

A D Y A S H A N T I

true meditation

discover the freedom  
of pure awareness



Sounds True  
Boulder, CO

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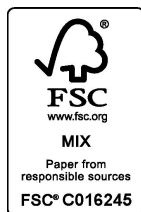
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## Editor's Introduction

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Each of our lives is a kind of spiritual laboratory in which we test the teachings we encounter in the fire of our own experience. Ultimately, what matters are not the truths other people tell us or the practices that we are able to mimic, but the spiritual discoveries we make through personal investigation.

When I first spoke with Adyashanti (whose name literally means “primordial peace”), I knew I was speaking with a spiritual teacher who had made some very real and personal discoveries. Although he claimed to have “woken up out of Zen,” it was his longtime Zen teacher, Arvis Justi, who encouraged him to begin teaching in 1996 at the age of thirty-four. Hearing that people often experienced breakthrough insights in his presence, I knew I wanted to add his input into the spiritual laboratory of my life.

So, in November 2004, I attended a five-day retreat with Adyashanti. During this retreat, Adyashanti gave talks during which retreatants had the opportunity to converse with him publicly about their innermost questions and concerns. We also spent four to five hours each day in silent sitting. During this time, we were to engage in what Adya calls True Meditation. At the retreat, the basic instruction we received to orient ourselves during these silent sittings was two words: No manipulation.

As someone who has spent more than twenty years attending various kinds of meditation retreats and experimenting with dozens of different techniques and approaches, I felt a bit baffled. “No manipulation? That’s it?” Could I slouch? What about my discursive mind? Was this really a form of meditation, or was Adya simply giving us permission to space out? What is “True Meditation,” anyway?

In addition to receiving the instruction “No manipulation,” there was a one-page handout we could read and contemplate. “Thank God,” I thought. “Everyone else here may be familiar with Adya and this approach, but I need more information.” Maybe the handout would help. Here’s what it said:

## True Meditation

*True Meditation has no direction, goals, or method. All methods aim at achieving a certain state of mind. All states are limited, impermanent, and conditioned. Fascination with states leads only to bondage and dependency. True Meditation is abidance as primordial consciousness.*

*True Meditation appears in consciousness spontaneously when awareness is not*

*fixated on objects of perception. When you first start to meditate, you notice that awareness is always focused on some object: on thoughts, bodily sensations, emotions, memories, sounds, etc. This is because the mind is conditioned to focus and contract upon objects. Then the mind compulsively interprets what it is aware of (the object) in a mechanical and distorted way. It begins to draw conclusions and make assumptions according to past conditioning.*

*In True Meditation all objects are left to their natural functioning. This means that no effort should be made to manipulate or suppress any object of awareness. In true meditation the emphasis is on being awareness: not on being aware of objects, but on resting as primordial awareness itself. Primordial awareness (consciousness) is the source in which all objects arise and subside. As you gently relax into awareness, into listening, the mind's compulsive contraction around objects will fade. Silence of being will come more clearly into consciousness as a welcoming to rest and abide. An attitude of open receptivity, free of any goal or anticipation, will facilitate the presence*

*of silence and stillness to be revealed as your natural condition.*

*Silence and stillness are not states and therefore cannot be produced or created. Silence is the non-state in which all states arise and subside. Silence, stillness, and awareness are not states and can never be perceived in their totality as objects. Silence is itself the eternal witness without form or attributes. As you rest more profoundly as the witness, all objects take on their natural functionality, and awareness becomes free of the mind's compulsive contractions and identifications, and returns to its natural non-state of Presence.*

*The simple yet profound question, "Who Am I?," can then reveal one's self not to be the endless tyranny of the ego-personality, but objectless Freedom of Being—Primordial Consciousness in which all states and all objects come and go as manifestations of the Eternal Unborn Self that YOU ARE.*

Folding up this handout and sticking it in the pocket of my jeans, I spent the five-day retreat alternately practicing the meditation techniques I was familiar with and simply relaxing, listening, and being without manipulation. But at the

end of the retreat, I had to admit I had far more questions than answers. What is the role of technique in meditation? Does this approach work for meditators of all levels, or only for advanced practitioners who have already spent years familiarizing themselves with quieting the mind? What about posture and the physical and emotional pain that can often arise during periods of meditation?

Filled with questions, I asked Adyashanti if he would be willing to work with Sounds True to create a teaching program on True Meditation. He agreed, and this book is the result. I handed Adya a list of questions and he responded by giving two dharma talks on the topic of True Meditation: one talk on “Allowing Everything To Be As It Is” and a second talk on “Meditative Self-Inquiry.” He also recorded two guided meditations (available at [SoundsTrue.com/TrueMeditation](http://SoundsTrue.com/TrueMeditation)) so that listeners can explore these teachings in their own introspective way.

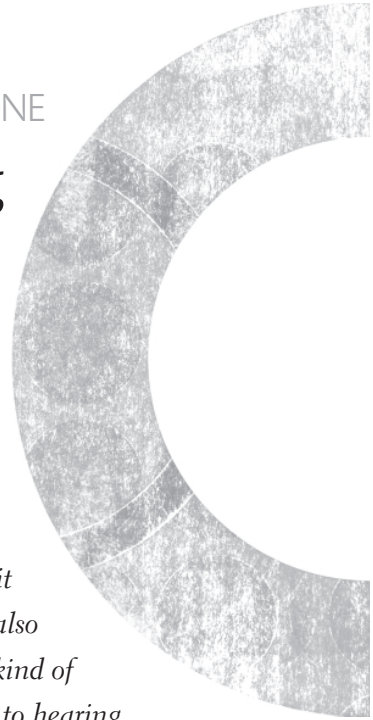
According to Adyashanti, spiritual discoveries are self-authenticating. What matters most is not what others affirm but what you realize in your own being. It is my hope that this book and CD offering on True Meditation will further your own process of genuine discovery, for the benefit of all beings.

Tami Simon  
Publisher, Sounds True  
May 2006, Boulder,

PART ONE

# Allow Everything To Be As It Is

*We're going to investigate the whole notion of meditation, what meditation is, why we meditate, and what meditation can lead to. I want to explore what I call True Meditation, which you'll come to realize as I describe it is actually something quite specific and also something quite different from the kind of meditation that most people are used to hearing about. But first, a little personal history.*



## Ending the War with the Mind

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I came from the Zen Buddhist tradition, and in the Zen tradition, there is a long history in which the primary practice is meditation. In Zen, you often meditate for hours a day in the seated meditation posture for a prescribed period of time. And what I found out through many years of practice in this style of meditation is that I actually wasn't particularly good at it. I think a lot of people find when they first begin to meditate that they're not particularly good at it—their minds are busy, their bodies want to be twitching, and it's hard for them to calm down and be quiet. So my experience from the beginning was that meditation was actually very difficult for me to do. And I find for a lot of people it is something that is actually very difficult for them to do.

So I found myself sitting, on various retreats and at home. At home I would sit for maybe half an hour or an hour a day, sometimes longer. I would go on retreats and sit for much, much longer periods of time. And very often my meditation was actually anything but meditation. It was a lot of struggle, a lot of trying to calm my mind, a lot of trying to control my thoughts, and a lot of trying to be still, without much success—except for a few magical moments when meditation just seemed to happen. Because I wasn't particularly gifted at meditation initially—at being able to control my mind and enter

into a meditative state—after some years I realized that I needed to find a different way to meditate. The approach I was using clearly wasn't working. This is when I began my investigation into what I call True Meditation.

One day I was speaking with my teacher, and she said, "If you try to win the war with your mind, you'll be at war forever." That really struck me. At that moment I realized I had been viewing meditation as a battle with my mind. I was trying to control my mind, to pacify my mind, to try to get my mind to be quiet. Suddenly I thought, "My goodness, forever is an awfully long time. I must come up with a whole different way of looking at this." If continuing this way meant I was going to be at war with my mind indefinitely, I needed to find a way not to be at war with my mind. Without even knowing it I started to investigate, in a quiet and very deep way, what it would be like not to be at war with my own mind, with what I felt, with my whole human experience.

I started to meditate in a different way. I let go of the idea of what meditation was supposed to be. My mind had had a lot of ideas about meditation. It was supposed to be peaceful; I was supposed to feel a particular way, mostly calm. Meditation was supposed to lead me into some deep state of being. But because I could not master the technique of meditation as it was being taught to me, I had to discover a different way of meditating, one that wasn't oriented around a technique. So I would sit down and let my

experience simply be, in a very deep way. I started to let go of trying to control my experience. That became the beginning of discovering for myself what True Meditation is. From that point on, that shift—moving from trying to perfect a technique or discipline to actually letting go of technique and discipline—started to inform the way I engage in meditation.

## An Attitude of Innocence

Our ideas about meditation are usually colored by our past conditioning—what we’ve learned about it, what we think meditation is, where we think it should lead. Meditation can serve a whole array of agendas. Some people meditate for better physical or emotional health or to still their bodies or minds. Some people meditate to open up certain subtle energy channels within their bodies, often called *chakras*. Some people meditate to develop love, to develop compassion. Some people meditate in order to achieve altered states of consciousness. Other people meditate to try and gain certain spiritual or psychic powers—what they call *siddhis*. And then there’s meditation as an aid to spiritual awakening and enlightenment. It’s this kind of meditation—meditation that is an aid to spiritual awakening and enlightenment—that really interests me. It’s what True Meditation is all about.

It doesn’t matter whether one is brand new to meditation or has been meditating for a long time. What I have found is that history doesn’t really make any difference. What matters is the attitude with which we engage the process of meditation. The most important thing is that we come to meditation with an open attitude, an attitude that is truly innocent, by which I mean an attitude that’s not colored by the past, by what we’ve heard about meditation through culture, through the media, or through