

# *Calm living* in a HECTIC WORLD

THIS HIGH-ACHIEVER TRADED HER BUSY LIFESTYLE FOR A SLOWER PACE AND A CAREER THAT PROMOTES CONSCIOUS LIVING.







### PEACE

Jacqui turned her life around and is helping others do the same.



**“Make a list of the things that make you happy, then make them happen.”**

**J**acqui Lewis has what she describes as an intimate relationship with stress and anxiety. The Sydneysider made a living in PR, marketing and hospitality until she ended up a burnt-out, divorced, single mum at 29. Forced to re-evaluate, Jacqui realised that using her knowledge of stress for good was the only way forward. The result was The Broad Place.

### Tell us about The Broad Place.

We opened two years ago – it’s a school for clarity, creativity and innovation. We help frantic folks live healthier, more connected lives through workshops, mentoring and retreats. We specialise in ancient knowledge for modern living.

One of the key tools we teach is Vedic meditation, a practice that originated in India more than 5000 years ago. I believe it’s the number one tool for living with greater clarity. We also hold study programs, workshops, retreats and experiences that aim to increase our connection

to who we are and how we think creatively. Many people aren’t living life to their potential. When we ask, ‘Are you at your most remarkable?’ we usually hear, ‘Not quite’ or ‘There’s room for improvement’.

### Who are your students?

Everyone from teenagers to retirees. Stress is part of everyone’s life – from high-school students doing their exams to an intensive-care nurse to a high-level lawyer. Often it’s someone who’s asking ‘Is there a better way to live?’ The people who come to us have experienced high amounts of stress, tension or fatigue and they’re looking to strengthen their mind and be more connected to themselves. So many people ignore the signs of stress and tension until it’s too late.

I know what it’s like – I had the wind knocked out of my sails when I was 29. I found

myself divorced with a child and a whole bunch of things that aren’t part of the box-ticking plan. I had to evaluate what I wanted to contribute to the world. Because of my own experience, I knew a lot about dealing with stress, tension and fatigue and I became really motivated to help other people who found themselves in a similar situation. I realised it’s about having the right tools so we can be engaged with the modern world.

### Does that also include technology?

We’re active on social media and we publish e-books so I get why people need to connect online. But having boundaries is really important so we can make sure we’re engaged with our actual day-to-day life. We were never meant to be on technology for as long as we are. Looking at our phones and computers all day means we’re not engaging with the goodness that’s on offer around us.

### What should we do to be more present?

Reducing the time we spend on social media is a good start. Try this: for seven days (with the intention of keeping it up







### THE KEY

Meditation plays a huge part in balancing your life, says Jacqui.



forever) use no technology for an hour after you wake up and an hour before you go to sleep. This means no mobile phone, iPad, laptop or TV. It's incredibly confronting, especially to those who check their phone before they even get out of bed in the morning, but it really helps to engage with the life around you, not the life in the cyber world.

### How can we swap stress for happiness?

To increase happiness in our lives we need to prioritise what makes us joyful which helps produce happy hormones, while at the same time stems the flow of stress hormones. An easy way to do this is to make a list of the unique things that make you happy, then make them happen. For me, that's taking our chubby Jack Russell running on the beach. She chases crabs and isn't very coordinated so the whole thing is hilarious! So often there isn't enough

time to enjoy little moments during the day, but when we do we get an overwhelming sense of happiness. You could make tea from scratch with tea leaves, drink your coffee in the cafe rather than getting takeout, or have lunch in the park instead of at your desk. It doesn't have to be a big time commitment to have an impact on your happiness.

### Any other tips to cope with a hectic lifestyle?

It's important to be careful about our language – we all love to use words like 'busy' and 'under the pump'; but using this sort of language creates stress-related hormones that impact on the body. It's not that we need to fake positivity, but it's about finding a middle ground. Perhaps describe work as 'challenging' rather than saying, 'I'm sinking or I'm so busy' because your body will respond to what you're saying. ■



## Meditation 101

Here's Jacqui's guide to training the mind to relax in just 15 minutes.

- 1** Sit in a comfortable position with your back supported and head free. It's important to be comfortable and feel good when you're meditating. There's no need to be absolutely still, so feel free to shift about if you need to.
- 2** Focus on your breathing and take three long, deep, slow breaths. Notice the sounds around you. Relax your body and let your shoulders fall. Each time your mind wanders, which it will hundreds of times, pull your attention back to the breath.
- 3** Slowly bring your attention to each part of your body, from your eyes to your feet. Take one long breath in and out while focusing on each part of the body. What we're doing here is training the brain to think about one thing at a time.
- 4** Bring your awareness to your whole body and take five slow, deep breaths. Remember, you're not trying to banish thoughts. Just keep returning your focus to your breath whenever thoughts pop up. You'll have lots of thoughts – and that's okay.
- 5** Breathe normally. Relax as much as you can. Notice any sensations you feel in your body until the 15 minutes is complete.

Visit [thebroadplace.com.au](http://thebroadplace.com.au) to find out about meditation, retreats, ebooks, publications and more.