

PAUL
WILSON

The Guru of Calm
—Sunday Times

THE
QUIET

A woman in a striped shirt and white dress is walking on a beach at low tide. The water is calm, and her reflection is clearly visible in the water. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

THE
QUIET

Four simple steps to peace
and contentment — without
spending the rest of your life
on a mountaintop.

We could have shown you a contents page here. But contents pages are pretty boring. In a nutshell, this book is divided into two: the larger part, Book A, relates to the body-mind and the actual practices (the Quiet Practices).

There are a dozen or so practices to choose from, most of which are de-mystified shortcuts (from the experience of 30-year meditators) built in. Book B has even more



SOMETHING ELSE

After a decade of touring, writing and speaking as ‘the Guru of Calm’, it was time to step out of the limelight. What I had in mind was a few years at home, combined with some small-scale teaching and some large-scale surfing.

This would have worked well had I not been invited to India in 2002. You’d think a small conference of unrelated writers, teachers and assorted others would be fairly harmless. Exactly what I thought. I was totally unprepared for the following exchange.

‘Guruji wants to know what you are writing these days, Mr Wilson.’ I said I was taking it easy. A bit of teaching, and a lot more surfing. Silence.

Not wishing to appear too under-occupied compared with the industrious people who had invited me, I quickly added that I was conducting the occasional meditation retreat, where I taught a streamlined approach to meditation.

More silence.

In the politest possible way it was suggested that, in light of my talents and reputation, perhaps my work wasn't finished yet. Later that evening it was further suggested that my future work might not be surfing, but to 'spread joy and remove sorrow'.

Spreading joy didn't seem like a bad sort of role to take on, although removing sorrow (or removing *suffering*, as it was later retranslated) wasn't something I'd had much experience in.

I didn't give much thought to either of these messages until the flight home. I wondered if there might be some sort of link between them and another comment that had been made on that visit.

In Mumbai, a journalist wondered why the people of that city were buying my books. I'd wondered the same thing myself. With so many indigenous gurus and meditation schools for them to choose from, surely my offerings would be seen as more or less of the same.

'It's the *noise*,' she suggested. 'When you live in a city of 15 million people that's teeming with life 24 hours a day, there is very little relief from the noise. Your books offer a way to escape it.'

Providing relief from noise? I hadn't thought of noise that way before. We take for granted the racket we live with – not only physical noise, but emotional and intellectual 'noise' as well. It's become so dense and unremitting that when a gap does occasionally appear, it suggests that something's wrong. There's a *space* – but what does that mean? Does 'space' equal 'quiet'? Or does it mean that something is missing? There are so few gaps or spaces to be found that it's almost as if we've become detuned to their restorative power. We've become detuned to the subtlety and beauty of silence. Detuned to the joy of just being.

Spreading joy, removing sorrow, and providing relief from noise ... I had plenty to think about on that flight back home.

Now that you're thinking about it as well, you can probably see the appeal of having more space in your life. And more quiet. And more joy and peace. Perhaps that's why you've picked up this book in the first place.

When you were in your teens, you would never have guessed it could turn out like this. Then you were looking forward to all the freedom you'd have when you grew up. Not to mention the joy and happiness.

What happened?

Today, instead of doing the things you'd always wanted to, your day's taken up by things that others want you to do, or you have to do, or you think you have to do. Instead of being the one who calls the shots, you're the one being dictated to by bosses, mortgages, school lunches, politicians and even terrorists on the other side of the world. Instead of being in charge of your own time, time is in charge of you. As for a light at the end of the tunnel, you can't even see the tunnel.

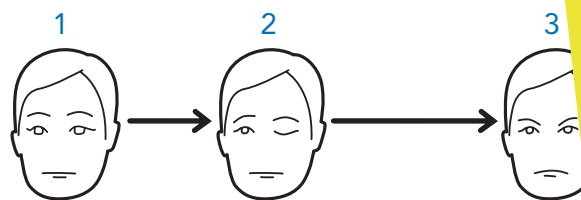
When you were in your teens you probably thought that the material side of life would provide the satisfaction you were looking for. Back then you had no doubt that the more you acquired, the happier you'd be: more possessions, more friends, more adventures, more accomplishments. Who'd have thought you would arrive at the conclusion that it was going to take *less* for you to feel happy? Less work, less clutter, less complication, less responsibility. More or less – both were illusions, and neither was the key.

So what's it going to take? What makes life worthwhile? What brings happiness and satisfaction?

Like all of us, you've already discovered how fleeting happiness is. It ebbs and flows according to whatever happens on the day. You fall in love, and everything is light and exciting. A sharp exchange

In an ideal world, this would be something to discover from your own experience, just taking things as they come, without effort, analysis or expectation. But in today's world, we've been detuned for subtleties like meditation, so sometimes a bit more preparation is required. So, in the broadest possible sense, this is how the Quiet practices flow.

In the early days of your practice the pattern is fairly consistent, regardless of whether you are sitting for 10 minutes. The practice incorporates four distinct phases, each of which has a specific pattern of brainwave activity.



The initial stage (1) is where you are relaxed and aware. Stage 2 is the settling-in, or moving into the meditative state. Many people think of it as the distraction part: you've followed the letter, you've been sitting in your quiet place for a while, but the only thing you are aware of is the number of breaths you've been having. 'Am I doing it right?' 'Nothing's happening.' 'How long has it been?' 'When I finish, I must go to the supermarket ...' Even the most experienced meditator experiences this. The difference is the duration, which varies according to circumstances and the attitude of the meditator.

Whatever is going through your mind at this point, more influential things are happening to the rest of you. You'll be exhibiting visible signs that you are becoming physically relaxed. As long as you do nothing to inhibit it, this process continues of its own accord. You probably won't even notice the subtle physical changes taking place

The Quiet is actually two books in one. Book A relates to the everyday side of meditation – that which relates to the body-mind. It shows how to use the Quiet Practices to enhance your physical and mental wellbeing. To compensate for a stressful lifestyle, to produce clarity of mind, and to lead to more stable emotional state. And, of course, peace of mind. A much happier and more contented state follows.

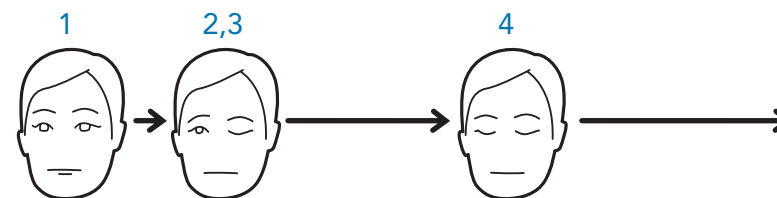
– your pulse rate slowing, your breathing becoming slower and more relaxed, and any thoughts becoming further and further apart. Even if you think there's a lot going on in your mind, you are moving slowly and predictably towards the meditative state (Stage 4).

But something happens. The instant you become aware of the fact that something is changing, you start to analyse. In a flash, your everyday conscious mind reasserts itself (Stage 3) and, instead of moving deeper into your meditation, you are trying to make sense of what was taking place.

I remember this phase well from meditation in my mid-twenties. It hardly existed in my childhood – in the quiet of the Outback I was happy to move from one stage to another without needing to know what was happening. But as I matured I grew more analytical and demanded answers. For a while, this became a barrier to my moving into the deeper stages of meditation. Fortunately, once you let go of the need to analyse, the journey automatically continues.

However, it's not always mental activity that defines this point. It may be a burst of restlessness: an itch, the urge to cough, feet that need shuffling, growing impatience, or a glance at the clock. Other times it may be a jerk or spasm. On rare occasions, it could be an issue from your past, such as unresolved grief or something to do with a relationship.

All meditators experience this restlessness. The difference is how they respond to it. Beginners give in to the distraction, then find themselves back at the settling-in stage. Experienced meditators





QUIET PRACTICE 1:



Deep is a concentrative or ‘one-pointed’ style of meditation. The principle behind it is that by focusing your attention on only one thing, you gradually exclude all other stimuli from your consciousness.

When this one-pointedness occurs – that is, your mind is concentrated by only one thing – you will be in a state of full awareness, free of all discursive thinking. This produces a unique state of consciousness that is the exclusive domain of meditators. In addition, this brings a raft of psychological benefits, not the least of which is a sense of an orderly frame of mind.

We’re going to explore the Deep practices in a number of different ways. The first is fairly elementary, but it’s essential to the cultivation of a sound, lifelong practice.

A deceptively simple process

Now that you have an idea of how a Quiet sitting flows, you may want to explore the process that enables it.

When you set out, your mind is full of thoughts. These are restless by nature, moving from one topic to another in a dynamic and largely unpredictable pattern. So while you might start out thinking of breakfast foods, you could soon be thinking of waistlines or dentists or train schedules. You can’t overcome this restlessness through mental effort. But you can sidestep it by focusing your attention on an ‘object’, such as the sound of your breathing.

Initially this works, and you have only breathing on your mind.

While more thoughts arise and, before you know it, you’re thinking of train schedules and breakfast foods.

When you become aware of this, you calmly redirect your attention to the sound of your breathing. Sooner or later, all extraneous thoughts will cease, and there’ll be nothing on your mind other than your attention will have ‘merged’ with your breathing. As a result, this can be a blissful and revealing experience.

Is this a sustainable feature of your meditation? Not for some people. How long does it last? Who knows. And because it’s all on a moment-to-moment basis, you’ll have no idea either.

When your state of consciousness returns to the everyday state, it’s as when you start thinking and analysing again – that you become aware of the passage of time. The beauty of the Deep practices is the way they make time stand still.

As the name implies, Deep~By Numbers is an introductory level. If you’re new to meditation, or are reading this for a more balanced view of the topic, there’ll be an obvious appeal in this. However, if you’re an old hand at this – say, you’re a lapsed meditator or have

Most long-term meditators spend an hour or so each day in the practice. Often much more.

The Quiet practices are designed to take up less of your time – as little as 13 minutes.

That’s easy to find. To put it into context, that’s how long it takes you to make a relaxed cup of tea and drink it. And what makes it even easier is that this is 13 minutes of indulgence.

13 minutes of peace.

And quiet.



QUIET PRACTICE



AWARE

Now we come to a significant departure from the previous practices. Where they served to concentrate your attention on only one thing or a series of things, Aware broadens it so that you are aware of many or all things simultaneously.

In one sense, these two approaches are virtual opposites. Concentrative styles (Deep and Directed) narrow your attention; the mindful style widens it; the former ignores the distractions that arise, the latter observes them.

Ultimately, though, both approaches achieve the same result: they help you bypass uninvited thought so your awareness remains pure and unobstructed.

The Aware practices take this one step further. They're designed to bring moment-to-moment awareness to all aspects of your life – not just in meditation.

The Quiet explores all the different types of meditation practice that are promoted by the various traditions, and shows how they interlink ... and all ultimately take you to the same place.

We discover how, once the window-dressing is removed, these practices are incredibly easy to make part of your life.

(In Book B, we also look at the different philosophical approaches ... and how these take you to the same spiritual place as well.)

They do this by training the attention to remain in the present.

Few people in today's world have this ability. They spend their life being aware only of what's already gone. Past tense. When you think, *I really like this flavour, I wonder if it's lemon or lime*, you are not involved in the present experience of taste, you are evaluating something that's already happened.

Of course, it's not always like this. There are moments when you're fully engaged in the present. Like when you're doing something when you lose yourself in an activity and totally forget the rest of the world. Or in the instant you become aware of something, but haven't yet categorised what it is: the burst of awareness of the person sitting next to you on the bus, for example. This is the moment of pure, unconditioned awareness.

Practice trains you to extend that moment. You can be coolly aware of what's going on as it happens – without being or getting involved – something very revealing. You are not only more aware of the experience, you are more aware of *you*, and what makes you tick. You start to see into the nature of your personality, emotions, moods and reactions, and even physical states such as pleasure and pain.

You can probably see the psychological advantages in this. Say, for example, you were experiencing a negative state or emotion like fear. Generally, you'd do everything in your power to shift your attention away from fear. You try to avoid it by denying its existence or by 'compensating' in some way. Distracting yourself with fantasies about what you'll be doing tomorrow, or dragging up memories about something that happened yesterday – anything but face what you're feeling right now.

This means you never get to explore the nature of your emotion and how you react to it.

THE QUIET

BOOK B

Book B is for experienced meditators — those who've been using the practices from Book A for at least a few months

The Quiet is two books in one. While Book A was about the body-mind aspects of meditation — the individual practices, etc — Book B is about the spiritual.

The Quiet practices deepen your spiritual experience by helping you quieten the mind, strip away the myths and illusions, and produce a transcendent state that reveals aspects of reality that you wouldn't normally be able to experience or comprehend



RUSH-HOUR ENLIGHTENMENT

Hopefully you've taken your time getting here, because now you're going to be applying the skills you learned in Book A in a radically different way.

Book B is about the transcendent or spiritual side of meditation. It's not about religion, beliefs or faith, or any God-related stuff. It's about using meditation as a way to spiritual fulfilment — in whatever shape or form you choose. If you think spiritual fulfilment means liberation, awakening, enlightenment, salvation, being with God or just feeling uplifted, the path to it is explained in the chapters ahead.

This explanation is not going to please everyone. There are some who believe that spiritual fulfilment can only come from having knowledge, following the rules and participating in approved rituals. And there are those from the no-pain, no-gain school who believe

that spiritual fulfilment is pretty well incompatible with modern life – which would seem to rule out everyone who has to juggle workloads, relationships and wall-to-wall responsibilities, or is surrounded by noise and insecurity, or is committed to a career. The subtext of this is that spiritual fulfilment is reserved for those who renounce worldly comforts and pleasures, and dedicate their life to the spiritual path.

Sometime over the next few chapters you'll realise how *everything* can be part of your spiritual path.

It's true that those who live in the monasteries and ashrams, and have dedicated their lives to spiritual study and practice, will find it easier. But this is not the only way. Their way is just one worldly choice among millions of worldly choices. Whether you explore the nature of the self on a mountaintop in Tibet, or work 9 to 5 in the City, it's just a choice in how you spend your day. All paths can have a spiritual component and can be as spiritually accommodating as each other, provided that you have the skills.

You already know the Quiet practices in Book A. There are more in the pages ahead. Once you've perfected them, it's just a matter of where you apply them – in the ashram, on a mountaintop, in the workplace or in a traffic jam.

As before, the important part is that you turn up and apply them.

From method to fulfilment

Now we're going to take the Quiet practices to another level.

What you've taken from Book A is your way to the worldly benefits: peace of mind, clarity, stability, lightness and wellbeing. Enjoy them. But that's only one side of the Quiet practices. The more extraordinary side is what they can do for you spiritually.

The Quiet practices deepen your spiritual experience and

understanding in a way that cannot be equalled by instruction, rituals or studying. They help you to appreciate that you are more than a body–mind, more than your thoughts. They introduce you to a changed state of consciousness that can lead to a direct encounter with **the Quiet** – the blissful state of pure awareness, the infinite, the Absolute Reality, or whatever spiritual or mystical name you might like to apply. This presents an aspect of reality that is impossible to experience or comprehend in your regular day-to-day state.

Book A pointed you in this direction; Book B takes you there.

If all that seems too far-reaching, and all you were looking for was a way to feel more spiritually aware, you'll be pleased to discover we're talking about the same thing. The difference is the expressions we use. And the degree to which you feel it.

The degree is not always of your choosing. Say you've been practising regularly for several years; you've found how to tap into the underlying quiet; you're enjoying the health, emotional and spiritual benefits that flow from it; and you're a nicer, happier, more contented person all round.

Then, *WHAM!* – out of the blue your world is turned upside down. Just for a moment, an unforgettable moment, you feel in touch with something that goes deeper, that's infinitely more profound than you'd have believed was possible. Just for a moment, you're standing at the edge of total understanding and fulfilment. Infused with overwhelming love and gratitude. For a moment you're in the presence of something you can only define as sacred.

Then it's gone.

Confused by the briefness of your encounter, you ask around. Oh, others have had the same experience. In meditation? And it's not uncommon? The beginning of a great personal awakening? A hint of enlightenment perhaps? You mean, this really is something

Imagine there is a place where you can't be touched by the noise and tensions of the modern world. Where, no matter what's going on around you, you have time and space to breathe.

This place exists. It's called the Quiet.

Some people spend a lifetime of meditation practice and spiritual studies trying to find it. *With the Quiet practices you can be here in as little as 15 minutes.*

Here you'll find:

- Peace of mind
- Clarity of thought
- Emotional stability
- Physical wellbeing

The Quiet practices are based on four simple steps that transform the way you feel and what you get out of life. They're equally as powerful whether you've never meditated before, or want to deepen a lifetime of practice.

PAUL WILSON is known around the world as 'the guru of calm'. As well as teaching meditation for almost 30 years, he's a businessman, lecturer and author. His books have sold over 8 million copies, and have been translated into 24 languages.

'Meditation made easy – at last. Clear, practical and accessible, The Quiet is both inspired and inspiring. Perfect for our times.'
Stephanie Dowrick, author of *Choosing Happiness*.



McMILLAN
Pan Macmillan Australia

Jacket photograph: gettyimages
Cover Design: The Calm Centre

MIND, BODY, SPIRIT
www.panmacmillan.com.au

A\$29.95 RRP

ISBN-13: 978-1-405-03766-2

ISBN-10: 1-405-03766-0



9 781405 037662