



FINDING CONNECTION

*True silence is the rest of the mind: it
is to the spirit what sleep is to the body,
nourishment and refreshment.*

WILLIAM PENN

WITHOUT CONNECTION, YOU CAN'T REACH CONTENTMENT. By connection, I mean that you are in touch with the truth – the truth of who you are, what's going on around you, and what this life is all about. It's a big concept, which is why this chapter is really three chapters in one, as I'm going to discuss three means to fostering connection:

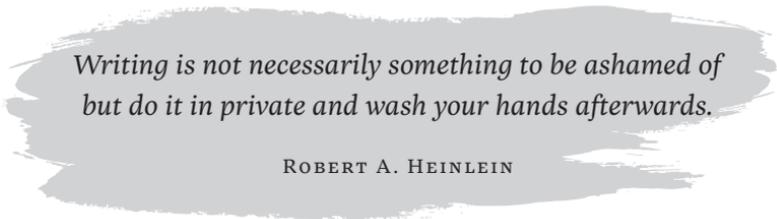
- Journaling to connect with your thoughts and feelings

- Meditation to connect with your true self
- Prayer to connect with a higher power

As you read this chapter, I ask that you keep an open mind. You've likely tried journaling or meditating before and it didn't stick. Or maybe you cringe at the word "prayer" because you're unsure how you feel about it or don't believe in God.

All of that is okay. In the following pages, I'm not going to try to tell you what to do or believe. I'm simply going to present a unique way of looking at things and some resources you may find helpful. Take what works for you and forget the rest.

JOURNALING



Writing is not necessarily something to be ashamed of but do it in private and wash your hands afterwards.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

I started journaling in 2003 when I *put the plug in the jug* as mentioned in the introduction. My mind was restless, as is the case with many people who struggle with quitting certain habits. Journaling helped me start to make

sense of all the mind chatter. It's an effective way to slow and calm the mind.

One of the biggest misconceptions about journaling is that it needs to make sense. The truth is, journaling can be whatever you want it to be. It doesn't need to be written in complete sentences or even follow the lines on the paper. No one needs to understand it but you. The important thing is that you get the thoughts out of your head.

Journaling can take many forms. When I need to make a decision about something, I draw a line down the middle of a page and write pros on one side and cons on the other. When I'm disgruntled about something, I'll start scribbling my thoughts about the issue on any piece of paper I can find in that moment.

Sometimes, we believe we are thinking logically when we really aren't, and that can get us into trouble. Our mind has been conditioned by the world around us, including past experiences. Too often, we jump into reactionary mode without questioning whether there is another way to look at something. Journaling can help take the power out of your thoughts so you can look at a situation more objectively. It helps to make sense of our sometimes obsessive and often erroneous thinking.

Remember the advice my spiritual mentor gave me: when my thinking is hysterical it's usually historical. When

you are upset about something, it's likely because something in the present has reminded you of something in the past. You're reacting to the past, not the present. Journaling helps to remove the hysteria, bring you back into the present, and see a situation with new eyes.

I journaled daily for about 10 years and now it's more sporadic. Sometimes I look back at my past journaling and chuckle at what I thought was a crisis at one point. That's a powerful thing to remember when I get upset or when something is gnawing at me. I know that journaling will help take the power out of my thoughts so I can see them for what they really are – likely something I'll laugh about one day in the future.

Again, I want to reiterate that there are no rules for journaling. It can take whatever form feels right to you. Not sure how to get started? I put together a long list of journal prompts for everything from romantic relationships to work and finances. You can find it on my website (CBKAdvising.com) under Resources, then Coaching Downloads.

There are also some great books on the market that can help you start your journaling journey. For my male clients, I always recommend they read one page a day from *A Quiet Strength: Meditations on the Masculine Soul* by Wayne Kritsberg, John Lee, and Shepherd Bliss, and then journal their thoughts on the topic. This book is very down-to-earth and

uses real-life situations that men experience to help them reflect.

Perception really is reality. Your thoughts on every situation are what's creating your life, from how you see it to the decisions you then make because of that perception. In order to change anything in your life, you must gain awareness and control over your mind chatter. Journaling is an extremely powerful way to do that.

MEDITATION

Meditation is talked about often in the personal development space but doesn't always get the attention it deserves in the professional world. That's a shame because it can be extremely rewarding in both aspects of your life – personally and professionally. Smart businesses and leaders are starting to recognize the many benefits of including meditation as part of a productive workday.

I'm not going to get into all the benefits of meditation because you've likely already heard them – things like stress reduction and increased focus. Yes, those are incredible results from developing a meditation practice, but rather than focus on the external benefits you'll receive, I want to touch on the internal benefits.

Meditation, as this chapter title states, is about con-

nection. It is about further connecting to yourself. Being more connected to yourself strengthens your emotional intelligence which leads to increased self-regulation, motivation, and empathy, all important steps on the path to contentment.

Meditation is like a gym in which you develop the powerful mental muscles of calm and insight.

AJAHN BRAHM

When I first started meditating, I struggled to make it through 60 seconds. My mind was full of thoughts that I couldn't quiet. If this is true for you also, it doesn't mean you can't meditate. If I can do it, you can do it!

The key thing to remember when meditating is that it's not about clearing your mind. That is extremely difficult to do. Instead, it's about the practice of noticing your thoughts and intentionally pulling your mind back to your meditation.

When you catch your mind wandering, simply notice the thought. Think of it like a dark cloud floating by on an otherwise sunny day. The cloud will pass, and it will usually pass quickly, so don't worry about it. Just look at it and bring your mind back to the sunny day (your meditation).

Increasing awareness of thoughts is like working out a muscle. It takes repetition to make it stronger. So please, be patient with yourself as you work out that muscle and develop your meditation practice. Here's a trick that helped me: keep a pen and paper next to you so when a thought arises that won't leave you alone, you can quickly write it down and give your mind peace that you won't forget it.

Another trick that's helped me is creating a space – maybe at home or in your office – that is designated for meditation. It doesn't have to be a large space, nor does it need to contain any special objects like candles or Buddha statues. Maybe it's as simple as a pillow propped up against a wall for you to lean your back on while sitting on the floor. Whatever it looks like, a dedicated meditation space will help your body and mind know it's time to relax when you enter that space.

When first starting to meditate, I believe that using a guided meditation is the easiest. Luckily, these days there are tons of guided meditation apps available. *Calm* and *Headspace* are popular ones that I recommend you try. Now I'll share a short, simple meditation that is my go-to when I'm feeling stressed or anxious.

If you prefer to listen to an audio version of this meditation, you can find it on my YouTube channel (@CBK Advising) titled, *CBK Advising 10 Minute Meditation*. You can

also download a PDF file of these instructions on my website – CBKAdvising.com under Resources, then Coaching Downloads.

This is an easy meditation that you can do at your desk, sitting in the car between appointments or sales calls, or in the privacy of your own home. The intention of this meditation is to increase your inner peace, self-esteem, and contentment.

Start by dimming the lights around you if you can. Consider playing relaxing music softly in the background. This will help prepare your mind and body to relax.

Next, get in a comfortable position. Maybe it's sitting in a chair with your feet flat on the floor or sitting on the floor against a piece of furniture. Even lying down is fine. Whatever will help you relax.

Now, gently close your eyes and take three deep breaths.

Place your palms face up in your lap, beside you on the floor, or resting on the chair you're sitting in.

Touch your thumb to your index finger of the same hand. Hold it there and think of a time when your body felt healthy fatigue, like you just finished an exhilarating activity. Maybe you went for a jog, played tennis, cleaned your house, or did some yard work. Remember that feeling and sit in it for 45 seconds.

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Next, touch your thumb to your middle finger and as you hold it there, go back to a time when you had a loving experience. Perhaps it was a warm embrace with a friend after a heartfelt conversation, a hug from a child, or a passionate kiss with a significant other. Stay in that moment for 45 seconds.

Then touch your thumb to your ring finger and remember the nicest compliment you have ever received. Think about that compliment and accept it. Imagine yourself accepting the compliment from the person who gave it to you, likely thanking and complimenting them in return. Sit in that moment for 45 seconds.

Lastly, touch your thumb to your pinky finger. Hold it there as you think back to the most beautiful place you've ever been. Maybe it was a park, the beach, another country, or even your own backyard. Imagine being back there for 45 seconds.

Then, very gradually, bring your awareness back to the room you are in while your eyes are still closed. Begin to move your fingers and stretch your arms and legs. Turn your head from side to side as you drop your ear to your shoulder. Take a long, deep breath in and when you're ready, open your eyes.

Take a minute to congratulate and thank yourself for giving yourself this time. Notice how you feel. More peaceful? More confident? More content? Remember, you can

do this short meditation anytime and anywhere to help you feel more inner peace.

Now, if you really struggle with sitting meditation, don't worry. That doesn't mean you can't still reap the benefits of meditation. There's something called active meditation that might be better for you. In fact, you may already be doing it without realizing it.

Active meditation involves some kind of physical activity or repetitive movement that can be done silently and without a lot of thought. Some examples include gardening, fishing, golfing, knitting, crochet, or walking the beach looking for seashells.

Active meditation, like sitting meditation, is about creating more calmness, focus, and awareness. In our loud and busy world, our mind is constantly jumping from one thing to the next which feeds into the chaos. Your mind, just like your body, needs to rest, and meditation is the best way to do it. Whether you sit down and focus on your breath or walk the beach looking for sharks' teeth, find a way to give your mind a break.

There are also a lot of great books to help you with meditation. One of my favorites is *Quiet Mind: One-Minute Retreats from a Busy World* by David Kundtz. It contains a series of reflections on all aspects of life and will help you find still points in your own experiences.

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As you develop a regular meditation practice, you will feel more grounded, more centered, and more connected with yourself. And through connection with self, you'll begin to sense and increase your connection to something bigger. Call it God, Source, Life, the Universe – whatever! It doesn't matter what your specific beliefs are and I'm not here to change them. My goal is simply to encourage you to find a connection with yourself and with something bigger than yourself.

Connecting to some form of higher power helps to pull you out of the chaos of daily life. It serves as a constant reminder that you are bigger than the stressors and struggles of daily life. As I stated in Chapter 2, you are bigger than your mind. Think about it – if you can *notice* your thoughts, then you *aren't* your thoughts. You are the one watching them. This realization is how finding connection can lead to contentment.

PRAYER

I believe prayer is a sending out of vibrations from one person to another and to God. All the universe is in vibration.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

I believe prayer, like meditation and journaling, can take many forms. So, as you read this section, I want you to try to expand some of the definitions you may have for *prayer* and even *God*. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, I'm not here to try to change your beliefs. I simply want to encourage you to connect with a higher power, however you see fit.

Our lives feel busy, stressful, and chaotic because we get lost in the weeds of day-to-day life. Connecting to a higher power allows you to zoom out every now and then and see things from a much bigger and wider perspective. When you believe there is more to life than daily logistics, you begin to trust in your ability to do anything and to get through anything.

I pray all day every day. Sometimes it's a simple thank you for the roof over my head, a sunrise, or a delicious coffee. Other times it's asking for guidance when my thinking starts to get away from me. There have been many times when I was struggling with something or feeling self-absorbed that I prayed for a distraction to break my mind from its continuous thoughts. Soon thereafter, someone with far greater issues than mine would reach out to me. Every time that happened, I was both amazed and relieved from my obsessive thinking.

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature – trees, flowers, grass – grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.

MOTHER TERESA

There is power in prayer. Sometimes they're answered and sometimes the simple act of saying a prayer can serve as an important pause – a moment of awareness that allows you to intentionally choose what to say or do next.

Have you noticed a continuous theme in this chapter? *Awareness*. Journaling, meditation, and prayer are all means to bring you back into awareness of the present moment so you can be intentional with your thoughts and actions rather than reactionary.

Here are a couple of my favorite prayers I use throughout the day:

Please direct my thinking, then my actions. This is a helpful prayer when I'm not able to journal.

Please give me restraint of pen and tongue. This one helps me keep my cool when dealing with someone who has gotten under my skin.

Please help me. This is my anytime and all the time prayer when I just need some guidance.

And my favorite prayer of all time from Saint Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

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I encourage you to bring prayer into your life. Again, there are no rules to what form it takes. All that matters is that you develop a connection to a higher power; something bigger than you to help guide you and pull you out of the day-to-day stressors of life.

