IGNITE YOUR SALES POWER!

MINDFULNESS SKILLS FOR SALES PROFESSIONALS
also by

JOY RAINS

Meditation Illuminated: Simple Ways to Manage Your Busy Mind

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Bethesda, MD
For Dad,
who pointed the way
to a sales career
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. FUEL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1:</td>
<td>MEDITATION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2:</td>
<td>IMAGINATION</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. AIR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3:</td>
<td>CONCENTRATION</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4:</td>
<td>CONSIDERATION</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SPARK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5:</td>
<td>DETERMINATION</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td></td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: 18 Ways to Develop Your Power of Awareness</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Final Thought</td>
<td></td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td></td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both my father and my grandfather were professional salesmen, so selling is part of my DNA. When I was in high school, I landed a part-time telemarketing job and began a long sales career, following in their footsteps.

After college, I earned my living as a traveling saleswoman, selling optical products to wholesalers. I moved on to selling computer products to the U.S. government, then telephone systems to commercial accounts, and finally print and online advertising to businesses.

When I began my sales career, I noticed that some sales reps rose to the top like heavy cream and others sank to the bottom like heavy weights. I wanted to understand this disparity, so that I could be one of the salespeople who rose.
In the early 1990s, learning to meditate taught me how to become mindful — and how to develop the enormous power of awareness. Roadblocks became easier to navigate. Opportunities became easier to recognize. Business poured in. Sales flourished.

I was so excited about the benefits of mindfulness and meditation that I wrote a book for beginning meditators, *Meditation Illuminated: Simple Ways to Manage Your Busy Mind*. (You’ll find some excerpts from it in Chapter 1.)

Since mindfulness was key to my business success, I decided to write this book on mindfulness for sales professionals. You’ll find ideas, lessons, and techniques that can help you rise to the top. My intent is to help you boost your business — and ignite your sales power.

Hope you enjoy!

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**INTRODUCTION**

**THE POWER OF AWARENESS**

One cold morning before the days of electric cars, I was miffed that my car wouldn’t start. My husband turned to me and matter-of-factly stated, “You need three elements for ignition: fuel, air, and spark.”

Now you can discover elements to ignite your sales power. Within these pages, you’ll find a framework of three parts: *Fuel, Air*, and *Spark*. You’ll learn how to build your power of awareness with mindfulness skills — and how to apply these lessons to best practices for sales.

Here’s a summary of each section:
I recommend picking and choosing the techniques that resonate with you. The more engaged you are in this process, the more successful you’ll be.

At the end of each chapter, you’ll find an Action Plan with suggestions for techniques and practices to try, ways to evaluate their effectiveness, and recommendations for moving forward with them. You’ll find an additional Action Plan within the body of Chapter 2.

The Appendix contains eighteen ideas for practices to try. You can try a new practice each day, or skip around and choose those you like. Note the ones that resonate with you and try to integrate them into your sales activities.

I hope you discover the practices that are right for you, so you can ignite your sales power!
MANAGING YOUR THOUGHTS
Your thoughts are fuel for your mind and for your actions in the world.

- CONCENTRATION
- CONSIDERATION
- DETERMINATION
- MEDITATION
- IMAGINATION
Meditation is a practice of training the mind to develop present moment awareness. This awareness is called mindfulness. Mindfulness allows you to become aware of both your internal experiences, such as your thoughts — and your external experiences, such as what your customer is communicating.

In this chapter, you’ll learn how awareness of your internal experiences can help you recognize thoughts that could impede your sales efforts. You’ll learn how to meditate — so you can release thoughts that don’t serve you, clear your mind, and navigate a path to the sale.

To start, let’s take a look at the nature of thoughts, and how awareness of your thoughts can improve your results.
THOUGHTS AND AWARENESS

It’s widely reported that the average person generates anywhere from 50,000 to 70,000 thoughts per day. Thoughts may range from bigger issues (Should I make a career change now?) to thoughts about smaller issues (Should I eat lunch before or after my appointment?) to judgments of liking or not liking (I love this new product!) to regrets about the past or worries about the future (I’ll never overcome her objection!).

Thoughts often happen at lightning-fast speed, either with the same thoughts repeatedly cycling through the mind, or with the mind jumping from one random thought to another. Consider, for example, a sales professional meeting with a customer. As there’s a pause in the conversation, her mind wanders. If you could listen to her thoughts, you might hear: I hope I can close this deal. Maybe then I’ll win the trip to Hawaii! Better get to the gym, so I look good in my bathing suit. Darn! I ate too much cake last night — but hey, it was my birthday. I can’t believe how old I’m getting!

Thoughts like these can become obstacles to the sale. Rather than paying attention to her customer, this sales rep is allowing her thoughts to pull her away from the present moment. If she’s distracted, even just momentarily, it might be at the moment her customer says, “If your software will save us time, I think my managers would be interested.” She could miss this important buying signal and the opportunity to understand her customer’s needs — not a good formula for sales success.

Meeting prospects and customers with a clear mind can be challenging. After all, just as it’s the nature of the heart to beat, it’s the nature of the mind to think. I call the mental content that cycles through the mind “STUFF,” which is an acronym for:

- Stories
- Thoughts
- Urges
- Frustrations
- Feelings

STUFF serves an important function, since it helps you navigate through life. Yet, you may not even realize this STUFF is present. It can fade to the background of the mind, but it’s still there, influencing your behavior.
Try this: Pause for one minute. Notice what’s going on in your mind — your Stuff.

Some people are surprised by the amount of Stuff they notice during this one-minute exercise. Others don’t notice much of anything at all. The point of the exercise is to be aware of your experience; there’s no right or wrong.

Awareness will allow you to make a conscious choice about how to manage your Stuff, so it doesn’t distract you. You’ll learn how to develop awareness with meditation later in this chapter.

Thoughts and Judgments

Thoughts can also become obstacles when they’re in the form of negative judgments. If a potential customer looks unhappy, do you interpret that as meaning he’s not interested in your product or service? If you hear the economy is in a slump, do you tell yourself a story that your sales will collapse, as well?

Consider an example from my experience.

It’s the monthly meeting of the National Association of Professional Saleswomen, sometime in the 1990s. The room is filled with 100 saleswomen, waiting to learn how to make a telephone cold call. I’m presenting.

“First, let’s break the habit of saying ‘how are you’ when the prospect answers the phone. It sounds canned and inauthentic.”

“Take the envelope from under your chair. There’s a balloon inside with ‘how are you’ printed on it. Blow up the balloon and tie it in a knot.”

“Now, let’s break the habit!” I stomp on my balloon. One hundred women follow suit and the air fills with sounds of balloons breaking.

People are laughing and having a grand time, except for one woman, an esteemed colleague in the audience, scowling and shaking her head in disapproval. Rather than noticing everyone who’s having fun, my eyes are drawn to her like a magnet. The voice in my head says, She hates your presentation.
She’s an expert in this field and her opinion matters. My heart sank.

Afterwards, when everyone had filed out of the room, she was waiting to talk. She said, “I loved your message, but that noise, the noise of the balloons breaking was so loud, it reminded me of my difficult childhood, growing up in a violent neighborhood.”

This woman’s reaction had nothing to do me. I created a negative story around her response, giving the story a meaning that had more to do with my insecurities than anything else. Awareness would have enabled me to realize: *This woman is scowling and I don’t know why.* Instead, I reacted to a story that turned out to be false.

**Consider this:** Have you ever told yourself a story that led to a lost sale? How else could you have responded? Take a moment to reflect.

Your judgments directly affect your responses. What’s your response if a customer says “no”? If you realize you’re treating a customer’s negative response as a permanent roadblock, consider looking deeper to see if there’s another path to the sale.

As ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus wrote, “We cannot choose our external circumstances, but we can always choose how we respond to them.” Developing your power of awareness will allow you to respond to life’s events *consciously,* rather than react to them *unconsciously.*

**THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION**

A proven way to build your awareness is through the practice of meditation. Meditation helps you clear your mind, as you learn to release distracting thoughts and negative judgments.

Meditation is a practice of noticing. You don’t try to stop thinking; rather, you allow your STUFF (Stories, Thoughts, Urges, Frustrations, Feelings) to surface and then let it pass, without judgment or internal comment. You practice noticing your experience in the present moment, observing your STUFF as if you are witnessing it.

The awareness you develop during meditation can make a profound difference in your sales results. In addition to practicing at a regular time, I recommend tak-
I recommend choosing a regular place to meditate, so you can practice building your power of awareness. Sit on a chair or floor cushion in a quiet room. Start with 2–3 minutes, setting a timer if needed. As you become used to practicing, gradually increase your time to 15–20 minutes a day if your schedule allows. If you’re short on time, try to meditate for just a few minutes to maintain a daily routine.

Here are steps to follow:

1. Start by sitting up straight, without being rigid. Keep your spine aligned with your head and neck. Gently close your eyes. Try to release any physical tension, keeping your body relaxed — but your mind alert.

2. Choose an anchor — a neutral focal point that doesn’t stimulate your mind. Commonly used anchors are: your breath; your body; a word repeated silently, such as peace; a sound you listen to, such as ocean waves; or an object to hold, such as a smooth stone.
3. Rest your attention on your anchor. Whenever your mind wanders, gently refocus on your anchor. For beginners, this may be as often as every second or two. Although many people think the practice of meditation involves stopping all thoughts and feelings, this is not so. Expect that thoughts and feelings will continue to arise.

4. Accept your wandering mind. Meditation is a practice of returning to your experience in the present moment. Again and again and again. Notice when your attention wanders, and then return your attention to your anchor. The intent of meditation isn’t to suppress thoughts and feelings. Consider anything that draws attention away from your anchor to be like a cloud passing, or like a boat floating by as you watch from the riverbank. Allow it to pass without judgment and gently refocus on your anchor.

5. Continue gently refocusing on your anchor for the rest of your practice time. This process is key, since it exercises your mind’s “muscle.” Just as the repeated practice of doing abdominal crunches can build your core strength, the repeated practice of noticing distractions and returning to your anchor can build your power of awareness. The practice of shifting your attention to a neutral focal point (your anchor) is like shifting your mind out of “drive” and letting it rest in “neutral.” Each time you refocus on your anchor, you’re training your mind to let go of distracting thoughts.

Meditation is a simple practice, but it can be challenging. As stated earlier, people often have the best success by starting with brief periods of regular practice time and gradually increasing the length of time spent meditating as they become used to practicing.

**WHEN TO MEDITATE**

You can meditate almost anytime. (Note: Don’t meditate when driving or performing another task that requires your full attention.) It’s important to practice when it works best for your schedule. Meditating for a few minutes is preferable to not meditating at all.

Many people find practicing first thing in the morning works best, before they get busy with the day. It’s helpful to schedule meditation practice to coincide with an
activity you do regularly, such as brushing your teeth in the morning.

In addition to regularly scheduled practice time, consider meditating before contacting customers, taking time to release any distracting thoughts. For instance, if the roads were congested on the way to meet a customer, you may be feeling rattled, or if the CEO of your customer’s company is expected at the meeting, you may be anxious. Try a Simple Breath Meditation or a Body Awareness Meditation, as described later in this chapter. You may want to set a timer on your phone to keep you on schedule.

WHERE TO MEDITATE

I suggest creating a dedicated meditation place — a place to regularly practice developing your power of awareness. Over time, you may find your mind begin to quiet down by simply entering your dedicated place. Meditation places can even be portable — for example, a meditation cushion that’s used in different settings. An entire room in your home could be devoted to meditation — or just a corner of a room. One meditator carved out a small space next to the dryer in her basement laundry room by installing a sliding translucent screen. Another transformed a bedroom corner into a private space by using a sheer curtain as a divider. Another uses a favorite chair in the living room.

A meditation place should include a dedicated place to sit, such as a chair or meditation cushion. Some people also like to include inspirational items, such as books of short readings (for before or after your practice), meditation beads, candles, or music.

You can practice meditation almost anywhere. If you meditate before a sales call, you may want to find an out-of-the-way park bench or a quiet corner in an office building lobby. You could even meditate in your car — once it’s parked!

SIMPLE MEDITATION PRACTICES TO TRY

You can choose from the following practices — and also find audio meditations posted on my website, www.joyrains.com.

BODY AWARENESS MEDITATION

A stress response can take place both in your mind and in your body. What happens when a prospect says “no”? Do
you tense up? If you’re anxious about a sales presentation, do you hold stress in your body? Imagine coming into awareness of physical tension and releasing it. You can practice body awareness almost anywhere, anytime.

Use this as a stand-alone practice or as a starting point for other meditations. Begin with your head and move your awareness downward to one muscle group at a time. Alternatively, start with your feet and move your awareness upward to one muscle group at a time. As much as you can, try to relax each muscle group before moving on to the next one.

You can release muscular tension with your imagination, visualizing your in-breath surrounding the tension and your out-breath gently releasing it. Or, imagine the tension becoming warmer and melting away. Take as much time as needed. If any tense areas won’t release, see if you can accept them as they are.

You can also tighten each muscle for a few seconds and then relax it, to differentiate between a tensed muscle and a relaxed muscle. Be gentle and don’t strain.

Throughout this process be aware of your body and how it feels. Allow your spine to support you, and allow the seat and ground beneath you to support you. Release any muscles not needed to support you. Keep your body relaxed but your mind alert. Try to develop a muscle memory of what it feels like to relax.

**SIMPLE BREATH MEDITATION**

Start by sitting up straight, without being rigid. Keep your spine aligned with your head and neck. Gently close your eyes. Try to release any physical tension, keeping your body relaxed and your mind alert. Rest your attention on the pace of your breathing, without changing anything; simply notice. You might notice the coolness of the air as you inhale and its warmth as you exhale, or you might notice the rising and falling of your chest. You could even silently say “rising” with each inhale, and “falling” with each exhale. Each time your attention wanders, gently refocus on your breath.

**SMOOTH STONE MEDITATION**

Choose a smooth stone that fits in your hand. Start by sitting up straight, without being rigid. Keep your spine aligned with your head and neck. Gently close your eyes. Try to release any physical tension, keeping your body relaxed and your mind alert. Rest your attention on the stone in your hand, noticing its various characteristics, including: its weight, temperature, shape, texture,
and size. Each time your attention wanders, gently refocus on your stone.

You can also keep your meditation stone in your pocket to remind you of an intention, for example, being relaxed or staying focused.

MORE WAYS TO PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

You can also cultivate mindfulness by considering your activities to be meditative practices, as if the activity itself is your anchor. For example, consider integrating brief mindfulness breaks into your daily routine, such as pausing for a moment and noticing two full breaths, washing your hands and noticing the feel of the soap and water, or eating a meal with full awareness of the textures and flavors of your food.

Another simple way to integrate mindfulness into your life is with a walking meditation. As you walk, gently bring your attention to the soles of your feet as they touch the ground. Any time your attention wanders, gently bring it back to your feet. You can practice this for a few steps, a few miles — or any distance you’d like. Consider using a walking meditation as you transition from one place to another. World-renowned meditation teacher Thich Nhat Hanh says to “be aware of the contact between your feet and the Earth.”

MORE BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

One significant health benefit of meditation is reduced stress. Since mindfulness helps you experience life in the “here and now,” you may notice tension that you hadn’t noticed before. For example, you might realize that your breathing is shallow or your muscles are tense — or, that you’re adding to your stress by imagining negative scenarios. Becoming aware of tension can help you release it. Try a Body Awareness Meditation to help you release physical tension or a Simple Breath Meditation to help you release mental tension.

Many scientific studies point to significant mental and physical health benefits of regular meditation. For more information on the health benefits, see the National Library of Medicine’s website at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/ and search “meditation.”
ACTION PLAN

EXERCISE
Pause for a couple of minutes before a sales call. Choose an anchor to use. Gently rest your attention on your anchor. Release your Stuff each time you notice it, and return your awareness to your anchor.

Alternatively, listen to an audio meditation before contacting your customer. You can find recordings of varying lengths on www.joyrains.com.

As you walk to your customer’s office, rest your attention on the soles of your feet as they touch the ground. When you talk to your customer, see if you can maintain present moment awareness. Any time you notice your thoughts wandering, gently bring them back to your customer, as if your customer is your anchor.

EVALUATE
After you meet with your customer, rate the following statements on a scale of 1–5, with 1 strongly disagreeing and 5 strongly agreeing.

✧ I was able to release physical tension prior to my meeting. 1-2-3-4-5
✧ I was able to clear my mind prior to my meeting. 1-2-3-4-5
✧ I was able to focus on my customer. 1-2-3-4-5

Based on these ratings, what will you do again — or do differently — on your next sales call?

MOVING FORWARD
What practice or practices would you like to integrate into your life? Possibilities include:

✧ Meditating at a regular time each day.
✧ Setting up a regular meditation place at home.
✧ Taking a moment to clear your mind before contacting customers.
Learning to direct your attention is one of the most powerful ways to navigate a path to the sale.

... MOVING FORWARD CONTINUED

✧ Trying to become aware of physical tension and releasing it.
✧ Evaluating your quality of awareness after sales calls.
✧ Using a walking meditation when transitioning from one place to another, noticing the soles of your feet as they touch the ground.
✧ Listening to guided audio meditations, found by searching “guided meditation” online or found on www.joyrains.com.

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Chapter 2

IMAGINATION

REALIZE YOUR POTENTIAL

Your imagination has a tremendous amount of power. You can change your outcomes by using your imagination to change your beliefs about reality. Since the brain treats imagery the same as it would treat real-life action, new behaviors can be “ingrained” in your mind simply by engaging your imagination.

When you couple the power of your imagination with the power of awareness, you can intentionally plant positive thoughts in your mind. In this chapter, you’ll learn how to create your vision of success and realize your potential by activating your imagination through:

- Words, using positive statements called affirmations.
- Images, picturing your goals with visualization.
**A final thought ...**

In the Introduction, I shared my father’s wisdom: *Sales is the worst paid job for those who don’t work hard — and the best paid job for those who do!* Considering his words, I recommend that you work like a dog.

I happen to love dogs. I love the way dogs accept people for who they are, freely sharing their affection. When I gaze into their soulful eyes, I feel like they’re totally present. A dog doesn’t think: *Will I see FiFi in doggy day care tomorrow?* The dog’s attention is fully in the present moment.

It’s with this idea of complete presence that you can meet your customer. It gives the expression “work like a dog” a whole new meaning!
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