



INTENTIONAL MORNINGS

A Ritual Guide

*Start the day the right way with
yoga, essential oils, meditation and more*



Namaste, lovely!

Morning routines have always been important to me.

I admit, I'm a morning person so I tend to find it easier to bound out of bed than some. Even when I was at school, I can remember getting up that little bit earlier to enjoy breakfast and avoid the mad scramble to get out the door. As life has fluctuated, so have my morning routines.

During the early years with the girls, it could feel impossible to carve out even a few minutes for myself in the mornings. Instead, I focused on making the morning as manageable and peaceful as possible. Sometimes it was a success, sometimes not but the intention was there. As the girls have grown up, my morning routine has evolved yet again. Nowadays, I'm lucky enough to have more time for myself in the morning. I'm usually up at 6 o'clock before the rest of the house stirs. That gives me just under an hour of precious, quiet time that I'm always grateful for.

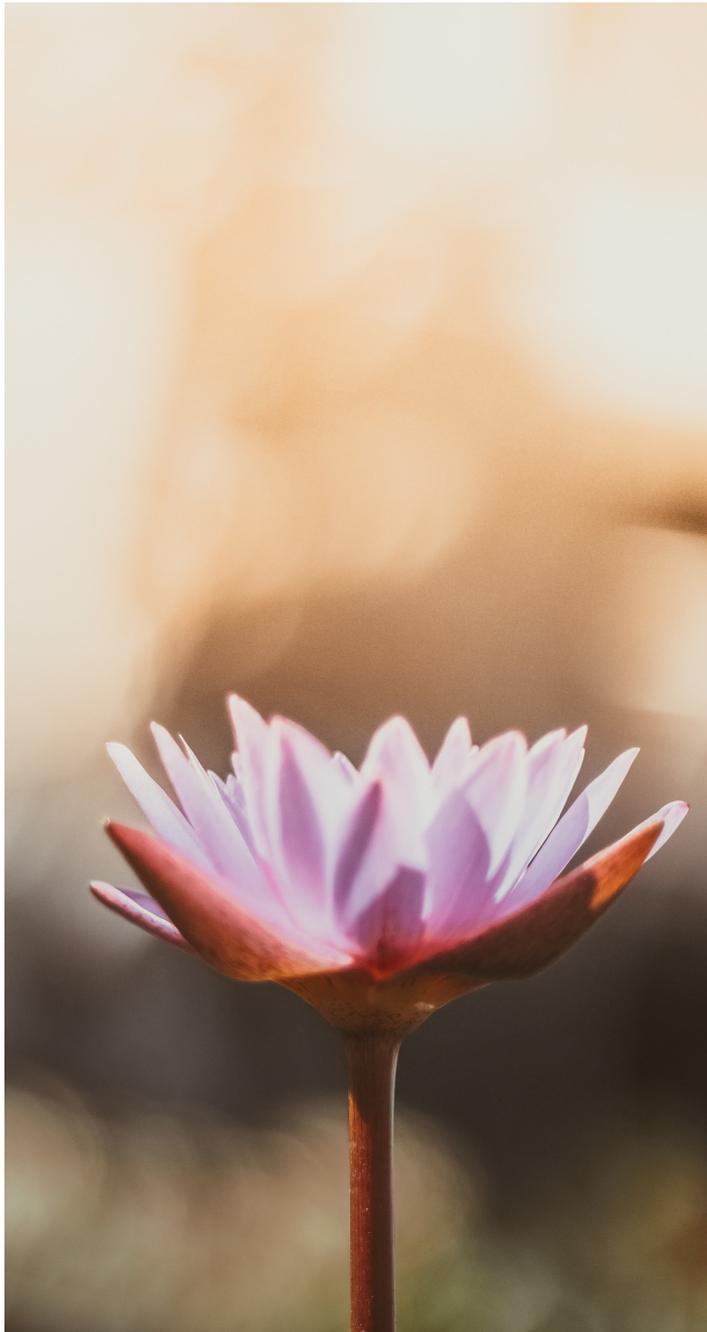
What follows is my ideal morning ritual. Sometimes everything falls into place like magic but other times life just gets in the way. When I don't have the luxury of time, I prioritise 10 to 20 minutes of seated meditation, whether guided, unguided or a simple breath awareness exercise. This really sets the tone for the day. Everything else is just a bonus.

Above all, a morning ritual is about being awake and open to the beauty of our messy, perfectly imperfect lives. I encourage you (and myself!) to let go of the perception of perfection and simply relish doing the best we can, with the tools we have.

*With Love and Gratitude,
Rachael x*

INTENTIONAL MORNINGS

This is my ideal morning ritual. When I don't have the luxury of time, I prioritise 10 to 20 minutes of seated meditation. This really sets the tone for the day. Everything else is just a bonus. If meditation doesn't appeal to you, my next go-to routine is to get out into nature for a walk. Above all, a morning ritual is about starting the day with intention and being open to whatever comes up. Experiment and have fun!



RITUALS

01 Morning Brew

to stoke digestion and comfort

02 Essential Oils

to ground, energise and revitalize

03 Pranayama

to clear the lungs and the mind

04 Yoga

to stimulate meridian channels

05 Meditation

to add focus and clarity

06 Chanting

to heal and soothe

07 Fresh Air

to reinvigorate the senses

01 MORNING BREW

Quiet moments with a hot drink

I'd love to say that the first beverage I reach for in the mornings is a hot lemon water but I'd be lying! In reality, once the kettle has boiled, it's a good old fashioned cup of Yorkshire Gold tea for me with a dash of Oatly oat milk. And I adore it.

But it really doesn't matter what your go-to morning brew looks like. The important point is that you're able to take a few moments at the start of your day to be still and comforted.

Drink slowly and mindfully.





02 ESSENTIAL OILS

Aromatherapy for body and mind

With tea in hand, I head straight for my little yoga room upstairs. I light some candles and some incense (I love Sacred Elephant's Sandalwood incense) to charge the space with divine scent and a warm glow. You don't need to have a dedicated space for this ritual though. All you need is a little corner where you won't be disturbed.

Now it's time for some aromatherapy to soothe both body and mind.

Rub a few drops of your favourite essential oil between your palms to release the scent then inhale deeply. To maximise the benefits of the oil, apply some onto the soles of your feet and your temples or other pulse points.

My go-to essential oil in the morning is Frankincense, which stills the mind and has wonderfully balancing properties that connect with the higher chakras. Or if I need grounding, I'll use one of my own Intentional Blends containing vetiver. I recommend Neal's Yard for essential oils. Alternatively, contact me for my own blends.

03 PRANAYAMA

5-10 rounds of Nadi Shodhana (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

Making time to work with the breath in the morning is a great way to set you up for the day and even to settle you before you go to bed. Pranayama restores balance and ease to the body and mind, and can cultivate focus when you're feeling scattered. It's also a useful foundation to lead into your meditation practice.

Nadi Shodhana (alternate nostril breathing) is a simple yet powerful breathing technique that I try to incorporate into my morning routine. I recommend practising for 5 to 10 rounds or until you feel settled.

Setting Up For Nadi Shodhana

Find a comfortable seated position where the spine is neutral but you don't feel strained or uncomfortable. Sitting in a chair is fine, simply place both feet flat on the floor.

Take your right hand and rest your index and middle finger between the brow or tucked into the palm of your hand. The thumb will hover over your right nostril, and your ring finger will hover over your left nostril.

Settle yourself and take a few normal breaths in and out through your nose.

The Technique

One round of Nadi Shodhana looks like this...

- 1. Close your right nostril with your thumb and exhale through your left nostril*
- 2. Inhale back up through your left nostril*
- 3. Pause and close the left nostril*
- 4. Open the right nostril and exhale through the right*
- 5. Inhale back up through the right nostril*
- 6. Pause and close the right nostril*
- 7. Exhale through your left nostril*
- 8. Repeat for between 5 -10 rounds*

The breath should be slow but certainly not forced. If it feels strained or uncomfortable for you in any way, release the hands and breathe normally. Try again the next morning.

04 YOGA

5 minutes of butterfly pose

You don't need to incorporate a full yoga practice into your morning routine. Simply mobilising the spine, hips and shoulders with some gentle movement is enough to slowly awaken the body and prepare it for whatever the day may hold.

From my seated posture, I begin to incorporate slow movements into the body and perhaps move on to all fours for a few rounds of cat/cow depending on how the body feels that morning. This is simply an exploration. The more you practice and move intuitively, the easier and more natural it becomes so close your eyes, try it out and see what feels good for you.

I then finish with a shape from Yin Yoga, known as Butterfly Pose (see image) which is said to bring balance to the body's six main meridians (energetic channels in the subtle body). If you have the time, rest here for up to 5 minutes. But even 1-2 minutes will do the trick. Complement the pose with full, deep breaths into the back of the body.



05 MEDITATION

A few moments of mindfulness

Meditation is the one non-negotiable element of my morning ritual.

Whether you're able to sit for 1 minute or 20, it's the practice of showing up and committing to a pocket of time for awareness that's important. It is one of the simplest acts of loving kindness you can gift yourself. The benefits of meditation will extend way beyond those first few moments of your day.

That's not to say that I find it easy.

In truth, I often find the practice challenging and frustrating but it's also been hugely grounding, comforting and insightful, especially during those 'sticky' times we all experience.

The Technique

- 1. Sit in a comfortable position on a little cushion or with your hips slightly elevated for comfort. Make sure you're nice and warm with a blanket, jumper or pop on a pair of socks. You don't want to get chilly!**
- 2. Take a couple of deep breaths, close your eyes and begin to notice the sounds around you, the weight of your body, and the feel of the air moving across your skin.**
- 3. Give your body a quick scan and simply notice how it's feeling this morning. Then settle your attention on the breath and notice where you feel it most strongly, getting curious about its rise and fall.**
- 4. Thoughts will come and go. We can't prevent them, but we can notice them. Try to label them as thoughts rather than getting caught up in the narrative, whether they're 'good or bad'. Then return to the anchor of the breath or the sensations dancing through the body.**

I usually set a timer with the Insight Timer app (free to download on your phone) so I don't need to keep an eye on how long I've been sitting. Some days, I'll do a guided meditation on the app with teachers like Tara Brach and Jack Kornfield.

06 CHANTING

Soothing sounds

When time allows, in the morning (or in my car!), I love to take a few moments to chant.

For me, chanting seems to cut through all the sludge, all the heaviness of life and guides us straight to the gold. It is liberating, healing, powerful and soothing.

And the beauty of chanting is you needn't worry about whether or not you can hold a tune! You simply allow the sacred sounds of the mantras to move through you and let them spin their magic.

If you're new to chanting, I recommend looking up Nikki Slade or Deva Premal (they're both on Spotify). You can start just by listening, and letting the sounds wash over you.

When you feel ready, chant along. You'll soon start to pick up the mantras. Try if you can to leave any judgement about what you look or sound like and focus instead on the effect of the vibration in both body and mind.





07 FRESH AIR

Take a walk in nature

Every morning, I head out into the fresh air with my labradoodles for a walk. This may well be my favourite part of the day. Nothing beats soaking up Mother Nature before the hustle and bustle of the day has begun; the scents, sights and sounds all seem so much more vivid and alive. It is often this simple act of walking in nature that has offered me the most profound instances of clarity, those wonderful 'aha' moments. There is space to ponder, to notice, to let go.

If a seated meditation practice isn't for you then being out in nature would be my top alternative! Even if it's just for five minutes around your garden or around the block, you'll really notice the difference to the rest of your day. The beauty of it is that it's simple, it's free and available to all.



ABOUT RACHAEL

Rachael was hooked on yoga the minute she stepped onto a mat over twenty years ago. Since then, she's completed multiple yoga teacher trainings, become a mumma to three gorgeous girls, and learned how to sit still (some of the time, at least).

Rachael teaches regular yoga classes in and around Cambridge including flow, pregnancy and restorative yoga. Her style of 'intentional flow' aligns body and mind with a fluid sequence of postures woven together with breath and intention to create space for grace, strength and presence on and beyond the mat. Classes are often infused with essential oils. Rachael is also a teacher training tutor and ambassador for Sweaty Betty.

Off the mat, Rachael loves curling up in front of Eastenders with a cup of Yorkshire tea and a chocolate HobNob, walking her labradoodles, and bottling her own blends of essential oils.

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shreem kleem
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lakshmi
namaha*

MANTRA BLESSING FOR HEALTH,
WEALTH & WISDOM