

“This book will change your life.”

—MARK HYMAN, M.D., *New York Times* Bestselling Author

STRESS LESS,
ACCOMPLISH
MORE

MEDITATION
FOR
EXTRAORDINARY
PERFORMANCE

EMILY FLETCHER

FOUNDER OF ZIVA MEDITATION



STRESS
LESS,
ACCOMPLISH
MORE



MEDITATION FOR
EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE



EMILY
FLETCHER



WILLIAM MORROW
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to everyone who has “tried meditation” and felt like a failure.

You are not a meditation failure; you just haven't been taught yet.

This book will teach you.

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Foreword

When I first met Emily, we were both lecturing at an event in Greece. She was telling me about her meditation practice, and in the back of my mind I was thinking, *Oh, sure. I studied Zen Buddhism. I've gone on retreats. I've meditated for twelve hours a day. I've also been a yoga teacher and still do yoga all the time. I have plenty of health hacks in my tool kit.* I felt like I already had my stress under control, but I was intrigued by what she had to say.

The more I listened to Emily, the more I realized that she was talking about something else—something deeper, more powerful, and potentially life-changing. What really got my attention was the way she kept talking about doing less while accomplishing more.

Of course, the idea of adding yet another demand on my time—even just fifteen minutes twice a day—seemed crazy. Life keeps me extremely busy: In addition to being a practicing physician, author, and parent, I give lectures and am a regular medical contributor on many television shows. Squeezing more into my daily schedule seemed impossible.

But Emily made a compelling case. I agreed to try meditating with her while we were in Greece, and I was shocked when I realized just how different this form of meditation felt from what I had done in the past. I decided to take the Ziva Meditation training with her, and afterward, I began to sleep better almost right away, but that was only a small part of the benefit. My mind felt clearer; my focus sharpened, and I even started having more time in my day! I didn't notice I had been anxious or stressed—until I wasn't!

I was intrigued enough by the results to commit to at least another month, just to see what would happen.

To say I was shocked by what Emily's style of meditation did for me is an

understatement. I didn't realize I was stressed and anxious; I didn't think I was agitated. And I was already achieving at a high level. But after just two months, I felt happier, calmer, and less anxious. I have so much more energy. Now if I don't sleep well, I can do the Ziva Technique and feel as refreshed as if I've just had a long nap. I used to get tired at the end of the day, but now I get a new surge of energy after my second sitting and feel able to go out at night and have fun. For the few minutes I put into meditation each day, I get back at least an extra three hours of focus and quality work. The benefits of meditation bleed into everything I do.

Maybe the most surprising aspect of Emily's approach is how easy and accessible it is. This is the kind of meditation you can do anytime, anywhere. You don't have to clear your mind, burn incense, or be alone in the forest. I've meditated in conference rooms, in parking lots, on airplanes—you name it. When I tell my patients about Ziva, I say, "You don't realize how stress may be impacting your performance until you start feeling better. And you can't believe how much more you're capable of until you try this out."

I encourage everyone to check out the Ziva Technique. I can honestly say I can't live without it. Now I don't have time *not* to meditate.

"Stress less, accomplish more." It's for real, trust me.

—Mark Hyman, M.D.

Director of the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine and author of *Food: What the Heck Should I Eat?* and eleven other bestselling books

Preface

As a neuroscientist who is also interested in “wellness” (the modern, less shame-inspiring replacement term for “self-help”), I sit at an interesting, albeit somewhat uncomfortable, vantage point. On one hand, I see a new and exciting era emerging, in which science is getting leveraged toward the development of truly useful practices for enhancing people’s lives. On the other hand, I also see a lot of misuse of the word *science* as a marketing tool to sell everything from supplements to esoteric breathing practices to brain-machine-interface devices. To be clear: There are some very interesting, even powerful tools emerging in all corners of the wellness arena, but most lack the essential components that I, personally, would want to see before dedicating my time, energy, and money to them.

Those criteria are:

1. Deep descriptive rigor. I need to know what is involved in the practice.
2. Predictive power. I need to know what I can reasonably expect during and after.
3. Actionable. I need a clear description of what to do, when to do it, and how.
4. Moves the needle. The results need to make a big, positive difference.

All that might seem like a tall order, but I believe it is reasonable to ask for that from the self-designated teachers, coaches, gurus, and web personalities who hock this stuff. So when I heard that someone named Emily Fletcher was giving a talk on meditation at a conference I was attending, I figured I would skip it. Another American “yogi”—seen that one before. Fortunately for me, the Internet connection worked only from inside the conference room, so I

decided to handle e-mail in there while Emily spoke on the stage.

Looking back, I'm so grateful I made that choice. I think it was Emily's words—"These neuroscientists are catching up to what meditators have known for thousands of years: that meditation actually makes our brains better!"—that got my attention. After all, she was basically taking a jab at me. But as I listened further, I realized, *This woman really gets it*. First off, Emily possesses the unique skill of being able to make something as "tranquil" as meditation truly exciting, while at the same time grounding it in both its ancient roots and real modern scientific inquiry. She knows the classic jargon, but she isn't afraid to assign user-friendly definitions to the various terms surrounding meditation and mindfulness practices. I find this incredibly useful. For example, nowadays the word *meditation* seems to be used as a catchall for any eyes-closed activity besides sleep or coma, and *mindfulness* is even less well-defined. Emily has a different, far more organized take on all this. In *Stress Less, Accomplish More*, she educates you: Mindfulness is really about the now, whereas meditation is about letting go of stress from the past. She even defines *manifesting* (a word I'd frankly never been comfortable with) as a set of actionable steps. Whether everyone agrees on these definitions is less important than the fact that by putting them out there, Emily breaks down the major barrier to getting *you* into a daily practice.

Stress Less, Accomplish More beautifully establishes a *why* to each step. All the incredible benefits of engaging in a regular meditation practice that people tout—better sleep, calmer state of mind, less reactivity, better sex, and so on—still exist, but in *Stress Less, Accomplish More*, Emily teaches you what to expect *during the actual practice itself*. That is a unique and powerful gift, and no, it doesn't require that you spend ten days sitting in silence. It is about small, actionable, daily steps to achieve large, specific benefits. And she teaches you how.

So now, three years after hearing Emily speak and learning the Ziva Technique, I have come to realize that I was fundamentally wrong: Emily is not just another American who spent some time in India, picked up some lingo, did some stretches, and came back to the United States to tell us about it. Emily is a deep scholar of meditation, and is clarifying what both ancient and modern meditation really is, how it works, and, most important, what it can do for you. *Stress Less, Accomplish More* brings together the very best of what is possible in terms of educating you on meditation (my criterion #1 above), what you can expect at each stage (#2), how to do it (#3), and some of the many incredible benefits it can create (#4). Somehow (perhaps it is her Broadway training?) Emily also makes this process incredibly playful, fun, and entertaining. That wasn't on my list of criteria, but perhaps it should be

#5, because as you'll soon discover, *Stress Less, Accomplish More* is anything but boring, and it very well may change your life.

—Andrew Huberman, Ph.D.

Professor of Neurobiology, Stanford University School of
Medicine

Introduction

You may be thinking, *Me? Meditation?* That’s what I thought, too. A youth spent in the Florida Panhandle doesn’t really provide the best opportunity to come in contact with any sort of meditation. I competed in beauty contests, sang the national anthem at the opening of a Walmart Supercenter, and went to a lot of keg parties. But meditation? It never even came up.

By the age of twenty-seven, I was performing on Broadway in the show *A Chorus Line*, understudying three of the lead roles. Acting on Broadway was a childhood dream, but the reality had become a nightmare. If my performance was off, I was devastated. My anxiety kept intensifying, I had terrible insomnia, and I started to go gray—at the tender age of twenty-seven. I was constantly getting sick or injured. There I was, living my dream—doing the one thing I had wanted to do since I was nine years old—and I was miserable. Broadway was supposed to be sunshine, roses, and martinis with Liza. Instead, my experience of the Great White Way was splitting rooms in overpriced apartments, eating tuna fish out of a can, and complaining about my bunions.

One day I was in the dressing room watching another actress named Deonne. She was understudying five leads, but unlike me, she was completely calm and centered; she was effervescent and a pleasure to be around. Every song she sang was a celebration. Every dance she did was full of joy. Even every bite of food she ate, she cherished. I asked her how she pulled it off, and her answer was, “I meditate.”

I promptly rolled my eyes at her answer and brushed it off as impossible. There was nowhere near the neuroscience then that there is now, so it was hard for me to understand how something like meditation could be impacting her performance so dramatically. But I kept feeling worse—I hadn’t slept through the night in more than a year and a half, which was severely

impacting my performance. I finally felt so embarrassed about my ability to perform that I knew I had to do something. Deonne mentioned that her meditation teacher was in town and asked me to come along to an intro talk. Everything the teacher said made sense to me; it rang true. I signed up for the course. After only the first two hours of training, I was “meditating”—meaning I was in a different state of consciousness from what I had ever been in before—and I actually liked it!

That night I slept soundly for the first time in eighteen months. That was over a decade ago, and I haven’t had insomnia since. I stopped getting sick, I stopped going gray—in fact, my hair color came back. Best of all, I began enjoying my job again. And I got much better at it. I stopped seeking validation and approval from the audience, which paradoxically made me a much better performer. I was always ready, and I could finally hit the stage with calmness and confidence. That naturally led me to think, *Wait a minute—why doesn’t everyone do this?*

That’s when I became inspired to teach meditation. I quit Broadway and traveled to India, where I began what became a three-year teacher-training process. No, I was not in India that whole time. I am not that hard core. This ended up being the most creative, rewarding thing I’ve ever done. When I tell my story, people always ask how I could walk away from a successful career and take the risk of starting Ziva Meditation. The simple answer is that my life goals became much clearer when I began meditating daily, and I tapped into energy and insight that I’d never before realized I had. This book is about giving you, the reader, access to this insanely powerful tool. You can find that same inner-connectedness that my more than twelve thousand students and I access twice daily. You’ll learn how to improve your performance by removing stress, boosting energy, increasing drive, and ultimately how to become more successful at life in the process.

This Is Not Your Typical Meditation Book

Before we go any further, I want to clarify something. This is not another meditation book heralding the benefits of higher states of consciousness without giving you any real tools to get there. This book is all about extraordinary performance. And I don’t just mean for artistic performers or people on a stage. This book will help you upgrade your personal and professional performance no matter your occupation. It will give you not only an intellectual understanding of how stress may be keeping you from your full performance capabilities, but more important, this book will give you practical tools you can start to use on a daily basis to eradicate that stress and

start to up-level your brain, your body, and ultimately your life.

In the following pages, I will train you in a specific technique that you'll be able to do on your own. It's called the Z Technique; it's an adaptation of what I teach live at our studio in New York City and online through our fifteen-day virtual training, zivaONLINE, and it's designed to help you in work and in life. The steps outlined here are specifically created for achievement-minded individuals who are committed to performance enhancement and excellence. Whether you spend your time closing deals or opening sippy cups, the Z Technique will give you a mental edge to help innovate and adapt at the rate that technology demands. By investing in yourself for fifteen minutes twice a day, you can drastically change your outlook and your output in life. In addition to teaching you a daily practice, many of the chapters have exercises at the end that you can use for specific life challenges and to help you gauge your success along the way.

Maybe you've noticed how meditation has quickly transitioned from being a fringe activity to becoming standard practice in the boardrooms of corporate America, and you're curious as to why. Maybe you've tried meditation in the past but gave up because you felt like you could never quite clear your mind, or because you struggled to fit it into your fast-paced life. Or maybe you aren't interested in the practice of meditation at all, but you *are* interested in any tool that can enhance your productivity and performance while decreasing stress.

Whatever the case, you've come to the right place. *Stress Less, Accomplish More* is designed to serve as an introduction to not only meditation but also the three mental tools that make up the Ziva Technique: Mindfulness, Meditation, and Manifesting. This book will give you an explanation of what they are and the science behind how they function as tools for high performers to improve their cognitive function and creativity, while simultaneously releasing stress and improving overall mental and physical health.

There are currently more than six thousand peer-reviewed scientific studies on meditation. In the following pages, I will share the most exciting ones with you, including some from Harvard Medical School, Stanford, and Wake Forest University, and translate how these recent findings apply to your busy life. The findings in these studies range from medically verifiable physical benefits to new scientific analyses that point to the neurological advantages of meditation in mental acuity. All the findings confirm what I have witnessed firsthand with my students, and what you can experience if you read this book and put into practice the techniques you will learn in the coming pages: Meditation can give you deeper and more refreshing sleep and increased

energy during the day; make you feel more connected, less anxious, and more level-headed in demanding situations; help you experience better relationships; and even have better sex! One of my students likened meditation to putting on reading glasses she never knew she needed: Suddenly, life comes into sharp focus.

Many of my students have attempted meditation in the past but gave it up for a variety of reasons. Using the Ziva Technique, these same people have been able to reclaim their meditation goals without the guilt of past failures or the confines of a highly rigid system or community. My aim is to rid the world of ex-meditators. By this I mean my goal is to give people who previously felt like meditation failures—for being “too busy” or not being able to “clear their minds”—the knowledge they need to accurately gauge their success and a practice that will actually feel worth the time investment. As we progress through the book, I will guide you as you create a self-sufficient practice that can be easily integrated into even the most demanding schedule. No need for apps, earbuds, crystals, incense, or kaftans. As I mentioned, the Z Technique is a gentler version of the Ziva Technique that I teach live and online; it is a painless way to condition your body and mind for better performance. Whether this is your first time dipping your toe into the meditation pool or you’ve been doing this for years, *Stress Less, Accomplish More* is both the perfect starting point *and* a refresher course for realizing your full potential. If you have previously been allergic to the word *meditation*, don’t call this meditation—just try the Z Technique and see how you feel. If you’ve had a meditation practice for years but find it a bit too rigid or aren’t seeing the return on time investment you would like, try the Z Technique and see if you feel a difference.

It doesn’t matter what your profession, ambition, religion, expertise, or experience is. Meditation is simply a tool to help you reach your goals; it’s never the goal itself. The main point is this: *We meditate to get good at life, not to get good at meditation.*

If you want to elevate your performance—to eliminate the effects of stress, improve your mental energy, increase your physical health, expand your creativity, and hone your intuition—you’ve come to the right place. All it takes is the desire to up-level your life and fifteen minutes twice a day. Are you ready to invest in yourself?

1

Why Meditate?

“I can’t meditate.”

This is the most common refrain I hear from would-be meditators. For some, “I can’t meditate” means “I want to meditate, but seriously, have you seen my schedule?” For others, “I can’t meditate” is far more literal: “I tried to meditate, but I couldn’t stop my mind from thinking.”

Both types of people are usually very sincere in their desire to practice meditation. Both types of people believe meditation is not a viable option for them. And both types of people are wrong.

The disconnect comes from a cultural misunderstanding of the term *meditation*. I think there’s one dude out there telling people that in order to meditate, you have to clear your mind. I wish I could find this guy and teach him how to meditate. While it is possible to access different states of consciousness, and humans are the only species that can do this at will, the point of meditation is not to clear the mind. I would argue that the “point” of meditation is to get good at life. So if you’ve ever tried meditation and felt frustrated because you couldn’t stop all those crazy thoughts, here’s some really good news: The mind thinks involuntarily, just like the heart beats involuntarily. One more time, for dramatic effect: *The mind thinks involuntarily, just like the heart beats involuntarily*. Just for kicks, take two seconds and try to give your heart a command to stop beating.

If you’re still reading this, I’ll assume you weren’t successful. It’s easy for us to see that trying to stop the heart from beating is fruitless, yet we continue to try to stop the mind from thinking. Then we feel like a meditation failure and we quit. Who wants to keep doing something that makes you feel as if you’re constantly failing? People who find one type of meditation unfulfilling, too time-consuming, or too difficult often reject anything that

goes by the same name. The beauty of the Z Technique, however, is that it's almost completely fail-proof—and it's a tool that will help raise your performance in all areas of your life. This style of meditation is so simple that you actually have to *try* to screw it up. Combine that ease with the fact that meditation has been scientifically proven to improve nearly every area of your life without taking away your competitive edge, and I feel confident that you're going to become a meditator (or an ex-ex-meditator, if we want to be really confusing), too. Once you have a technique that is designed for you and a bit of training on how properly to gauge your success, meditation can become an enjoyable part of your daily routine.

But here's the rub: The word *meditation* has become like the word *food*. Blueberries, hot dogs, sushi, potato chips—they're all food, but they all do wildly different things to your body. Similarly, there are hundreds of different styles of meditation, but Westerners tend to pile all the techniques under one umbrella term, even though these varying techniques do vastly different things to your brain and body.

Saying you don't like meditation is like saying you don't like food. Imagine going to a restaurant, looking at your server, and just ordering "food." What's the server supposed to do with that?

Meditation can be broken into a number of different styles: mindfulness, Zen, self-induced transcendence, Vipassana, Kundalini—just to name a few. Some schools of thought identify as few as five different forms; others break it down into more than twenty. For the purposes of this book, we will classify meditation into three main categories, or what I like to call the 3 M's: Mindfulness, Meditation, and Manifesting. Just as eating a hamburger does different things to your body than drinking a chia seed smoothie, different styles of meditation light up different parts of the brain and require different degrees of effort and time. They can also have varying degrees of effectiveness on your performance off the proverbial cushion.

So Which Style of Meditation Should I Practice?

This is a very personal question, and one you'll ultimately have to answer for yourself. I want to do everything in my power to give you the information you need to make an educated decision based on data and your own personal experience. In this book, I will be referring to two different techniques quite a lot: (1) The Ziva Technique, which is what I teach in person, and in our virtual course, zivaONLINE; and (2) The Z Technique, which, to reiterate, is an adaptation of the Ziva Technique. The Z Technique combines the same

beautiful trifecta of Mindfulness, Meditation, and Manifesting, but in a gentler and more universal approach, since I am not able to deliver personal mantras or offer individualized training and guidance the way I can when working with students face-to-face.

To start, let's get crystal clear on the differences between the 3 M's that you will be learning in the coming pages. We'll begin with the first two: mindfulness and meditation. Many people think these are the same, and even use the words as synonyms. This is problematic, especially as both practices are gaining popularity. One mental technique was originally designed for monks, and the other for people with busy minds and busy lives. With meditation becoming increasingly more mainstream, it will be helpful to be well versed on the differences between the two, and to develop a specificity of vocabulary so you don't feel unnecessarily confused or frustrated.

Mindfulness is a “directed focus” mental practice, meaning that you have some point of concentration during the exercise. I would define it as the art of bringing your awareness into the present moment, and it is very effective at handling your stress in the right now.

Mindfulness: The art of bringing your awareness into the present moment. An effective tool for changing your level of stress in the right now.

Most mindfulness practices are designed to help you bring your awareness into the body and into the right now, making it a beautiful tool to help you stop incessantly reviewing the past and rehearsing the future. Where this can get confusing is when people use the word *meditation* when they're actually referring to some type of mindfulness exercise in which you're focusing your mind in a specific direction. Counting your breaths, visualizing, imagining a waterfall, listening to guided audio—all these would be versions of mindfulness. Most of the popular “meditation” apps or guided YouTube videos are shades of mindfulness. They are lovely, and can be incredibly useful for changing your mental state in the right now, but I use mindfulness as a runway *into* meditation. It gives my high-performing students something to do with their busy minds as they are preparing their bodies for the deep rest and surrender that is meditation. I think of mindfulness as the appetizer to the main course of the Ziva Technique—meditation. Mindfulness is a great tool to use if you're stressed in the right now and want to feel better immediately.

Similarly, if you have a headache and you take an aspirin, you start feeling results right away. If you're stressed and you listen to a guided mindfulness exercise on your phone, it will help you feel better in the right now.

Meditation, as I define it, is helping you get rid of your stress from the *past*. Your body is a perfect accountant: Every all-nighter you've pulled, every bite of fast food you've ever eaten, and every shot of tequila you've done—it's all stored in your cellular memory. Meditation gives the body deep, healing rest—rest that is actually deeper than sleep. When you give your body the rest it needs, it knows how to heal itself. One of the things it heals itself from is stress. The less stress you have in your body, the easier it is for you to perform at the top of your game.

The specific style of meditation I teach at Ziva has its roots in something called *nishkam karma yoga*, a Sanskrit term meaning “union attained by action hardly taken.” It is a six-thousand-year-old practice that is born out of the Vedas, an ancient body of knowledge originating in the Himalayas. The Vedas are the same beautiful body of knowledge from which stem yoga, Ayurvedic medicine, feng shui, and acupuncture. The word *Veda* means knowledge and this knowledge is 1,500 years older than the Great Pyramid of Giza; in other words, this isn't some new age hogwash or hipster-inspired fad.

Nishkam karma meditation requires no effort, no focused concentration, and, thankfully, no struggling to “clear the mind.” I like to think of it as the “lazy man's meditation.” Instead of trying to force yourself into a cosmic abyss of black-hole nothingness, you allow the body to innocently and spontaneously access a deeply restful state. There is a tool that helps with this; it's called a mantra.

Now, the word *mantra* needs some clarification as well because the wellness industry has hijacked this term. A mantra is not a slogan. It is not an affirmation, such as “I'm a strong, powerful woman!” or “I deserve abundance!” In actuality, the word *mantra*—Sanskrit for “mind vehicle”—is a word or sound used as an anchor to de-excite the nervous system, access more subtle states of consciousness, and induce deep, healing rest.

The Vedas: An ancient body of knowledge originating in Northern India, designed to help practitioners find renewal, balance, and wholeness of body, mind, and spirit. They are a human interpretation of the laws of Nature, not a doctrine or dogma.

Mantra: Sanskrit, from *man* = “mind” and *tra* = “vehicle.” A mantra is used as an anchor to de-excite the nervous system, access more subtle states of consciousness, and induce deep, healing rest.

When I teach people face-to-face, students are given their own personalized mantra, which helps them access a verifiable fourth state of consciousness that is different from waking, sleeping, or dreaming. In that fourth state of consciousness, you’re giving your body rest that is two to five times deeper than sleep. There will be more on the science behind this concept in chapter 4. One of the main things that differentiates our in-person training from zivaONLINE and the Z Technique are the mantras—what types we use for which training and how long you spend in the meditation portion. In zivaLIVE, which is face-to-face, you’re given a personalized but meaningless primordial sound; in zivaONLINE, you are taught a protocol for how to choose your own mantra from a curated list; for the Z Technique and the purposes of learning through a book, we will be using a gentler, universal mantra to access this rest. This deep rest allows you to feel more awake afterward. Imagine a supercharged power nap without the sleep hangover. And instead of needing an hour and a half with your eyes closed, you need only fifteen minutes—bonus: you can do it in your chair at work, on the train, or even with your kids screaming in the next room. The function that helps get rid of the old stresses we have been storing in our cellular and genetic memory is a de-excitation of the nervous system. When you de-excite something, you create order. When you create order in your cells, the stress can start to come up and out in a way that allows your brain to use more of its computing power for the task at hand, instead of wasting that energy managing old stress. This is one of the reasons that meditators tend to get more done in less time.

The specific technique we will be following in *Stress Less, Accomplish More* fuses ancient practices with modern neuroscience. There are elements of the 3 M’s distilled specifically for people who are out in the world, who are going after their dreams, and whose lives are a far cry from an insular, monastic existence. What you are about to learn is for people with busy minds and busy lives. ***Mindfulness helps you deal with stress in the present; meditation gets rid of stress from the past; and manifesting helps you clarify your dreams for the future.***

Mindfulness, in its current form, is a derivative of styles of meditation that were originally designed for monks. If you think you might be a monk, this is

not the book for you. (But I'm guessing the likelihood of you wanting to be a monk is low.) Monastic types are contributing to society in a different way than the rest of the population; their whole life is a meditation. This was news to me when I first started learning. I assumed that monks must be meditating at such an advanced level that they would be vibrating or levitating, but the reality is that if you're in a state of meditation all day, you can afford to do a gentler practice. The rest of us, known in India as "householders"—that is, people with jobs and kids, companies to run, and bills to pay—have less time to meditate. We need a technique designed for us, one that allows us to drop in and access that deep, healing rest regardless of our external settings. That's where the mantra comes into play. You will learn a universal mantra as part of the Z Technique; think of it as an anchor to help you access your least-excited state of awareness, the key to tapping the source of unlimited fulfillment that is inside us all.

The Z Technique is intended for those of us who are householders—who are getting things done and making big things happen on the physical plane. That doesn't mean we can't interact with another plane; it just means we don't spend the majority of our time hanging out there. This style allows us to reap maximum benefits with minimal effort or time. It is designed for high performers. I define a high performer as anyone who wants to be better every day—someone who wants to use their gifts to leave the world better than they found it. Yes, some of us work in high-pressure, "high-stress" environments, but all of us want to get in, get out, and get on with life while life gets better.

High Performer: Someone who wants to be better every day, with the intention to leave the world better than they found it.

Finally, let's dive into the third of the 3 M's: manifesting. Manifesting is simply getting clear about precisely what you want to create in your life, or consciously curating a life you love. It is shocking to me how many people never take the time to get clear on their goals. When I ask my students what their dream job looks like, I often hear them justify their *current* job. When I ask people what their perfect relationship looks like, I often hear vague platitudes about respect and laughter. But just like placing an order at a restaurant, we have to be specific when calling in our dreams.

Most people don't take the time to let Nature know exactly what it is they'd like to create. Manifestation tools help you get crystal clear on your desires so

you start to act as if they are on the way. Think of it as placing your order with the great cosmic waitress at the great cosmic restaurant.

Manifesting: Designing a life you love. The act of being grateful for what you have while simultaneously imagining your dreams as if they are happening now. The process of manifesting is multifold: 1. Give thanks for what you have. 2. Clarify your goals. 3. Take time to imagine one goal as if it is happening now. 4. Detach from any outcome.

This process has the effect of closing the gap between your desires and those desires becoming reality.

Let me emphasize at the outset that manifesting is *not* “magical thinking.” This isn’t something you simply wish into being; you still have to get off the couch and take inspired action. Manifesting is the acknowledgment that thoughts become things. Once you learn the Z Technique, you’ll have a daily practice of manifesting directly after the deep rest and connection that meditation provides, which is a powerful time to create.

What makes manifesting so effective directly after meditation is that the meditation is helping you access that verifiable fourth state of consciousness, which is different from waking, sleeping, or dreaming. In this fourth state of consciousness, your right brain and left brain are functioning in unison. This is very similar to the state you are in when you fall into and out of sleep. Every time the brain transitions between waking and sleeping, it moves through a short window of this fourth state of consciousness, which is something I call “the bliss field.” We will also access this during the meditation portion of the Z Technique.

It has long been known that visualizing your ideal life as you fall asleep is a great way to fast-track your dreams to fruition. Neville Goddard wrote about this back in 1944 in his book *Feeling Is the Secret*. The amazing gift you’ll be giving yourself with your twice-a-day practice is triple the opportunities to plant these seeds for your future.

Just as you can achieve a deeper stretch and greater flexibility at the end of a workout, when your muscles are already warmed up and malleable, so, too, is manifestation a more effective tool at the end of meditation. In my personal experience and in guiding thousands of high achievers through this process, I

have found that practicing meditation and manifesting together is so much more powerful than doing either on its own. You could meditate all day long, but if you never take the time to get clear about what it is you want, it's much harder for Nature to bring you your order. Similarly, you could make hundreds of vision boards and hang them all around your home, or practice *The Secret* day in and day out, but if your body and mind are riddled with stress, you may not believe you deserve to step into your dream. The trick here is that we don't get what we want in life, we get what we believe we deserve.

There are some schools of thought that suggest your desires are divinely inspired—that manifestation actually precedes the desire. This idea holds that your impulse for something is actually Nature letting you know what is already making its way toward you. You know how you can feel the wind rushing toward you through the subway tunnel before you ever hear the train approaching or actually see its lights? Or how you see the pink and orange clouds before the sun actually rises above the horizon at dawn? Desire and manifestation can be thought of as operating in the same way. (This is rather advanced, and we will revisit this concept once you have more practice under your belt.)

The Meditation Shame Spiral

It doesn't matter what type of meditation you're practicing. If you don't have any training, it's very possible you'll be judging yourself based on misinformation. Meditation is deceptively simple, but ***don't confuse simplicity for weakness***. As lovely as it would be to be able to give the mind a command to shut up, or turn off our built-in hearing aids, this is not the point. There's nowhere on planet Earth that is completely silent, not even the caves of the Himalayas. If you sit down to meditate and a dog barks in the distance, a siren screams by, or your right bum cheek falls asleep—and your mind registers those sounds or sensations, as well as all the thoughts and images that go along with them—suddenly you're on a mental field trip. (So much for achieving oneness with the universe.) Surely monks would never deign to let their minds wander to such unprofound things as their neighbor's cranky pug or a tingling butt.

As a result, you chalk that meditation session up as a failure, and further, you see yourself as someone who has failed. The next time you sit down to meditate, you're determined to do better, thinking, *I'm not going to think this time. I'm not going to think this time. I'm not going to think this time . . .* which is, of course, thinking. So you finish another meditation, and not only

did you “fail” to clear your mind again, you have the added guilt of a second failed meditation attempt. You grit your teeth and buckle down for a third attempt, this time in a super-squishy seat in a perfectly soundproof room, so there are no possible distractions to stop you from reaching nirvana. Everything is going great; you’re comfortable, you’re relaxed, you run absolutely no risk of being disrupted by a noise from outside . . . and then your stomach rumbles. No problem—you manage to pull yourself back in, relishing the silence of your surroundings. Really, really relishing it. *I mean, this has got to be the quietest place I’ve ever been. I can’t even hear the ambient noise of water in the pipes. Way to go, self, for paying a little extra for the deluxe soundproofing package! The guy at the hardware store said it would be worth it, and he was totally right and . . .* crap. Now you’re thinking about how great you are at meditating and your home-improvement projects, no longer in the moment of thought-free Neverland. And you’ve “failed” at meditation yet again.

Rack up enough so-called failures in a row, and you’ll grow discouraged and eventually give up, because who wants to feel like they’re failing at something on a daily basis? You mess up, so you try harder, but the very effort that helps you succeed in most other areas of your life just guarantees another failure at meditation.

The Meditation Shame Spiral, I have found, is especially prevalent among high achievers. They’re often reluctant to even attempt meditation because they fear they won’t be any good at it. “I am afraid to even try, because my mind is just too busy to meditate,” they insist. “My mind is too busy to achieve anything like bliss.”

Meditation often feels intimidating for high achievers, who are used to doing and succeeding; they’re used to picking up new skills easily and have often built their identities on their ability to stare down every challenge. But here’s the secret they don’t like to talk about when they dust off their trophy cases: They naturally gravitate toward the very things that highlight their strengths and avoid the things that don’t. In other words, they like to operate in the areas where they know they can succeed. While this feels nice and validates the ego, it doesn’t lead to a life of growth.

Did I see you cringe a little as you read that last comment? Did it strike a little too close to home? Here’s the thing: I understand you, achievers, because *I am one of you*. I am the most achievement-driven achiever who ever tried to achieve at achieving, so I know what I’m talking about when I say our biggest fear as success-driven individuals is failure. And we usually aren’t particularly good at it, for the simple reason that we haven’t had much experience with it. So when we’re faced with a new skill set that seems like it

may not play to our strengths, our first reaction is usually to dismiss it and move on to something where success is much more likely.

If this sounds familiar, I would encourage you to go into this book with an open mind. The techniques you'll learn here are very different from the oh-so-frustrating “clear your mind” directives you probably received in the past. Take another look at the practice of meditation specifically because it's just that—a *practiced* discipline. Even the most experienced in the field are constantly growing, hungry to discover new facets of their potential, to up-level their brains to higher states of consciousness, and to access a deeper connectedness. In other words, we are all constantly in a state of improvement. You already possess the ability to be a successful meditator because you have the ability to think a thought. More on that soon, but as I said earlier, ***we meditate to get good at life, not to get good at meditation.*** No one cares if we are good at meditation, though I wish they did—I love being the best at things (and I suspect you do, too). But the ultimate goal is never to become a world-class meditator. That's just silly. What would be the point? Meditation is not a party trick you do to show off to your friends; meditation is the means to an end. The goal is, ultimately, the innumerable benefits of meditation and how they can shape our lives, enhance our performance, and improve our interactions in the world.

It is impossible to lose at meditation. Let me say that again: *It is impossible to lose at meditation.* Every act of delving into your least-excited state, every inspired decision you make as a result of your practice, every moment that you realize that you are enough is a victory. In other words, every time you engage in the practice, you're winning. Achievers afraid to try meditation because they fear they won't be good at it should let that sink in: Practicing the Z Technique guarantees you at least two successes a day.

So Why Meditate?

So why does any of this matter? Even if the practice truly is quick and simple, what do we really gain or lose by incorporating it as a nonnegotiable part of our daily routine?

In the upcoming chapters, we will take a closer look at stress—its origins and its impact on every aspect of our health, down to the cellular level in our bodies. We will also examine the neuroscience behind meditation and the way it positively impacts the human brain in both objective and subjective measures. For now, though, I would simply like you to consider the very practical, utilitarian side of the question: Why should you dedicate any of

your very precious and limited minutes, every day, to meditation?

Simply put, because it creates more time. ***Would you be willing to invest 2 percent of your day if you knew it would improve the other 98 percent?*** If so, buckle up, because that's exactly what this book will teach you to do.

Let's dive deeper into the concept of time, because that seems to be the most universal concern of all would-be meditators—especially high-performing, outcome-driven personalities. I hear it constantly: They are reluctant to try meditation because “I'm too busy to meditate” or “I barely have time to go to the bathroom or eat lunch, much less spend a quarter of an hour just sitting.”

Guess what? They're right. I don't have time for that, either. That's the reason Ziva is so perfectly suited for people who are doers: It is doing. Just because the mind thinks involuntarily during meditation doesn't mean it isn't working; this tool goes after the root cause of stress, the thing that triggers so many negative physical and emotional responses.

Think about it: When your phone is plugged in, it's not “just sitting,” is it? Of course not. It's charging so it'll be ready to be the most effective tool it can be when you need to use it. When your computer does that forced-shutdown thing, where it spends fifteen minutes upgrading while that little spinning wheel mocks you, is it “just sitting”? Sure, it may feel like that—it might even look like it—but your computer is actually engaged in a series of system cleanups that have been programmed specifically for the sake of making it a more efficient, more effective, and more powerful machine than it was before.

What if you never took the time to charge your phone? What if you never rebooted your computer so it could install updates? Would your tools be operating at optimum efficiency? When you don't allow your mind the chance to refresh and rejuvenate itself, you're denying it the chance to reach peak performance, and possibly even running it down to zero, at which point it's physically incapable of performing the very tasks it was designed to do.

I've got plenty more of these analogies, but I'm going to stop here because I'm pretty sure you get the idea. The point is, when you engage in meditation that is made for *you*—not for monks—you're *literally creating time*. You are optimizing your cognitive performance capabilities so you can get more done in less time. The Z Technique is the very opposite of doing nothing; it's consciously and methodically creating an optimized space from which to operate with superior equipment and with your maximized abilities. Viewed in this way, meditation is so much more than “just sitting”; it's updating and defragging your mental hardware so you can more effectively run whatever software you have as the operating system of your life, be it Christianity,

Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'i, any number of self-help regimens, secular humanism—pretty much everything but nihilism. (Though I have no doubt meditation would prove beneficial for nihilists, too.) ***Meditation is not a belief system or religious practice; it is a technique that will allow you to remove stress from your body while strengthening your mind.***

I can tell you all about the scientifically verifiable benefits, as well as the anecdotal ones confirmed by my fifteen-thousand-plus students. I can cite scores of recent articles quoting high achievers who credit meditation as a key aspect of their success. I can even point to dozens of Fortune 500 companies that have embraced the practice company-wide. I can also tell you why various industry leaders, innovators, and influencers meditate. The one thing I cannot do is tell you why *you* should incorporate meditation into your daily routine. That ultimately has to come from you. You have to be the one to identify not only the goal but why you are pursuing it—the motivation that reaches beyond the moment the goal is reached. In other words, it's great to celebrate crossing the finish line, but what prompted you to run the race in the first place?

Here's some good news: *You don't have to have your life figured out to begin a meditation practice.* Seriously. Just about every other self-help or personal improvement plan hinges on figuring out profound truths about yourself, your driving forces, and your inspirations *before* you begin to experience the positive results. Meditation is a tool that can actually help you discover those things along the way. As you begin to practice the plan laid out in this book, you'll find that rather than being the goal itself, the Z Technique is actually just a means of moving your mind, intuition, creativity, and even your physical body toward realizing your goals and clarifying your motivations. As we discussed above, the word *mantra* literally means “mind vehicle,” moving you from one place to another. The only thing that matters, at this point, is the intention and desire to improve your current state of being. If you have that, you can begin on the journey and let the rest sort itself out as you go.

Are you ready for your first homework assignment? Write down your intention for picking up this book, no matter how vague, silly, or ambiguous it may feel right now. You could write something general, like “I want to enjoy my life more.” Or you could be much more specific, like “I want to get a promotion within the next six months.” You could even be more subjective, such as “I want my family to find common ground about politics” or “I want to be a better parent” or “I want to be a stronger force for good in the world.” Even if you have to say “I don't know why I feel compelled to try meditation,

but I'm out of other ideas," that's fine, too. There is absolutely no judgment here. (Remember, I got into meditating in part for the noble goal of not wanting gray hair in my twenties.)

I am reading *Stress Less, Accomplish More* because ...

This is how stress is affecting my performance today:

On a scale of 1–10 (1 being the worst, 10 being the best), this is how I rate my:

Sleep:

Work Performance:

Relationships:

Stress:

Intuition:

Creativity:

Health:

Don't skip this assignment. It can be tough to take an honest look at your relationship with stress. But seriously, don't skip it. This will help you to gauge your success as you

start a daily practice. It will also be fun to revisit this once you finish the book and have some meditation under your belt.

Once you have these answers written down, I would like you to give some thought to one more thing: your excuse for not trying meditation sooner.

Maybe you're just learning about it for the first time. Maybe you had some misconceptions about what it was really all about. Maybe you used to practice but fell out of the habit. I suspect that at least some of you haven't tried it because it sounded like a bunch of hippy-dippy, woo-woo magic talk. And I'm sure that for the vast majority of readers, simply not having the time for yet another thing on your calendar is at least a contributing factor in avoiding meditation. Whatever your reason, make a mental note of it—and be honest. The important thing is to be frank and authentic. Meditation is about accessing the best possible version of you, so don't be afraid to be transparent as we begin this journey.

With That in Mind . . .

As we move forward in this book, I would encourage you to be gentle with yourself. Don't think you have to set out to be the best meditator in all the land. Don't worry if you find your mind far busier than you would like it to be. Don't sweat the Sanskrit words and scientific terms I'll be throwing at you.

Most important, let go of your preconceived notions of what meditation "should" look like and instead give yourself permission to enter this with beginner's mind. Enjoy this as a wholly new (but time-tested) method for relieving stress and preparing your mind and body for heightened awareness and engagement with life.

This may all still sound a little nebulous, but I promise that it will begin to get clearer and more tangible as we progress. Right now, I just want you to ask yourself if you're ready to *commit to the intention* of meditating. That's it; there's nothing more required of you at this point. Just commit to the intention—that's enough for us to get started, and it may be enough to change the trajectory of the rest of your life.

Ziva Case Study 1

From \$70,000 of Debt to \$1.2 Million Earned in One Year

Mari Carmen, Entrepreneur

I saw Emily for the first time at a business mastermind group where she was speaking. There was something attractive about her, beyond her appearance and contagious smile. She was tapped into something more profound; her glow came from within. She was powerful yet calm and confident, and I knew right away I wanted some of what she was having.

Two months after seeing her onstage, I rearranged my schedule and traveled to New York City to attend her zivaLIVE course. I was already a meditator (of sorts), but I knew without a doubt that there was more to it, and I trusted that she could show me the way.

My situation was not terrible; life was not “that bad.” I had retired from a successful corporate job, I was happily married, the kids were almost out of the house, and I had started my own business in 2014. I was on the way to continued success . . . or so I thought.

Okay, the truth that no one knows is that I had accumulated \$70,000 in debt and somehow burned through my \$200,000 in savings in two short years. My new business was in the red, big time. My confidence was dwindling quickly; I was scattered and felt needy, which I hated. Despite all these demands, I knew the answers must reside within me, and that somewhere in this whole mess, there had to be a lesson I needed to learn.

However, I had absolutely no idea *how to access* those answers that supposedly resided within me.

Right after Emily’s first class, I felt better. Maybe it was a psychological high, but who cares! When first starting meditation, I’m not sure if it matters if it’s a placebo effect. I knew I was doing the right thing for me. So I made a commitment to my twice-per-day meditations.

I didn't have any "extra" time in the morning for meditation, so I moved the alarm clock back. In the beginning it was just fifteen minutes, but now I wake up thirty minutes earlier than before. I use the first fifteen minutes for my meditation and the rest to joyfully take my time getting ready for the day. It is such a powerful psychological shift to feel ahead of schedule and prepared for the day, versus rushed and late right out of the gate.

After the first two weeks, I kept "forgetting" the second meditation. All the while, my sleep improved, I had more time, and my skin started to look better and more rested. Even though I was spending less time sleeping, I was more energized, and I began to be able to hear those answers that I knew resided inside me.

So, I thought, *If once-a-day meditation can do this much good, what could committing to twice daily do?* I decided to cut the BS and start "remembering" the afternoon meditation. I have to admit, at times it felt like torture. I feel there is still a part of me that wants to "forget about it," but I can't, and here's why.

After one year of consistently taking two Ziva meditation breaks per day, I have:

- Added three more hours of productivity to my day. Here's the thing: The clarity that meditation gives me allows me to make decisions faster, see answers to challenging situations more quickly, and come up with new content (for blogs, a course, a third book) much more easily. I feel my brain capacity expanding.
- My energy levels have always been reasonable, but now I have double the energy I used to have. I'm well into my fifties and more vibrant than ever!
- With more time in the day and more energy, my work performance has skyrocketed. My mind is not cluttered anymore as I go through my workday, so the things I'm building are of higher quality, and my creativity is solid. I have exceeded my own performance expectations.
- I landed a TED Talk, which was one of the most "stressful" opportunities I have ever faced. You can't

re-record it, it's live, you only get one shot to do it right . . . and I nailed it!

- I finally found the answers I needed (turns out, they were inside me all along) to revamp my business and move in a different direction. This resulted in an increase in sales from \$80,000 to \$1,200,000 in one year. I am consistently attracting the kind of client who is ready for this lady boss to empower them to reach new heights.

What else can I say? Meditation is not about changing who you are, moving to a cave, or sitting cross-legged in a dark room waiting for something to happen. I have worked my buns off, and it hasn't all been easy, but it's been so incredibly rewarding.

I can't imagine quitting now. There's no going back for me, because the results are clear. Ziva has transformed my life.
