



Accidental Meditation

I am, for lack of a better term, a meditation dropout. Oh, I've tried it all: the standard legs-crossed, deep-breathing variety (which made me stir-crazy after a few endless minutes); Pilates classes (where I managed to pull a muscle just learning to breathe properly); and t'ai chi instruction (which ended with gentle reprimands by my instructor that walking meditation was *not* a form of aerobic exercise). They all left me anxious and restless. I couldn't let go and simply be present in the moment—a hallmark of my type-A personality. That all changed on a Caribbean vacation. There, I inadvertently learned even action-obsessed people like me can achieve satori.

Now, you may think that just being on a serene beach relaxing should help instill a meditative state. Not so for someone who every day had proudly recited the mantra "Go, go, go, faster, faster, faster." But the morning I donned a snorkeling mask and submerged into the quiet, mystical world beneath the sea, my life began to change. I can still feel the magic of that first glimpse: a bright red starfish, a giant spotted ray

gliding by like a bird in flight, and hundreds of silversides swimming in synchronized motion. It transported me to another realm.

Immersed in beauty, color, and silence, I was forced not to move too much or too suddenly, or the creatures around me would scatter. For the first time ever, I could be *still*. Minutes

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slipped away unnoticed, as the simple cadence of breathing in and breathing out became stronger and stronger. Lost in a dreamy world where parrot fish, barracuda, and even sea turtles swam by me as if I were invisible, I learned that submitting completely to silence brings an exhilarating, nerve-tingling rush.

Now, back in Pennsylvania, whenever I feel stressed, I lie down and visualize that moment when I place my face in the water and hear only the gentle waves breaking on the shore as I breathe deeply and glide ever so smoothly through warm, clear water filled with beauty. Breathing in and breathing out, I float and meditate while angelfish lead the way. —Vickie McIntyre

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