enjoyable. Feeling frustrated about an early rising defeats this desire. Practice by setting a time at least five minutes earlier than you rise currently. Then increase your time until you can rise 15-30 minutes earlier than you need in order to prepare for your day. This range ought to be enough time to read/view/listen to your guiding inspiration and meditate.

If after practicing you find an early rise continuing to elude you, all is not lost. 😊 Instead of planning to read and





meditate in the morning, if your meditation material is long, you may consider the material in the evening, prior to going to bed. Then meditate in the morning after briefly reviewing it. The material and meditation can still frame your day, which is what we're ultimately after - infusing your days with an abiding peace that you can access any time you need/want, no matter what may be going on around you.

During the time of meditation, ideally, you do not want to end until you have sensed an understanding with which to go forward. Therefore, you want to get up in enough time so that your moments in mediation are relaxed and not hurried. (*If 30 minutes is not enough time, feel free to extend your meditative time.*) So that you do not run late preparing for your day, you may want to set a gentle alarm to signal the end of your meditation. We want to keep this experience calm and loose.

Establishing the Foundation

Let's clarify a definition:

Meditation

Generally, to meditate means, "to muse over, to contemplate or ponder; to intend or plan." Books on meditation are a little more specific. Consider the following definitions:

Meditation is ". . . a training method to control thought processes. It is a time which we can build, create, by directing thought."

" . . . the process by which we go about deepening our attention and awareness, refining them, and putting them to greater practical use in our lives."

Faith-based Meditation

A time of choosing to think deeply on sacred writings (*i.e.*, *scripture*) and other inspired works rooted in established traditions, and even social media memes that speak to your soul, are all about stimulating your mind and stirring your spirit toward the peace you seek for your life.

The goal here is to begin slowly, patiently increasing your time in meditation. Remember this is a process and there is no pressure to do it right or to do it a certain way. We have shared a couple of versions of a definition for meditation for the purpose of this journey. Let us now delve a little more into what meditation is and what it is not.

If you are praying person, please know that meditation is more of a preparation for prayer than it is prayer itself. It is an exercise for the human mind so that you will know more clearly how to pray. It is a time of connecting with self and with the Divine. You may receive divine wisdom and guidance, or you may just become calm long enough to think clearly. Meditation is more of a time to receive and be, rather than quiet moments to create a "to do" list. We can gain deeper understanding of who we think we are, who we were created to be, and any differences between those realities. It is a time to reconcile the truths of our lives with the lives we can have.

It is a time to connect with an inner power that we sometimes forget exists.





While meditation is a time of preparation, we have to be ready to meditate – prepare to prepare. Entering meditation means being/becoming ready to confront some issues and/or feelings of which we may have been unaware - or even ignoring ... It means we will hear our inner voices express thoughts and/or emotions that have been hidden or, indeed, buried. The trick is to allow the revelations and to hear our inner voices without judgement, without trying to make it better, immediately. Remember, meditation is simple. It's just not all that easy; it is definitely an effort simply to be present in the meditative moment - to begin to unlearn ways of being, even surviving, that have been beneficial in our pasts. But **today is a new day** that calls for new approaches to being well - inside and out. It can be particularly challenging if these new approaches may seem to rub against cherished guidance from our elder loved ones. Know that there is nothing new under the sun. If you're Christian, and thought that meditation is not for you - know today that it is indeed for you, and always has been. 😊

Surveying bookstores one may not find many books labeled as meditation books for Christians. Generally these books are called "devotionals." Christians tend to leave the discipline of meditation to those of other faith/belief traditions – Buddhism, New Age, etc. Yet the bible clearly encourages its readers to meditate.

**"I have hidden your word in my heart,
that I may not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11)**

**"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your
mouth; meditate on it day and night . . ." (Joshua 1:8)**

This mini e-book presents meditation as an important discipline for all spiritual practitioners, including Christians, because we all have minds that when strengthened can help our lives become powerful testaments to the grace and freedom available as a follower of our traditions.

**Meditation is important because it affects the mind.
It is "a time of choosing to think deeply . . ."**

In meditation all we want to do is to pay attention to the moment at hand in a particular way without drawing any particular conclusion. If a question comes to mind, do not try to answer it or even seek a divine answer to it. For the moment, simply have a question. Be sure to journal it, because the answer will come. When focusing attention on the meditative moment without the weight of conclusions, we cultivate the ability to experience more of life's moments on a daily basis simply for what they are. "If we are not fully present for many of those moments, we may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives, but also fail to realize the richness and the depth of our possibilities for growth and transformation."¹²

"What we steadily, consciously, habitually think we are, that we tend to become."¹³

Remember that our definition of meditation is "a time to think deeply . . ." We will come to experience, as we purposely set aside time to meditate, that our time of meditation will extend beyond that specific time apart to be still. Then transformation – or reclamation – takes place.

Let's reflect ... and then, let's meditate.





What do you think about most of the time? *How* do you think most of the time? Do you see a partially filled container as half-full or half-empty? Your mind is the most powerful part of who you are. What your mind knows, chooses, decides, and thinks affects everything else about you and your life.

Guiding Instructions for Meditation

After choosing your meditation material (*a brief article or passage, an inspiring quote or meme, etc.*), consider the following general guide to meditating and refer to it as you meditate on your chosen material:

1. Find/create/use a quiet, calm, peaceful place.
2. Sit straight, yet comfortably, but not so much so that you will fall asleep. Do not cross arms or legs. (*Sitting straight without crossing limbs enhances blood and energy flow.*)
3. Relax your hands, jaw, neck – any place you hold tension and stress.
4. Read/watch/listen to your inspirational message three (3) times.
5. Close your eyes and reflect on it. Focus on a portion that can repeat in your mind.
6. If your mind begins to stray, that's fine. Simply decide to return to your focused passage.
7. Listen for your inner voice. Listen for the Divine.
8. Be especially aware of any physical manifestations of Divine Presence experienced by your body (*i.e., warmth, breezes, shaking hands, etc.*)
9. Write down your experience (*or express it in a drawing, recorded song or dance, etc.*).
10. Linger in the ending moments; recall them throughout your day.




Then ... before going to sleep for the night, spend minutes with your journaled notes from the morning and your day. Journal some more, if you'd like. Enjoy a restful night's sleep.

May you discover increased peace, balance, and grounding as you begin/restart this (re)new(ed) spiritual journey of meditation + mindfulness. Below are additional resources to help you get started (*click on the icons*):

Videos

- Meet dr. candi + Why It's Important for Black People to Meditate 
- How to Meditate 
- 10-minute Morning Meditation 
- 9-minute Bedtime Meditation 
- Meditation Starter w/ Brother Thomas Merton (Lacking Direction Focus) 
- dr candi's Spirituality Playlist on YouTube 

Apps and Websites

- [Liberate for People of Color](#) (app w/ meditations) 
- [Insight Timer](#) (app is not easily searchable for Black/Melanated meditations/talks) 
- [Black Zen](#) (website resources) 

Book

[Bootlicked to Balanced: Healing the Mind, Freeing the Spirit](#) (An Introduction to Christian Meditation) 





More Resources (articles/sites - click on the icons):

- The Cultural Relevance of Mindfulness Meditation as a Health Intervention for African Americans 📄
- African Americans are creating their own mindfulness spaces 📄
- Mindfulness Meditation as a Remedy to “White Ignorance” and Its Consequences 📄
- Promoting Mindfulness in African American Communities 📄
- Black Lives Matter Meditations 📄
- 5 Tips to Help You Start Meditating, Courtesy of Black Girl in Om’s Lauren Ash 📄
- 5 Benefits of Mindfulness for Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color 📄
- Black Men Meditate 📄
- Mindfulness for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour 📄
- Blackfullness - Mindfulness for Black People 📄
- The Best Mental-Health Apps for POC, According to Experts 📄
- Black Girls Breathing Founder Jasmine Marie Is Making Meditation Accessible -- to Heal Her Community 📄
- 5 Mindful Self-Care Tips for Black Men That Support Mental Health 📄



We have a history as a people of being tossed and driven by the waves of other people's ambitions, plans + decisions.

For this history to continue as our present + future is completely UNacceptable to me. That's why helping us heal + strengthen our minds to end this trajectory for us is a huge passion of mine.

Let's BE FREE - for good.



for the

ancestors.