

**Research Question:** What is the current discourse around mindfulness and mediation in public media?

- 1 H: I initially thought it was only for people who were into crystals and Cat Stevens and used the word Namaste un-ironically and lived in a yurt. I was vehemently anti-meditation and everything it stood for. But then, I did a little research, and I found out that there's been an explosion of science that suggests meditation can lower your blood pressure, boost your immune system, reduce the release of the stress hormone cortisol.
- 2 And then things get really sci-fi when you start talking about the neuroscience. Neuroscientists have been peering into the brains of meditators, and they find that you're effectively rewiring your brain. That's why I decided to give it a shot.
- 3 M: So you speak with this authority that comes from someone who's done this for a while. But it didn't start out that way. Can you walk us through what your very first experience with meditation was like?
- 4 H: Oh, it was a mess. It was a total mess.
- 5 M: (Laughter).
- 6 H: I mean, you can tell yourself that your life is about all sorts of big things like faith and love and patriotism, but if you sit down and close your eyes and look at what is happening in your mind in any given moment, most of your life is about what am I going to have for lunch? What did I say that dumb thing to my boss? Why do celebrities only marry other celebrities? Whatever. Your mind is just going to go off. And when you sit down to try to meditate even for just five minutes, which is what I did the first time. I had a head-on collision with reality, which is that your - our minds are out of control.
- 7 M: So give me an example. Layout a scenario, some kind of situation where you can point to meditation and say, wow, that changed how I responded to that situation.
- 8 H: Think about this scenario. You're driving, somebody cuts you off. Generally speaking, you have a thought - I'm pissed. What happens next? You automatically and reflexively inhabit that thought. You actually become pissed. And there's no buffer between the stimulus and your reaction to it.
- 9 With mindfulness on board, with just a little bit of meditating, you might be able to notice when you get cut off, my chest is buzzing, my ears are turning red. I'm having a starburst of self-righteous thoughts. I'm getting angry. But you don't need to act on it. You don't need to chase the person down the road screaming expletives with their children in the backseat. So for me, what I've been able to just see in my life quite frequently is the urge to do something or to say something stupid or hurtful or whatever and to let it pass.
- 10 M: Did you not do that before?

- 11 H: No, no, no, no, no. I was horrible. So I'm not claiming perfection. What I'm saying is - and why I called the book "10% Happier," which is obviously an absurd, unscientific estimation, is that this is not going to solve all of your problems, but it is a significant value add and a good return on investment for not a lot of time.
- 12 M: Is it funny to you as you have developed this new sense of introspection, as you look down on yourself now doing interviews about mindfulness and rattling off these details about meditation - is it funny to you that this is now the thing that animates you like this?
- 13 H: Yeah. It's ridiculous. I mean, I say, at the beginning of every speech, if you had told me 10 years ago that I was going to be a public evangelist for meditation, I would have coughed my beer up through my nose. I mean, this is just the last thing I ever saw coming.
- 14 But I honestly believe this is the next big public health revolution. The big problem is that there's this PR issue around meditation. People think it's either too weird or too difficult. And so my goal is to dispel both myths and to say, A, if somebody like me, a skeptic like me is doing it, you can do it. And, B, if somebody with the attention span of a kitten, like me, is doing it, you can too.