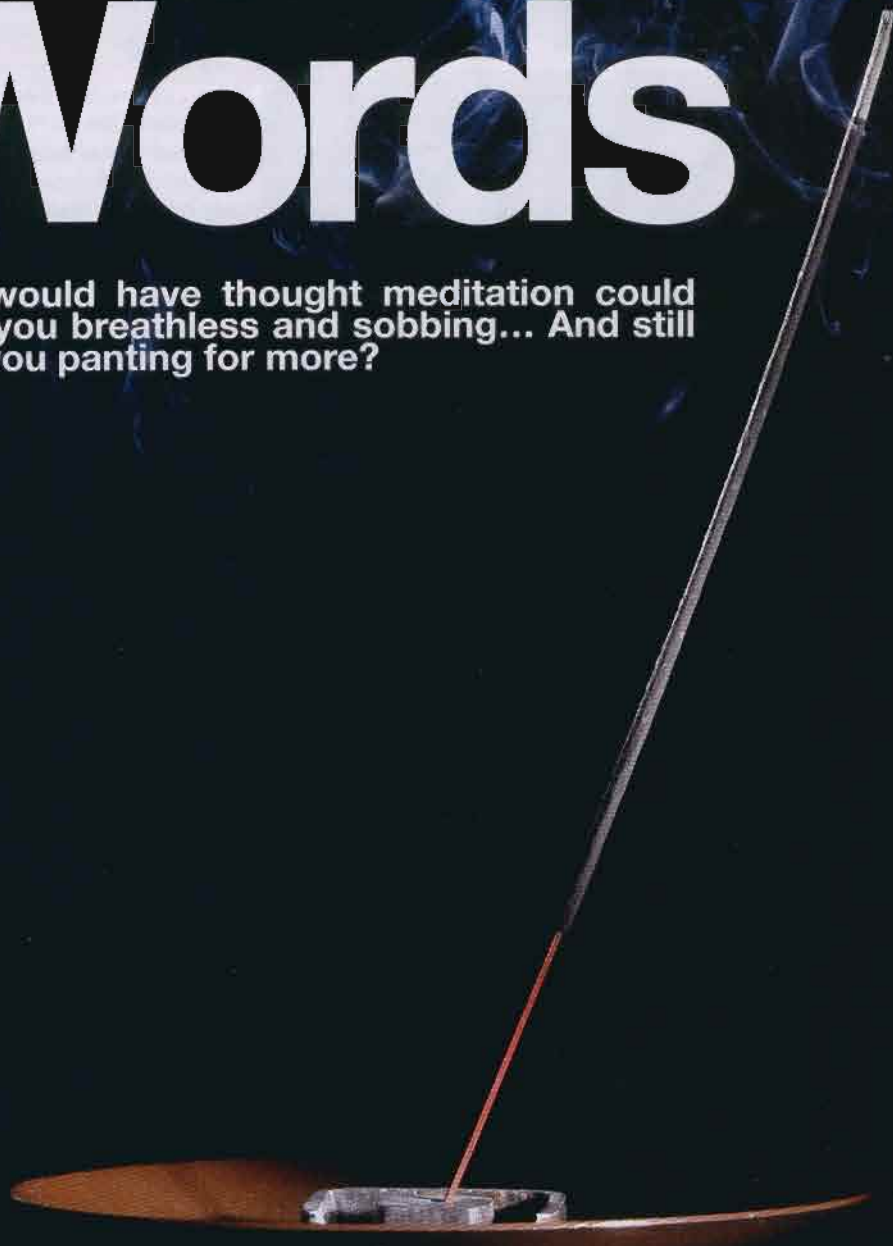


Beauty editor **ANGELIA TEO** Story **KHAI LIN** Styling **BERNARD TAN** Photography **CHING**

Lost For Words

Who would have thought meditation could leave you breathless and sobbing... And still have you panting for more?



On a lazy Sunday afternoon, dressed in comfortable pants and an old T-shirt, I was ready to get acquainted with inner peace. I had signed up for a meditation class to expunge the strains of life not only from my body but also from my mind.

For almost two months, my body had been on a downhill slope. Despite a reasonably healthy diet and frequent-enough exercise routine, life's ills — the flu, sore throats, headaches, and indigestion — had been paying me an extended visit. And when acute

For my first attempt, Tara started off with limited Dynamic Meditation. "Only 10 minutes," she warned, "otherwise, you'll turn blue."

White tissue paper was passed around the class, and Tara said, "Clear your nostrils." Stage one is the snorting stage, and to prevent nasal mucus from running amok — I couldn't imagine how I would continue to hold my head high if my bodily fluids were hitting other people — a preparatory cleansing was necessary.

I shut my eyes to block out my classmates — the only way I was going to get through this class. I began

To increase exhalation, we were told to bend our knees and flap our arms like ducks — I'm sure we looked incredible. To cope, I imagined toxic fumes flying out of my nostrils with every exhalation. And after not even a minute of this, I had to slow down.

eczema joined the ensemble, I had enough. I badly needed to make peace with my body and mind, a spring-cleaning, so to speak.

I knew my preconceived notions would be wrong the minute the instructress, Dhyana Tara, declared that the session might leave one "panting due to certain dynamic actions". OSHO Active Meditation, I learned, is a method quite the opposite from the passive version I'd envisioned. Here, large movements and boisterous shouting are the name of the game — the theory is that the release of energy through words and actions calms the body. "No time and place to feel shy," said Tara. I began to fidget.

to inhale quickly and exhale hard, delivering a harsh noise from the back of my throat. When I heard my neighbours snorting wildly and quite unabashedly, I took heart. To increase exhalation, we were told to bend our knees and flap our arms like ducks — I'm sure we looked incredible. To cope, I imagined toxic fumes flying out of my nostrils with every exhalation. And after not even a minute of this, I had to slow down. Yes, I was feeling a little breathless.

Stage two was upon us. This was the verbal stage, where apparently a karate-like chop would help to release repressed emotion and tension, as we shouted "Hi-ya!" *The Karate Kid*-style.

I peeked at my neighbours, arms flying in every direction and feet stomping, rock concert-style. We looked like little kids at their first karate class.

Chuckling quietly to myself, it was time to enter stage three. Here, arms raised, we were instructed to jump on the spot, each time shouting "hoo, hoo, hoo". This isn't as simple as it sounds. Tara insisted that the sound not come from the throat but rather from the *dan tian* (energy field point), located in the lower abdominal area.

This was an extremely exhausting exercise but Tara kept the pulse going with words of encouragement. "Don't stop even if you feel like are going to die from fatigue," she urged. "Think of it as departing from your old self and emerging a new person. So keep up the pace!" In between my "hoos", all I could think was, "Are my two minutes up yet?"

"Stop!" Tara yelled. And just like that we reached stage four, freezing in position. My heart was thumping in my chest. I could hear the loud panting of the class, each one of us straining to catch big gulps of air. Arms still in the air, I concentrated on my breathing pattern, trying hard to ignore my aching arms. In. Out. In. Out. I needed to rest my arms. In. Out. In. Out. Silence. Suddenly, the room turned quiet, an intense soothing silence that I was unaccustomed to. In that fleeting moment, my sore arms were forgotten.

Then we came to stage five, celebration. A soft musical tune was played and Tara directed us to bring our arms down to give ourselves huge hugs. And I couldn't quite... What is this? I was crying! A gush of raw emotion — the latest "colourful discussions" I'd had with my clients, all my pent-up resentment — manifested in a silent torrent of tears. Then calm enveloped me.

So this was peace. ❖

For more information on OSHO Active Meditation, visit www.osho.com. Workshops and classes are available upon request. Contact Dhyana Tara at 9180-1323 or drop her an e-mail at dhyantara@gmail.com for more details.