

From Stressed to Blessed: 5 Simple Steps to Learn Meditation and Change Your Life

Cynthia Chase

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In a short space, From Stressed to Blessed lays the groundwork for transformative meditation practices.

Meditation changed Cynthia Chase's life; with the belief that it can do the same for others, her testimonial guide *From Stressed to Blessed* distills the process into five easy steps.

Before being introduced to meditation, Chase was a midthirties single mother of four. She worked up to three jobs while studying for a master's degree in counseling psychology. She was overwhelmed and exhausted. But then she found a wonderful meditation teacher and learned the powerful benefits of regular practice, which helped her to remain calm even through events like a near-fatal car accident.

Each of the five steps is explained in direct terms that take the realities of daily life into consideration. For example, step one involves choosing a quiet, comfortable place and making sure there will be no interruptions; it embellishes this work with humorous suggestions for dealing with noisy pets, phones, small children, and other possible distractions. The second through fifth steps deal with the position of the body; a breathing exercise to induce mental and physical calm; suggestions, including visualizations and mantras, for handling intrusive thoughts; and guidance in returning to daily life. Beyond the steps are postmeditation suggestions, as for journaling (with helpful prompts included).

The book is quite brief given all the ground that it covers. Indeed, it even introduces the five-thousand-year history of transcendental meditation, including information about the practice's spread throughout the world and adoption by various world religions. Still, Chase's explanations (including those related to each of the core five steps) are clear and concise, and the guide as a whole is written in a friendly, encouraging tone. The book seeks to demystify meditation for other practice initiates. It touts benefits including an enhanced sense of well-being; increased energy levels; fresh gratitude; improved health; greater happiness, joy, and peace; and a vibrant, more meaningful life.

In the end, this is a spare, simplified instruction to meditation that makes space for those tripped up by its cultural and religious associations. Quotes from spiritual luminaries are included throughout to support this expansive presentation—though not all of them are properly contextualized. A quote from the biblical book of Genesis, for example, shows Isaac walking in the fields and meditating; the inclusion of his seeing camels coming toward him is less applicable to the book's efforts. Punctuation and agreement errors, as well as a misspelled name, further undercut the book's delivery.

Brief but empowering, *From Stressed to Blessed* is a meditation guidebook for beginners.

KRISTINE MORRIS (December 19, 2023)

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