

SINGING BOWLS

for MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS

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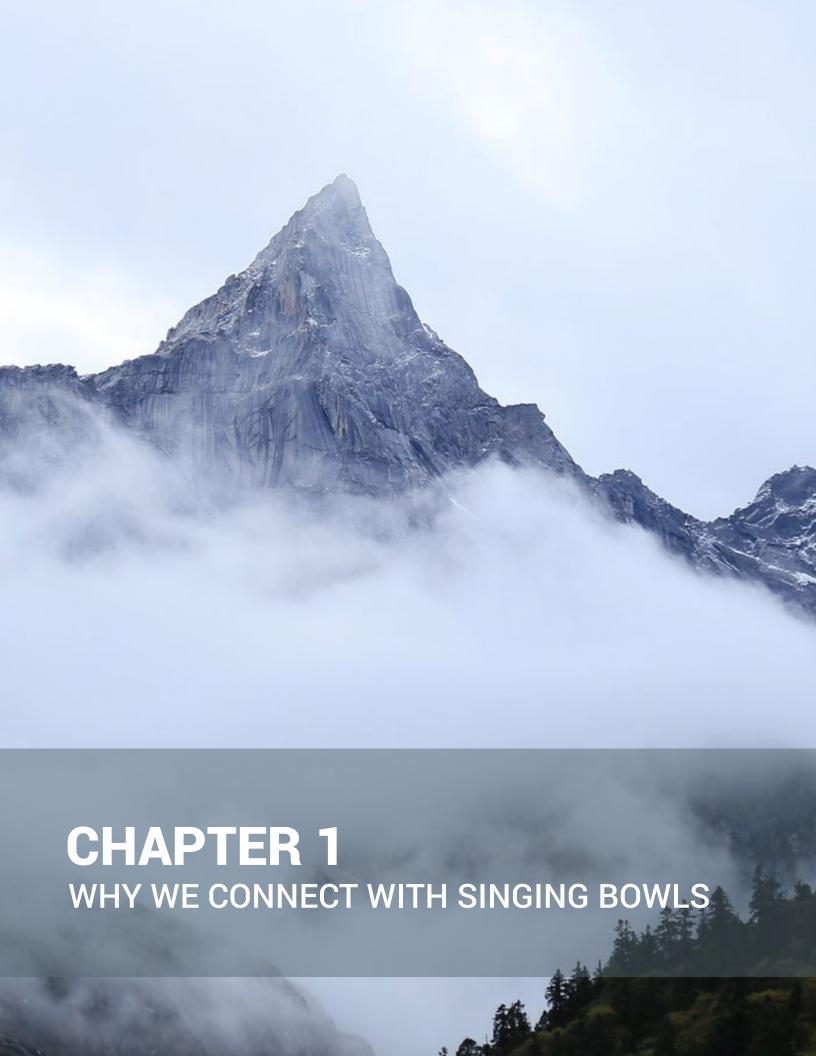
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"If we accept that sound is vibration and we know that vibration touches every part of our physical being, then we understand that sound is heard not only through our ears but through every cell in our bodies. One reason sound heals on a physical level is because it so deeply touches and transforms us on the emotional and spiritual planes. Sound can redress imbalances on every level of physiologic functioning and can play a positive role in the treatment of virtually any medical disorder."

Dr. Mitchell Gaynor

We live in a fast-paced and demanding world. Long work hours, the pressures of social media, a steady stream of negative news stories, and a lack of real 'downtime' means that many people are suffering from stress and overwhelm.

More and more people are turning to traditional and holistic methods of stress reduction and healing — with good reason! Sound therapy, and in particular, Tibetan singing bowls, are a simple, easy to use, and cost-effective way to relax as you enjoy the beautiful sounds they produce.

That's great news for you, as you get to know your singing bowl and connect with the varied ways it can bring joy and positivity to your life. Here at Silent Mind, we're thrilled that you've chosen to purchase your very own singing bowl and excited to help you deepen your experiences with this magical spiritual tool.

In this guide, we'll discuss the science behind singing bowls and why they are such a special way of connecting with sound therapy. Then we'll talk about how you can use your bowl to help you with mindfulness and meditation. Finally, you'll get some tips on how to share your bowl with others, and how to get the most out of it as you learn to play.

So, let's get started!

WHY WE CONNECT WITH SINGING BOWLS

Singing bowls have been used for many years to help people connect to holistic healing. It's not known exactly how old Tibetan singing bowls are, but many researchers believe they date back thousands of years, and may be related to or developed from ancient shamanic sound healing practices. Sound healing has long been used to aid people in a variety of ways, from reducing stress and anxiety, to the promotion of deep relaxation and sleep.

Dr. Mitchell Gaynor, a cancer specialist who worked for the Cornell Medical Centre before his death in 2015, did a lot to popularize sound healing using Tibetan singing bowls.

He first came across the technique while treating a Tibetan monk in 1991, and began using them to work with his cancer patients. After getting what he described as "phenomenal" results, he incorporated singing bowls into his research and practice.

"I started looking into studies on how sound can heal and transform. I found out Gregorian chants or classical music can change our brain waves to alpha and theta waves that are very relaxed.

Sound can change our immune function. After either chanting or listening to certain forms of music, your Interluken-1 level, an index of your immune system, goes up between 12 and a half and 15 percent. Not only that, about 20 minutes after listening to this meditative type music, your immunoglobulin levels in your blood are significantly increased. There's no part of our body not affected. Even our heart rate and blood pressure are lowered with certain forms of music. So, it affects not only our soul and our spirit, but it affects us on literally a cellular and subcellular level."

As Tibetan bowls have gained popularity in the western world, other researchers began to conduct their own investigations into their effects.

In 2016, the University of California, San Diego, published a report on the effects of Tibetan singing bowls – with amazing results.

They discovered that participants who used Tibetan bowls as part of a meditation practice reported less tension, anger, and fatigue. They also found that all participants reported an increased sense of spiritual wellbeing.

At the close of the study they stated that, "Tibetan singing bowl meditation may be a feasible low-cost low technology intervention for reducing feelings of tension, anxiety, and depression, and increasing spiritual well-being. This meditation type may be especially useful in decreasing tension in individuals who have not previously practiced this form of meditation.

Studies like these are great news for anyone who wants a simple and effective way to help them thrive in their daily lives! They show that sound can be a potent healing tool and method for connecting with a calmer and more constructive frame of mind.





AN ETHEREAL SOUND THAT TRULY RESONATES

Sit somewhere quiet and comfortable. Place your bowl in the palm of your hand. Take the wooden striker and breathe deeply. Strike the side of the bowl and listen as the pure tone rings out. Feel the sound wash through your body, entering each cell as the note fades back to stillness. Now strike the bowl once more, but run the striker around the edge, allowing the sound to build into a unique song, before letting the last notes return you to calm and stillness...

There's nothing quite like the sound of a beautifully toned singing bowl. The way the note rings out with a pure peaceful sound is utterly unique – no wonder these bowls are said to sing! We can talk about the science behind why singing bowls are so effective, but some things are better when felt with the heart, as well as experienced by the mind.

Sounds hit us on a deep level, awakening our body and mind and soothing our soul. A well-made singing bowl will give a tone that sounds ethereal. It's this sound that moves us in ways we might not even be able to fully explain — just like the notes of any song which resonates with you on a deep and magical level. In some cases, singing bowls even resemble the sound of a human voice, giving a soothing familiarity and helping us to connect with ourselves and each other. It goes deeper than mere relaxation and stress relief. These unique songs call out to parts of us that we often have no words for, yet are profound aspects of our being.

Just sitting with your bowl and playing can be enough to bring about awesome feelings of calm and centeredness. Many people who connect with Silent Mind singing bowls report that they are easy to play with lovely tones. They feel uplifted and connected to something special whenever they hold their bowl in their hand.

However, there is so much more your bowl has to offer! Read on to discover how you can use your bowl as part of mindfulness and meditation practices, and take your sound healing to a whole new level.



CHAPTER 2 SINGING BOWLS FOR MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness has become a bit of a buzzword in recent years. What is mindfulness and how can it help you lead a more peaceful and enriching life?

One of the best definitions of mindfulness comes from John Kabat-Zinn, the founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) technique. Kabat-Zinn is often referred to as the "father of mindfulness" because he has done so much to bring mindfulness practice to the Western world.

He defines mindfulness as:

"Awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally."

What does this mean in practice?

Mindfulness is a technique that allows you to come into the present moment by paying particular attention to what's happening at that moment. By noticing what's happening in your body and mind as you practice, you become more aware of your experience, both inside and outside.

Mindfulness can be practiced in different ways. You might 'scan' your body, paying attention to different body parts and how they feel, as well as 'watching' thoughts that arise during your practice.

Another way to practice can include paying attention to your breath, or to how your body feels when going about an activity, such as walking or doing housework. That's one of the great things about mindfulness - you can practice it pretty much any place, at any time.

When put like this, mindfulness can sound both easy and something that you do naturally anyway. After all, don't you pay attention to tasks in your day-to-day life, and hear your 'internal monologue' all day? Well, actually, not really! Most people tend to go about their day on 'autopilot', especially when it comes to everyday or familiar tasks.

Just think back to the number of times you have driven home, for example, but had no memory of the journey, or walked into a room and forgotten what it was you came in there for. We spend a huge proportion of our time this way, which results in us missing a great deal of our actual lived experience.

This can be especially true for those of us who have busy, stressful lives. As we go about our daily tasks we're often not fully there. Instead, our minds are fixed on the future or thinking about past events, worrying or overthinking anxieties and stressful situations. It's not until you practice mindfulness that you get a true sense of how much time your mind spends elsewhere.

Mindfulness can be extremely helpful in bringing you back into the present moment so you can focus, and truly experience life. One of the reasons for this is because of mindfulness' focus on non-judgmental awareness. Not only do people tend to spend most of their time with their mind on something other than the present, but many of these thoughts tend to be negative, repetitive, and not conducive to stress reduction and peace of mind.

When you begin to practice mindfulness, you start to notice many of the thoughts and sensations arising inside you, including ones which are negative. Often people try to squash these feelings down, or ignore them altogether. Or, they go the other way and spend time obsessively thinking and overthinking problems or difficult emotions. By committing to noticing these feelings and sensations without judging them, but addressing them with a light curiosity, these feelings tend to pass much more quickly.

This is the great paradox of mindfulness practice – the aim is not to 'get rid' of painful or difficult feelings and emotions. But, by noticing them and accepting them in a non-judgmental way, they actually tend to lessen over time.

Mindfulness is also fantastic for stress relief, as it grounds you in the present moment and brings you back to awareness, rather than worrying or becoming anxious about past or possible future events. Be honest: couldn't your brain use a much-needed break from constantly thinking about what you need to do next, or ruminating on the past?

Awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.



These effects have been observed by researchers such as Dr. Elizabeth Hoge, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. She found that mindfulness can increase resilience to the effects of stress. During a study, stress response markers such as cortisol levels and inflammatory proteins IL-6 and TNF-a were measured. After undergoing a mindfulness stress reduction course, participants showed marked reductions in these stress response markers.

There are many other studies which show similar results, meaning that mindfulness practice can be an excellent, easy to use, and completely free way to help you manage stress in your day-to-day life.

HOW CAN SINGING BOWLS HELP WITH MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness practices often begin with the sound of a bell, which invites the listener to come into the present moment by focusing their awareness on the sound. Tibetan bells have been used traditionally for many years to mark the beginning of practice, as well as to close practices.

Singing bowls can be used in much the same way – you can strike your bowl to signify to your consciousness that you are beginning a practice of awareness. And, you can strike it once more when you draw your practice to a close. This ritual can help to focus your mind and add extra depth and richness to your practice.

In other cases, you might want to strike your bowl periodically – you can do this each time you feel yourself moving away from the present moment, to bring you back into awareness. Or, you can play your bowl as you walk or move around. The possibilities really are endless – it's about finding ways to increase your awareness and ability to be in the present moment.

Mindfulness is not about emptying your mind, going into a 'trance' or 'getting rid' of anything inside or outside of your experience. It's about noticing and accepting what's happening in each moment, as it's happening, and letting it move through that moment without grasping onto it or trying to change it.

You don't have to practice mindfulness for a long time to reap the benefits of the practice. Here are just a few ways you can use your singing bowl to help you use mindfulness in your day-to-day life:

- If you find that you are very busy and often dashing around from one activity to the next, feeling stressed, you can use your singing bowl to strike a note at the beginning and end of each task. Just this simple action can help to remind you to take a moment, breathe deeply and allow your life to flow, rather than constantly being 'on the go.'
- Striking your bowl or playing it for a minute or two can also work to help you change your mindset as you transition throughout the day. You can strike your bowl when you get home from work or when beginning other activities to mark the change in pace. You can strike it when you get up to bring you into the present moment and take a few moments before you start your day. Or you could play it at bedtime in order to relax and be fully present as you let go of the stress of the day before sleep.
- You can even use your singing bowl to help with your time-management as you gently mark the end of tasks, allowing you to let go of them and bring your focus to the next thing on your list.

Simply striking your bowl or playing for a few moments when you feel overwhelmed or stressed out can help enormously in focusing your mind, and bringing you into the present moment. It helps to slow down the busy pace of life enough so you can give yourself room to breathe and space to simply be.

This can help to remind you that (as Dr. Wayne Dyer said) *you are a Human Being, not a Human Doing.*

PLAYING YOUR SINGING BOWL AS MINDFULNESS PRACTICE

One way you can take your singing bowl practice further is by not only striking your bowl to produce a clear tone to start and end practice, but also by playing it as a mindfulness exercise.

As you play the bowl, pay attention to how the sound feels in your body. Listen to the notes and notice how they travel through you, and the sensations this produces in your body.

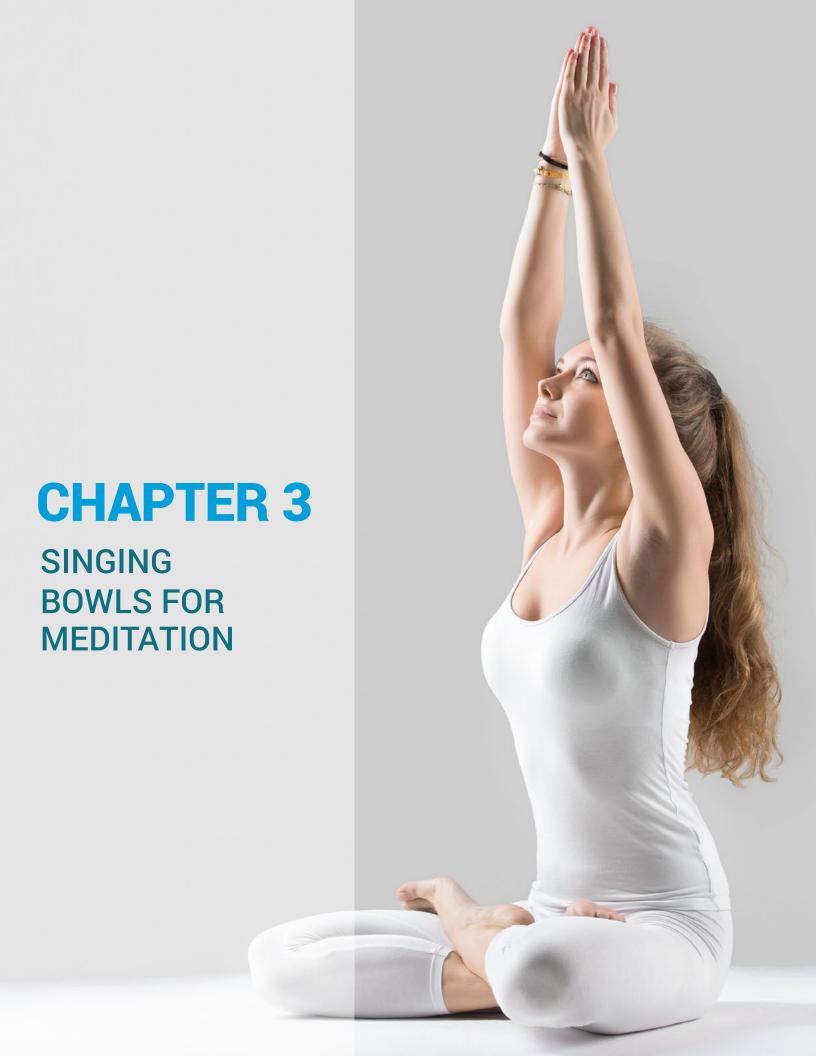
How does it feel in your heart, your stomach, your solar plexus?

What thoughts arise as you play? You might notice how much you are enjoying the sound, or whether the song brings up a memory for you. Maybe you notice yourself reflecting on how your mood is changing or remaining the same. You might notice different emotions moving through your body, or you might feel places where you were holding tension that are now letting go.

As you play you can also pay attention to the physical sensation of the bowl. How the striker feels in your hand, and how the bowl feels in the other. You can notice how your body feels as you sit or stand while you play.

All you have to do is relax, play your bowl and notice!

Before long you'll start to feel big differences in how you manage stress and the busyness of your day-to-day life.



Although mindfulness is often called mindfulness meditation, it's not quite the same as other types of meditation. The confusion comes in because the two can overlap. In mindfulness, for example, you might pay particular attention to your breath or to a sound – like the tone of a singing bowl, just as you would in a different meditative practice, but your intention might be different.

Although people might argue about the exact differences between mindfulness and meditation, broadly speaking, mindfulness is about being aware and present in each moment and accepting what's happening without trying to change anything.

Meditation, on the other hand, takes more of an active role in taming and directing the mind and consciousness in order to reach higher levels of awareness and development.

Both ways of being are complementary and can be used in conjunction with one another, but their outcomes are not exactly the same.

Mindfulness tends to help you with your busy day-to-day life. It can help you focus on tasks and stay in the present moment. That's why you can complete a mindfulness practice pretty much anywhere — I've even known people to practice mindfulness while in a work meeting or sitting in a traffic jam!

Meditation, on the other hand, usually needs to take place somewhere quiet where you won't be disturbed. It is a much more spiritual method and works on a deeper level than mindfulness. If mindfulness practice is a way to navigate the complexities and busyness of day-to-day life, meditation tends to take you even deeper into a vast world of human consciousness.

Therefore, most meditation happens during focused, quiet time, without external distractions (and definitely not when driving!).

It's about contemplation rather than just pure awareness.

Mindfulness practice can be deepened into a meditative technique if you use it in order to alter your consciousness in a meditative way. For example, by focusing on your breath for extended periods of time.

So, mindfulness can be meditative, but meditation is not always mindful, in the sense that you are not always 'watching' your thoughts or experiences as you deepen your practice. Instead, you might use meditation to get further insight into your Self, or to practice specific ways of being. Good examples of this would be practicing non-attachment, or extending gratitude to yourself and those around you.

When it comes to meditation, there are many different techniques for you to choose from. These include certain postures and ways of breathing, chanting words (often called mantras), focusing on objects (such as a piece of crystal or a candle flame), or visualizing to gain deeper insight, clarity, and mastery of your internal landscape.

A NOTE ON CHAKRAS & SINGING BOWLS

Chakra-based meditations are very popular these days and many people find them extremely helpful. We are said to have seven main chakras (although many sources explain that there are many more), which correspond to different spiritual and emotional centers in the body.

Chakras are often associated with individual colors, and imbalances in your chakras are thought by some to be responsible for certain problems or difficulties that might arise both physically and spiritually/emotionally in your life.

Many people use singing bowls to help them with chakra healing and balancing. This might be by using a bowl that's specifically tuned to the frequency or 'note' of each chakra. But you can also use a singing bowl to focus on each chakra as you explore healing and balancing of your chakras. You can play as you visualize each chakra, or strike your bowl around different chakra centers to help clear and unblock them.

The subject of chakras is far-ranging, however, so if this subject is new to you, it's recommended that you do some research to learn more.



MEDITATION TOOLS & PRACTICE

The type of meditation you choose to undertake depends on what resonates with you and works best for your unique personality and aims. Ideally, meditation should be a regular practice and will often have a ritualistic vibe to it – especially as this can help to focus and alter your state of mind, ready to deepen your contemplative practice.

One of the ways that people tend to create a special atmosphere for meditation to take place is by using meditation tools.

These are special items that you use for meditation and have significance to you. They are spiritual items, rather than ordinary, everyday items, and over prolonged use 'take on' those energies and significance.

Meditation tools might include:

- A special seat or cushion to sit on
- Malas (prayer beads)
- Gongs, Bells & Chimes
- Singing Bowls
- Candles, Crystals, Rocks

You can also use other aids to help create the right atmosphere to meditate in, such as music, guided visualizations, creating a quiet space/room dedicated to your practice, or even using a meditation app.

The important thing is that you find a space and tools that work for you, maybe even making sure these tools feel special and meaningful as you use them. Singing bowls, of course, are a wonderful, personal way to create a unique-to-you meditation practice.

You can use your singing bowl to signify the beginning of your practice, as well as using it to close your practice. You can also use your singing bowl to help you focus on your breath, with the intention of deepening your experience inwards, rather than simply observing as you would with mindfulness.

One of the most popular types of meditation is contemplative practice where you send deliberate and directed energy to others. For example, you can try a practice where your goal is sending loving energy and gratitude. For these types of meditations, singing bowls can be very useful. You can strike the bowl during each stage of practice and/or use the singing tones to help build loving/gratitude energy.

If you are using mantras, you might find your singing bowl useful to help you to keep pace and time, or simply to add new depth to the mantra as you chant. Another useful way to use your singing bowl is during walking or standing practice. You can use mindfulness meditation here to help relax and get you through any 'block' you might have with regards to sitting or doing the meditation 'right.'

It's not easy for everyone to sit and remain still for extended periods of time, especially if you have a health problem that makes sitting difficult, or you are not an experienced meditator.

Using your singing bowl as you walk/stand can be a helpful way to transform your mindset and keep you focused as you deepen your meditative state.

Try holding your singing bowl lightly in the palm of your hand and strike it whenever you feel yourself becoming distracted or find that your thoughts are running away with you. Let the sound occupy your mind and draw you deeper into your meditation. Alternatively, you can strike your bowl at regular intervals to help you reach an altered state of consciousness. Find the rhythm and strike that works for you — it could be small taps a few minutes apart or louder strikes closer together.

The most important thing is to build your unique relationship with your bowl. Experiment with different techniques as you meditate, and see what works best for your intention. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' here — what is right for you is what works for you. Have fun and play around with different methods and ways of playing and see where they lead you.

Happy meditating!



One of the most beautiful things about singing bowls is the way their unique sounds invite comment and interest from people who hear them. You might have members of your family who have never been interested in meditation or mindfulness practices, but are intrigued by the sound of you playing.

Sharing your singing bowl is a brilliant way to connect with others, and help them to get the awesome benefits of singing bowls in their lives, too.

SINGING BOWLS FOR CHILDREN

As mindfulness practice and the benefits of meditation have reached a wider audience in the Western world, people have begun to realize that children can get a huge range of benefits from these practices. It's really never too early to get a strong foundation in meditation and mindfulness. These are skills that can help your children for the rest of their lives.

Teaching your children about mindfulness can help them with a host of issues, such as sleeping, studying, and managing their emotions (especially during the difficult teen years!).

Children might not be very receptive to the idea of sitting still on a cushion for extended periods of time (or any period of time, in many cases), but they are often very happy to learn how to play a singing bowl.

You can gently introduce your children to some of the key concepts of mindfulness and meditation as you show them how to play the bowl. For example, you can sit with your child in a quiet room and strike the bowl. Ask them to listen until they can't hear the note anymore. Then the next time you strike it, ask them to notice if they feel the sound anywhere – like their stomach or chest.

Make a game of it! Even these simple techniques are a great way to help children learn how to 'listen' to what is happening in their body and mind.

You can then move onto playing with them or even buying them their own singing bowl. If they enjoy it, you can use it in much the same way you would for yourself. Play the bowl first thing in the morning to help with focus before getting ready. Or you can play it just before bedtime, along with tools like mindfulness practice, to help restless sleepers get a better night's sleep.

Keep it simple to start off with, and remember that the concept of meditation and mindfulness might be a little difficult for younger ones to understand. What will work a lot better is showing them via the experience of listening and playing themselves.

SOUNDS BATHS AND GROUP MEDITATION

Sound baths are a powerful way to meditate and can provide many relaxing and transformative benefits. Many people now attend workshops and sound bath healing groups — but you don't have to go to one of those to enjoy a sound bath!

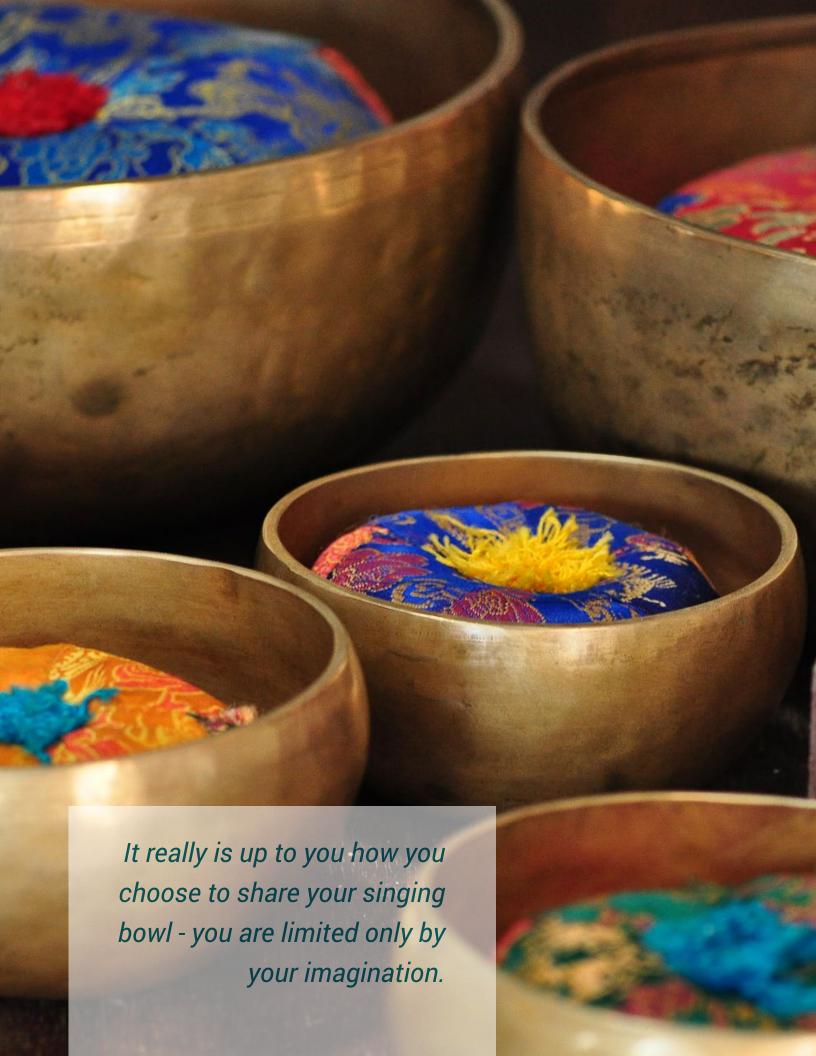
You can create your own sound bath by inviting members of your family, friends, or any group to bring their own singing bowl and play them together.

This has incredible effects on many different levels. When a group of people all join together to play singing bowls, the sounds and tones enrich and uplift each other to provide a truly unique and vibrant sound. And when you meditate together, the result can be far more effective than when you meditate alone.

A group of people all playing singing bowls and conducting metta practice for example, (metta practice is where you send loving kindness to others) can make for an extremely profound and powerful experience.

You don't have to create a formal practice to enjoy the benefits of playing as a group. Just playing informally with your family or friends is a brilliant way to enjoy a group activity with stress-relieving and bonding benefits.

You might choose to use your singing bowl as a space clearing tool, especially if you are part of any spirituality-based groups, or even if you feel you would like to clear away some space before a difficult meeting or event!



To clear space using your singing bowl, strike it firmly at all four corners of the room. Visualize the vibration clearing the space of any negative, old, and stagnant energy you would like to be rid of. When you have finished, you can stand in the center of the room and play the bowl. As you play, visualize the sound filling the room with pure, white light. Let the vibration and tone from the bowl infuse the room, and then step back and see how the energy and atmosphere have changed!

Another way of sharing your singing bowl is to take it to events and activities and let people see and hear it for themselves. If you volunteer or work with those who are struggling in some way, it might be worth offering to bring a singing bowl to help with stress relief and peace of mind. Or, you might introduce a singing bowl to an arts and crafts session to help stimulate creativity.

It really is up to you how you choose to share your singing bowl, you are limited only by your imagination.



CHAPTER 5 TOP TIPS FOR SINGING BOWL SUCCESS



As you learn to play your singing bowl one of the best pieces of advice is to experiment and see how it works for you and fits into your lifestyle and meditation practice. Singing bowls can sometimes be a little tricky to get the hang of, but once you do, you won't want to be without its vibrant, beautiful song!

There are some methods that you can try out to help you get the most from your singing bowl:

- 1. Get your technique right when playing or striking. Always make sure that you hold the bowl balanced on the palm of your hand, rather than gripping it with your fingers. Make sure you are relaxed and not gripping the bowl or the striker too tightly. Play around with different strikes, from tapping gently to striking your bowl more firmly. Listen to the noises and how they resonate with you to decide which ones will work best for different uses like mindfulness or starting a new activity.
- 2. When playing your bowl, strike it gently once or twice before running the wooden striker around the edge. You might have to experiment to find the grip that works the best for you, but hold the striker loosely and keep your wrist loose also. Remember that playing your bowl is all about accessing flow and relaxation, so forcing a note out by scraping will not get you the effect you want!
- **3.** Read and follow the singing bowl care instructions from your User's Guide such as keeping it on its pillow, and keeping it out of the way of places it can get knocked over.
- **4.** Don't leave your bowl in sunlight for any extended periods of time or outside overnight as this can harm the look and feel of your bowl. Make sure you clean it with gentle, non-abrasive substances. Warm water and lemon juice work very well.
- **5.** Finally... be patient! Take your time and learn your bowl and what techniques and methods of playing are right for your unique bowl, and for you. Keep practicing and refining your technique. In time you'll discover how your bowl responds best.

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