

**\* ALTERNATIVELY**

# PEACE BE WITH YOU ALWAYS

**Niamh Hooper**

[nhooper@independent.ie](mailto:nhooper@independent.ie)



**B**EING late is something that irks me at the best of times and sitting helplessly in the gridlock of Dublin's city centre on a Friday only adds to my frustration and stress.

In response to a quick text explaining the situation, one bounces back immediately. "No worries, take a breath," it reads and signs off with a smiley face.

I should have expected it but hadn't. I smile at my phone, take a few deep breaths and am now actively looking forward to meeting the author of *One Moment Master*, Martin Boroson.

But by the time I find a parking space at Heuston Station, lose my ticket and walk into the airy concourse I am as frazzled as the 47-year-old New Yorker is calm and serene, patiently waiting for me. It's as though the scenario leading to our meeting had been meticulously planned by the gods of meditation to show just how useful it can be.

The subject of this week's column is Boroson's modern-day spin on the ancient spiritual practice — only

instead of gently lulling oneself into sitting cross-legged in a quiet corner of the world to do it, the man who has done a variety of spiritual practices for 20 years now, and studied Western Philosophy in Yale University, has other ideas.

"Meditation," he says, "is about finding a moment wherever you are. It is about tapping a well of stillness that exists all the time."

To prove it he chooses a bustling railway station as the weekend kicks off as the ideal location for our rendezvous.

Derived from latin, the word 'moment' means 'a particle sufficient to turn the scales', something that is revolutionary and has enormous power. In a moment, time stops and it's as if we are opened to something completely beyond time and that's where we experience deep peace.

However before that Martin recommends getting to grips with a minute.

"A minute is a moment with handles on it. It has a beginning and an end and everyone has one free somewhere. Gradually the practice takes less and less time until it takes only a moment," says Boroson.

His desire to teach people how to access inner peace and stillness on the go arose while meditating one morning for his usual 30 minutes. But this particular morning

he was distracted and impatient as the time crawled.

"I was dithering on whether to check the clock and when finally I opened my eyes I had one minute to go. I had spent 29 minutes wondering when 30 would be up. I was about to call it quits and then I thought 'what if the next minute is the important one?'"

"So I decided to meditate for a minute with gusto and with it my attitude to time changed. It got me thinking and I began to wonder and experiment with how much can be accomplished in a short space of time," says Boroson, who now lives in Devon in the UK, after spending the 1980s and 1990s in Ireland.

The most common challenge of meditation, he reckons, is the trap many fall into — me included — of believing that you are doing it wrong if you're not blissed out continuously with a mind free of pesky thoughts.

So, in a noisy pub, I offer myself as a guinea pig. With physicians recommending meditation for a variety of conditions from depression to reducing blood pressure and stress and improved concentration, I'm all open to learning, albeit a bit dubious about my chances.

Without further ado, he has me sit with my feet flat on the floor, with a straight spine and suggests I "allow my mind to settle into my breathing".

He then gets me to recall how I feel when by the sea. I am transported to instant calm, fuller breathing and being touched by a sense of the forever changing yet forever unchanging.

When I open my eyes he tells me the sea is my meditation, as breathing is to someone else or repeating a mantra is someone else.

What's great about it is I don't have to be physically there — I can be anywhere



Perfect moment: Martin Boroson says peace is available anywhere, anytime

yet by closing my eyes, the sea is with me.

Ironically, this exercise isn't even in Boroson's book, which is crammed with simple techniques designed to rescue potentially wasted moments from being idled away on the internet, sitting in a boring meeting or getting frustrated in traffic.

In general, he suggests starting by arming yourself

with the intention to focus on your breath as you breathe in and out for one minute. That's all.

"Contentment cannot be found if your mind is focused on the future — on achieving goals, solving problems or getting stuff. It can only be found now. Peace is always available and is offering itself to us, but most of us aren't aware of it

because we're too busy doing other things."

Mmm... he may just be on to something.

**Verdict:** Boroson takes the mystery out of meditation and teaches simple ways for people on the go to attain moments of stillness.

*Martin Boroson is the author of The One Moment Master*



## Meditation What is it?

**THE FACTS:** MEDITATION is a practice aimed at stilling the mind and elevating the practitioner to higher levels of consciousness and positive change.

An ancient spiritual practice in the East, it ties in with a philosophy that understands that you cannot think your way to an answer — at a certain point the answer has to be an experience. Today, due to its effectiveness, meditation is

being reintroduced into Western religions and also a new wave of secular meditation is emerging, according to Boroson. We want to think, communicate, manage, and sleep better and meditation is being viewed in terms of mind-training with a track record that proves it works.

**THE EVIDENCE:** Several scientific studies have been carried out on the effects on body and mind of practicing

meditation. It has been found to use larger percentages of the brain, to lower stress levels and blood pressure, to decrease depression and improve overall outlook on life.

One study on Transcendental Meditation found that after 40 days of practice the memory of participants had increased four-fold while another study on insomnia sufferers due to post-traumatic stress disorder found it improved their sleep at night.