

March 31 in 31

Written by Gayle Nobel

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It is March 4 already. Yikes! February flew by. March is a longer month. More days to complete a challenge. I am still on a monthly challenge mission. 28 days of acts of giving/kindness was awesome last month. I learned a lot about what happens when you set an intention. Creativity coupled with heightened awareness kicked in to help me fulfill my challenge in February. What a great feeling!

In fact so far I am really loving the challenges in a "how in the world am I going to do this every day this month" kind of way. Trying not to take myself too seriously and have fun with the process. Kinda like life.

I find it is hard to stop the momentum of a challenge at the end of the month when moving on to a new one. That's because one month is long enough to form a habit. Of course, there is nothing that says I have to stop completely and I hope to enjoy the perks of some newly formed habits. Today when I let a woman go ahead of me in the grocery line she provided way too much information about her husband's illness at home and how she had to hurry back with the particular items she was purchasing. An act of kindness run amok.

I have been away for the first 3 days of March but started my challenge nevertheless which is....

31 days of MEDITATION in 31 days of March. "Just Sit" is how I like to think of it (named by my friend Sandi). For how long? Doesn't really matter but at least 2 minutes. And yes, 2 minutes counts.

Where? Again doesn't matter. I had to get creative while in Austin visiting my daughter Leah. This means I discovered that yes, you can meditate on an airplane. No one has to know that you are not actually sleeping. :-).

When? Preferably in the morning. Get er done is a good attitude to have when doing these challenges but it can be any time that works.

Some might think meditation is a bit whoo whoo, out there, new agey, weird, or mysterious. Personally, I have had an on again, off again relationship with it since 1995 when I was dealing with the death of my father. When I first started, my husband used to come home from work and say he could tell by my face that I had meditated that morning. He also seemed to know when I didn't. Hmmm, perhaps that's enough said.

So what is it? Basically meditation is about practicing mindfulness. Mindfulness seems to be the opposite of where we spend much of our mental attention. It is a great antidote for our life of multitasking and constant busy-ness.

Leo Babuata of Zen Habits shares some simple information about meditation:

Why practice mindfulness through meditation? Actually, there are lots of great reasons. Here are a few:

- *It relieves stress and helps you to relax.*
- *When you practice mindfulness, you can carry it out to everyday life.*
- *Mindfulness helps you to savor life, change habits, live simply and slowly, be present in everything you do.*
- *Meditation has been shown to have mental benefits, such as improved focus, happiness, memory, self-control, academic performance and more.*
- *Some research on meditation has indicated that it may have other health benefits, including improved metabolism, heart rate, respiration, blood pressure and more.*

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Those are just the highlights. Actually, some of the best benefits of meditation are hard to define — you begin to understand yourself better, for example, and form a self-awareness level you've never had before.

Most simply, sitting for just a few minutes of meditation is an oasis of calm and relaxation that we rarely find in our lives these days. And that, in itself, is enough.

This pretty much says it all. March challenge: 31 in 31.... "Just Sit".

Join me. Anyone?