

A Guide to Creating More Time & Energy

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INTRODUCTION

Hello! I'm so happy you decided to read this guide so you can learn how to create more time and energy for yourself. As a therapist, I have spent years working with women who are burned out, unhappy and sad because they are exhausted.

They come to me because the long-term effect of putting their needs aside for others has lead to physical or psychological problems. These include; chronic headaches, fatigue, weight gain, infertility, low sex drive, poor sleep, unhealthy eating habits, anxiety or depression and sometimes worse. These women have lost the joy in their lives and are struggling to get through each day.

Each week I meet a few new clients who tell me they know what they need to do to feel happy and healthy, but they don't have the time or energy to do it. As a result, I decided to write this guide to share with others, the strategies that I teach them.

This guide will be helpful for you if:

- 1) You feel like you don't have enough time and energy to do the things you enjoy.
- 2) You feel like you're missing out on your life and the type of relationships you'd like to have because you're so busy going from one responsibility to the next.
- 3) You try to fit in activities that you enjoy but then end up cancelling because by the time it comes you're too tired to enjoy it.

The focus of this guide:

The focus will be on two goals – creating more time and energy. This guide will provide four simple strategies for achieving these two goals.

To create more time, we need to be very clear on what is important to us so that we can begin to let go of what is not.

To create more energy, we need to learn how to manage our mental energy and focus on the present.

My intention for this guide is to make it as simple and concise as possible since I know both time and energy are at a minimum.

What causes the problem?

As a woman you may have been raised and socialized to take care of others and put their needs first, this is not uncommon. Overtime this can lead to complete neglect of your own needs and trust me, this is not good.... for anyone.

As a therapist, life coach and mindfulness teacher, I usually meet women when they are unhappy, overwhelmed and maybe dealing with a stress related illness. This can be for a variety of reasons, but it often boils down to either:

- 1) Taking on too many responsibilities in the name of being a good partner, friend, employee, parent, etc.

- 2) Not being able to calm the mind and focus on the present.

The danger of daily stress.

Before my clinical training I was unaware of the mind/body connection and how my thoughts were impacting my physical health. I was not aware how daily stress, worry and anger were negatively impacting my body.

I didn't know that every time I got angry or really stressed out, that my body would release stress hormones, my heart rate would increase, my blood sugar would get all messed up, my reproductive systems would be impacted and my stomach would be upset.

I had no idea of the harm I was causing my body because I couldn't say "no" and I was always caught up in racing thoughts about my never ending "to do" list.

Over time this leads to feeling resentment, emotional exhaustion and unhappy relationships. In the worst of situations, this can lead to physical illness and disease. For an excellent read on how our bodies are impacted by stress, I recommend [When the Body Says No by Gabor Maté M.D.](#)

I don't say this to scare you but I want you to know that no one else on this earth is responsible for your happiness & health except you. No one else will look out for your wellbeing the way you can.

Why you need to remember this.

You need to remember this when you start to question whether you should really assert yourself and your needs. You need to remember that your health and your relationships

are in your hands when you feel uncomfortable about saying “no” to someone or something.

You need to remember this when your mind takes off on another rant about all you have to do and how little time you have.

The benefits of saying “no” and being present

One of the pleasant side effects that I usually see in women who start to say “no” is an increase in energy and time to do the things they love to do, the things that really nourish them.

A beautiful thing will begin to happen when you have more time, energy and happiness – you will start to give to others from a place of compassion and joy.

You no longer give to others because you feel you have to with a side of resentment. You are not a martyr. Now you give because you are so happy that you want others around you to be happy.

You will have the time, energy and desire to really connect with loved ones from a place of joy. Your time together has more quality because you are really present. Sex gets better. Food tastes better. Life is just more fun!

Women are caregivers by nature and this is not a bad thing. It’s only bad when it comes at the expense of your own health and wellness. You deserve and need to take care of yourself before you take care of anyone else.

Is this guide for you?

This guide is not for you if you have no problem saying no, setting boundaries and have an abundance of time and energy.

This guide is for those of you who are uncomfortable saying “no”, who take on too many tasks and are constantly struggling with racing thoughts about all you have to do. This book will provide you with the motivation and strategies to create time for yourself and to bring more awareness to your present moment.

You will learn how to manage your fears as you execute your “no” to friends, family, colleagues, management and any other random person who tries to take some of your precious time and energy.

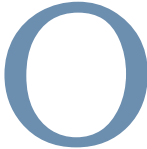
You will learn how to calm the mind and focus on the present so that you can save energy for all the things you love to do.

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CREATING MORE TIME PART 1

VALUE BASED LIVING: GETTING CLEAR ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU SO YOU CAN SAY “NO” TO EVERYTHING ELSE

ften we spend our days running from one task to another. We are checking our smart phones and mentally scanning our “to do” list while sitting in traffic. Only to end up home at the end of the day, exhausted, thinking about what we forgot to do today that will just have to be added to tomorrow’s “to do” list.

In Stephen Covey’s book, [The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People](#), the second habit is “beginning with the end in mind”. He shares how each day people are caught up in activities, striving to reach some goal (more competence, more income, more possessions) only to realize that those are not what truly matter to them.

Beginning with the end in mind means that we need to get clear on what we truly value in life so that we can determine if our choices and actions are based on those values. I call these value based decisions and value based actions.

I value family, friends and health above all else. But in 2009, I put 80% of my time and energy into my career. This kept me working long hours and seeing quick success professionally. This also left me exhausted, unhealthy and out of touch with my family and friends. I was miserable. I was not engaging in value based decisions or actions.

When we get clear on what we value and we take daily actions that support those values, we will be happier and healthier. We will have more time and energy for the things we love to do and the things that nourish us.

Life shouldn't be about putting your head down and feeling miserable until some imagined glorious retirement at age 65. Once you get clear on what you truly value, you can then make time for the activities that support your values. It will allow you to let go of all other tasks that don't fit.

The more clear I became about what I value and what activities support that (family time, meditation, yoga, exercise, cooking, spending time with friends), I was able to let go of what didn't fit with my values. Yes, I let go of career opportunities and made less money than I could have – but I had more time and energy for the things I loved. This made me happy and healthy.

The first strategy in creating more time is to get clear on your values and what activities support those values.

GETTING CLEAR ON YOUR VALUES:

What do you truly value? Spend some time to think about what you value most in life. I often ask clients to narrow it down to the five most important things they value.

Really take some time here to think about this as these values will guide your decisions and actions in order to create more time and energy.

List your values:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Now that you are clear on what you truly value, spend some time thinking about how you spend your days.

What activities are you doing on the weekday and weekends that support your values?

What activities are you doing that don't necessarily support your values? They may be things you think you "should" be doing or things you are doing to please other people.

These are the things you want to begin letting go of. Once you know what these activities are you can begin to set boundaries and say "No".

This brings us to the second strategy for creating more time – learning how to say "no" to activities that do not fit your values.

CREATING MORE TIME PART 2

*SAYING NO TO EVERYTHING ELSE EVEN IF SAYING **"NO"** MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE*



Okay, I know the thought of saying "no" might be a little scary at first. When I first bring this subject up in a counseling or coaching session I am usually met with widening eyes. I see fear.

I know the thought of actually saying “no” can be downright terrifying to some. If you are already scared, have no fear – we will take gradual steps to help you get comfortable with the process.

STEP 1:

Here is your first action. For the next week, if you are not comfortably saying “no” you don’t have to. What I would like you to do is look for opportunities where, if fear were not an issue, you would like to say “no”.

I want you to stop in these moment and think about what it would be like to say “no”. I want you to mentally scan your body and see what you are feeling physically as you contemplate saying the big “no”.

Do you feel tension in your stomach, chest, neck, jaw or ears? Is your heart rate increasing? Is your face flushed? Do you find it difficult to breathe? Are you getting sweaty, nauseous, dizzy? What exactly happens in your body when you’re contemplating saying “no”.

Write down what happens in your body when you think of saying “no”.

STEP 2: MANAGING YOUR INTERNAL FREAKOUT

Now that you know what you feel in your body when you want to say “no”, it’s time to learn how to manage that internal freakout.

When we get to the strategies that you will use to set your boundaries by saying “no”, we do not want you flustered and blurting out something incoherent... or worse, something rude that could damage your relationship.

You need to learn how to calm your body so you can calm your mind.

The first strategy you can use to manage your internal freak out is the 3-6 breathing technique. I teach this technique to most of the people I work with and the majority give me feedback about how helpful it was.

This is a deep breathing exercise. Before you begin I want to talk about the difference between a deep breath and a shallow breath. I want you to lay down and breathe. Put one hand on your chest and the other hand on your belly.

I want you to look down and see if your stomach is rising or if your chest is rising. The proper way to breathe is to have a full deep breath so that your stomach rises.

Think of a baby and how they look when they breathe. We are born knowing how to breathe properly, but then we grown up, get all stressed out and start to shallow breathe so often we begin to think that is the normal way.

It is not. I want you to practice breathing so you notice your stomach is rising. It may take some getting used to at first but you need to be able to recognize the difference, how it feels in your stomach, so that you can do it on a regular basis and in moments of stress.

Another tip for a good deep breathing practice is to make sure you fully exhale before you take your first deep breath. If you are stressed, scared or angry, you may have been shallow breathing for sometime and have likely inhaled more oxygen than you need. If

you try to take a deep breath without fully exhaling you may begin to gasp and there is nothing relaxing about that!

Now that you know the difference between a deep breath and a shallow breath it is time to practice the 3-6 breathing method.

The 3-6 Breathing Exercise – Calm your Body, Calm your Mind

A: *For the next 30 seconds I want you to just breathe as you currently are. If you have a timer on your phone set it so you don't have to pay attention to a clock. Once the 30 seconds is over, I want you to reflect on the following: Was your breath shallow or deep, was it smooth or jagged? Write it down.*

B: *Now I want you to focus on counting your breath. I want you to inhale for three counts and exhale for six counts. You are going to be physiologically relaxing your nervous system on the exhale, this is why you want your exhale to be longer than your inhale.*

I want you to inhale a deep breath through your nose for three counts, DO NOT PAUSE, and then exhale for six counts. Repeat. Do this for 30 seconds and then reflect the following:

Was your breath deep or shallow, smooth or jagged? How does your body feel? If you find yourself getting dizzy, reduce the exhale to 5 or 4. Overtime, as you practice, you will have the ability for a much longer exhale. Write down your experience.

C: Sipping. This is a technique that can help you learn how to extend and smooth your exhale. Imagine you have a straw in your mouth and you are breathing through that straw. This is much more controlled and your exhale takes much longer.

I want you to spend the next minute doing the 3-6 breathing count but on your exhale I want you to exhale through your mouth as if you have a straw in it (or actually grab and cut a straw and use that to exhale).

You will inhale through your nose for the count of three and exhale through your straw mouth for 6. Once you are done, reflect on this experience, how do you feel?

The 3-6 breathing is the main foundational skill for managing your nervous system (internal freakout) and calming your emotions.

In the first part of this strategy you learned how to recognize what is taking place in your body when you contemplated saying “no”. These feelings in your body indicate when you are experiencing some stress or fear. They are your warning signs that you need to practice the 3-6 breathing in order to response to the situation proactively.

The 3-6 breathing technique triggers your relaxation response (your parasympathetic nervous system) and calms down your stress response (your sympathetic nervous system).

Between using your warning signs and your breathing technique, you have just learned how to recognize your stress response and how to interrupt it by activating your

relaxation system. This skill alone is GOLDEN and will serve you well for the rest of your life.

I want you to practice this exercise when you are very relaxed so that it becomes something your body recognizes overtime as “time to relax”. This will make it easier to trigger the relaxation response when you are feeling stressed by using your breathing practice.

The purpose of activating your relaxation system when you feel stress or worry, is so your brain can move from the emotional, reactive part, to the logical, rational, problem solving part.

We all know that when we are really stress or anxious we have a difficult time problem solving or staying rational. If we become overwhelmed by our emotions we are likely to react in a way that is not helpful or healthy.

If we pause, take some deep breaths, calm down and reflect, we are much more likely to respond in a positive and healthy manner. Stop Reacting. Start Responding.

Now for the next week I want you to notice situations where you would like to say no, but are scared to. I want you to scan your body, recognize where you feel discomfort and I want you to pause and do the 3-6 breathing for a few moments.

This will allow you to practice managing your emotions in the moment so that you can move onto the next step – verbalizing your boundaries and asserting yourself with a polite “no”.

STEP 3 – START WITH SMALL “NO’S”.

Now that you have some mad skills in recognizing and managing the fear that comes with saying “no”, it is time to start saying it. It can be helpful to start small and start with less fear provoking situations to say “no” in.

If the thought of saying “no” to your mother is still quite terrifying then don’t start with Mom. If it’s your boss who you’d really like to start saying “no” to but you are still too nervous, don’t start with her or him.

Start with safe people. If you have a good relationship with your sister, spouse or co-worker begin there. Look for opportunities to say, “no thank you” when they offer you something that maybe you don’t want (an extra helping of dinner, a coffee, a plant they are trying to get rid of).

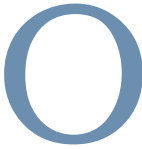
If you are a person who has said “yes” to everyone and everything your whole life, you may run into some reactions of shock from others. They may try to ignore your “no” and push their offer on to you.

You can breathe and respond with, “thank you, I have thought about it and I’m okay without it”. It may take some time for people to recognize that you are setting a boundary and that you are keeping that boundary set. At first this may not be met with happy reactions.

By changing your regular response you are upsetting a system that has likely taken place for years. If you feel your fear/guilt/anger creeping in, pause, breathe and trust in the process of setting boundaries and asserting them with “no”.

Over time, as you continue to assert yourself, people will adjust and respect your boundaries. If they do not, you may be in the unfortunate position of evaluating the role you want this person to have in your life.

STEP 4 - THE EDC MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

nce you are comfortable saying “no” to smaller requests it is time to start saying “no” to bigger requests for your time and energy. Think about the positive experiences you have had with saying “no” so far and use this as motivation to once again overcome the fear/guilt/anger that comes when you want to say “no” to bigger request.

The EDC Model of Communication is my “go to” method for communicating something important. The EDC Model of Communication stands for Empathize, Describe and Clarify.

I learned this strategy when I was in grad school and I have no idea who the original source is - but it is not me (if you know who, please let me know so I can credit them:).

Now back to the EDC model. We start with **empathizing** because it allows us to let the other person know that we really understand where they are coming from. By letting them know right away that we understand their point of view, we are allowing them to actually listen to us, instead of focusing on how to argue their point the moment we stop talking.

Now this does not mean that you have to agree with their point of view, but it does mean that you understand how they are experiencing it.

Next is the **Describe** stage - here you describe the situation from your experience in an objective and rational manner. You describe the impact on you as you experience it.

The final stage is to **Clarify** your needs or how you would like to see the situation progress.

Here is an example of how you might assert yourself and say no to a request from a friend/sibling to help with a project they volunteered to do:

"EMPATHIZE I understand that this work is important to you and you are feeling stressed about getting it completed on time.

DESCRIBE I am concerned that I won't have enough time to help you and get my errands done in time to get home for our family dinner.

CLARIFY If you want help in the future please let me know in advance so I can plan for it and help you out."

In this example you are showing that you are a friend and a support but you are not willing to drop everything to respond to their need.

Over time people will start to recognize your boundaries and you will get less requests for tasks they are capable of completing themselves.

Often our female friends and family tend to have the same problem with saying "no" and they take on way more than they can manage in a healthy way. They may have gotten used to asking you for help and you may be used to responding with "yes".

This cannot continue if you want to free up time and energy for your own needs and your own care. What you are doing when you assert yourself like this is modeling a healthy way to set and assert boundaries.

You may even inspire the women in your life to say “no” themselves once they start to see the happy, healthy changes you are experiencing as a result of saying “no”.

This way of communicating can seem unnatural at first. It may also still feel a little scary to start saying “no” to bigger requests that could lead to higher conflict. If you are still nervous, take the next week to look at opportunities to say “no” to big request.

A big request doesn’t necessarily mean that they are asking something huge of you - although they may be - a big request is something that will take a good chunk of your time or energy (watching someone’s child all evening, taking on time-consuming tasks at work, etc.).

I want you to spend some time thinking about their request and then reflect on the EDC process and draft your statement to them – play around with it until it feels comfortable and in your own words.

When you get a request it can be immensely helpful to delay your response. This is one of the many amazing tips I have taken from Cheryl Richardson’s book [Take Time For You’re your Life.](#)

Putting time in between the request and your response allows you to logically evaluate your time and energy and the request that is being made. You can let the person know that you have to check your schedule or check a prior commitment before you can give them an answer.

You can give them the heads up that you might not be available so that they can start to look for other supports as well. This will give you the time to formulate your EDC statement, breathe, practice it and practice it again.

Once you have your solid EDC statement ready to go, contact them and ask them if it is a good time to talk. Make sure they are not distracted and can really hear you. Now execute your fabulous “no”.

STEP 5 - ASSERTING YOUR BOUNDARIES

WTW

What?!? “I said ‘no’ but they won’t listen to me and they keep on pressuring me!”
Unfortunately this sometimes happens.

You can get angry and yell. You can get sad and give in.

Or you can look at this as an opportunity to strengthen your “no” muscle. Think of it as weight training for your thoughts and emotions.

Imagine your sister who has a history of making her problems become your problems, comes to you again and asks you to do something that you know will take a huge amount of time and energy.

You’re feeling good. You know how the fear of saying “no” feels in your body, so you’re deep breathing to keep your mind calm. Then you execute a beautiful EDC statement at which point she ignores you and just repeats her request – this time with extra pleading, bordering on begging.

This is not uncommon, especially if you have a long standing history of giving in and saying “yes”. This is your time to flex your new “no” muscles.

I would invite you to pause, breathe, smile in a genuine way (I’m sure she really does feel her crisis is your crisis) and now repeat your EDC statement for a second time.

Do. Not. Waiver.

If you repeat this again and she does not stop pleading, you can say some form of the following...

“Sister, I can really appreciate that you are stressed and want some help. However, I have explained my situation to you and I would really like it if you would respect my choice. I love you and want you to be happy, but I cannot put my needs aside for yours in this situation”.

Use your own words for this, use what feels comfortable for you – but be sure to let her know that you have heard her, you have given her your answer and that you will not change your mind.

Do not get into a back and forth argument about why you can’t. You do not need to explain yourself. You were clear. You were polite. You were respectful.

Remember at the beginning of the book when we talked about motivation for making these changes and how you will really need to hold on to it when you start to second guess yourself or you start to feel yourself giving into fear/guilt/anger. This is the time to grab that motivation and hold on to it for dear life.

You know you are right. You are the only one who will ensure you take care of yourself. Your mind and body deserves to be taken care of and this requires you to say “no” so that you can care of yourself.

I tell the people I work with that, *“we really do train people to treat us how they treat us”*. Now I’m not saying that is true in situations of abuse or violence. Violence is never okay. Abusive relationships are not healthy and no one trained someone else to abuse them.

I’m talking about non-abusive, non-violent relationships. These are the relationships where we train people to treat us the way they do. We do this by accepting their behavior and not asserting our needs and boundaries.

You are about to change the way people treat you by asserting your needs and saying “no”. This is a beautiful process to see over time. You will be training your friends, family, spouse, colleagues and management to treat you with respect and dignity.

As a result these relationships will improve and you will have more time, freedom, energy and joy. My hope is that with this new energy and freedom, you will begin to identify what nourishes you and what fosters passion and growth within you.

I hope that you will start to implement time to add nourishing activities to your life on a daily basis. When you care for yourself and feel genuine health and happiness, you will be more likely to give to your loved ones from a place of compassion and joy.... and then everyone is happier.

CREATING MORE ENERGY PART 1

PRESENT MOMENT FOCUS: HOW MINDFULNESS MEDITATION CAN HELP

If you spend a lot of time mentally going through your “to do” list worrying about the future or focusing on what makes you unhappy, you are using a lot of mental energy.

Your thoughts have a strong impact on your emotions and energy level. It’s often more exhausting to mentally rehearse a daily “to do” list than it is to actually do the list.

By learning how to bring your mind into the present moment you can begin to reduce some of that mental chatter and save your energy for more productive tasks.

One way to learn how to bring your mind into the present moment is to practice mindfulness meditation. By practicing mindfulness meditation, you not only learn how to bring your thoughts to the present moment, you also give your mind a resting period that is better than sleep.

A MINDFULNESS BREATHING MEDITATION

The purpose of a mindfulness practice is to focus your awareness on something such as your breath. You focus on your breath and each time you notice that your mind has wandered to; thinking about something, hearing something or feeling something, you bring your awareness back to your breath. This is a simple mindfulness meditation practice to begin with.

All that is required is for you to bring your awareness to your breath. Not just a deep breath, but a conscious breath, where you bring your total awareness to your breathing.

You feel and notice the air moving in, the small pause and then the air moving out; you feel every part of this breath and are present for every moment of it. Perhaps you notice your breath as it enters your nostrils, the back of your throat, your chest or your belly. Pay attention to the sensations as it enters and leaves your body.

This brings you into the present moment and that is the beauty of this simple meditation. Your mind is constantly thinking and creating stories about what is good, bad or indifferent. Now you can give it a few moments of rest during the day.

Try bringing your awareness to your breath for one minute, two minutes or five minutes and continue to deepen your practice.

You can bring your focus to your breath at any moment you feel stressed or notice yourself mentally running through your “to do” list.

If you want to try a free five-minute breathing meditation, [click here](#).

CREATING MORE ENERGY PART 2

THE POWER OF GRATITUDE: SHIFTING YOUR FOCUS TO ABUNDANCE

It's not uncommon to forget about all that we have, especially when we are feeling stressed about all that we have *to do*.

Often the thoughts about all we have to do come with thoughts about how little time we have. Sometimes we wake up feeling as though we are beginning our day in a time deficit and we need to rush and multitask just to stay above water.

This feeling of “never enough” time can deplete our energy. In times like this it can be helpful to shift our focus to abundance and all that we already have.

Taking a few moments to reflect on what you are grateful for can shift your mood and increase your energy.

There are a couple of ways that you can do this:

Sometimes I ask people to keep a gratitude journal and list five things they are grateful for each day. I like to stress the importance of being grateful for the small things, such as someone letting me in a traffic lane, getting a great parking spot, the comfort of my bed or the lovely new “anti-stress” bubble bath I am using.

You can also focus on gratitude without writing it down. You can simply spend a few moments thinking about all that you have and all that you are grateful for. Maybe even take it one step further and do a small act of kindness for a random stranger. Who knows, you may end up on their gratitude list.

The more mindful I am of this, the more often I will let someone in a traffic lane, open a door for someone, let them go ahead in line or just smile and say “Hi”. If I live my day feeling as though I have an abundance of time and energy, I actually have more energy.

REVIEW

CREATING MORE TIME & ENERGY

MORE TIME

Part 1:

- Getting clear on what you value – this allows you to get clear on what you will start saying “no” to.
- Create your value list
- Assess how much time you spend on your values
- Assess what you can let go of that doesn’t fit with your values

Part 2: Getting comfortable with saying “No”.

- Look for situations you would like to say “no” in
- Learn how to manager your nervous system
- Practice the EDC style of communication
- Keep your boundaries set

More Energy:

Part 1:

- Present moment awareness – bring awareness to how you spend your mental energy
- Practice a mindfulness meditation to give your mind a rest

Part 2:

- Shifting focus from deficit to gratitude
- Practice gratitude journaling
- Taking moments of gratitude during the day
- Living from a place of abundance

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Learning this information is helpful, but it does nothing for you if you don't implement it.

Your challenge this week is to let go of one responsibility or task that doesn't fit with living your daily values.

If you struggle with the language to use when removing yourself from a responsibility (which most of us do), you can try something like this.

"I'm so happy you value my input and support. I have recently reviewed my commitments and will not be able to give this task the attention it deserves. I will not be able to continue providing this support. "

Once you've let go of this task, tell me about it and what it was like for you. You can email me or post a message on Facebook – I love seeing this in action!

NOW IS THE TIME

People often fear change and will stick with what is unpleasant instead of facing the unknown that comes with change. Life is too precious and fleeting to stay unhappy.

Find supports. Allow yourself to dream. You deserve a happy & healthy lifestyle.

I wish you all the best as you create more time and energy for yourself.

With all my heart, to all you beautiful women taking care of our people and our world,
be well.

With peace & love,
Char

OXOX

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlene Richard, is a therapist in mental health and addictions. In 2007 she developed a panic disorder while completing her graduate work in Clinical Social Work. She learned mindfulness meditation to recover and now teaches others the healing benefits of this practice.



Charlene blogs about mindfulness meditation for a happy and healthy lifestyle at www.charlenerichardsw.com