

Simple, but not easy: meditation



-By Lisa Jones

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Next to my bed is my (appropriately named) bedside table. There are a few things which hold a permanent place upon it. A glass of water. A piece of paper and a pencil for those 3am moments of list-making mania. And [Wherever You Go There You Are](#) by Jon Kabat-Zinn.

I've had panic attacks since I was a kid. In a word, they suck. One minute you are fine, the next you are gasping for air and feeling as if they are nailing your coffin lid shut. Fun stuff.

The idea of managing panic attacks with meditation seemed as likely a pairing as tar and sunshine. Meditation always seemed like something exotic and sacred. Something that could only be accomplished on a mountain top or in a room painted all in gold and stinking of incense, by inherently peaceful men wrapped in cloth. It had nothing to do with me gasping for air while crouching in a school hallway with my fingernails embedded in my palms.

But that stereotype of meditation changed for me when I was introduced to the writings of [Jon Kabat-Zinn](#). He's not quite the Holy Man I had in mind to become my meditation guru. He's a doctor. He looks logical and scientific and not exactly in touch with any spiritual realm; he's got a Ph.D. in molecular biology for pete's sake. But because of that, he makes meditation accessible. Reasonable. He removes any sticky religious connotations and looks at the tangible effects that meditation has on your body and mind. He discusses the simplicity of meditation - personified by the hilariously titled *Wherever You Go There You Are* - but reiterates that simple is not synonymous with easy. This is no high minded existential rambling (not that I don't love that, but sometimes it's nice to have some science-y stuff to help with the motivation that you really are doing something worthwhile.)

So I was pretty excited to hear that Kabat-Zinn was coming to Charlottesville. Along with the University of Virginia School of Medicine, he will be doing a [retreat](#) in March. There is a suggested donation of \$30 for the full day, including lunch, which I think is pretty cool as the dude could charge up the wazoo and people would pay it.

Here are some of his books to check out if you are interested in learning more about meditation or enhancing your existing practice.

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life

Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness

Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness

Arriving at Your Own Door: 108 Lessons in Mindfulness

Everyday Blessings: The Inner Work of Mindful Parenting

The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness

Kabat-Zinn always says that it is important to not talk about your practice too much with other people; it's **your** practice. Don't bother wasting your energy by telling everyone how amazing meditation is and how much it has helped you in your everyday life. Never proselytize and tell others that they should meditate, too.

So I won't.