Everything I've Ever Done That Worked
Everything I’ve Ever Done That Worked

Lesley Garner
Praise for

Everything I’ve Ever Done That Worked

‘This book is a huge celebration of life and how we can in simple ways enrich our days ... I recommend it to anyone who wants to feel happier, more fulfilled and increasingly to enjoy the world around them.’

Jilly Cooper

‘A priceless collection of reflections, observations and signposts towards a happier and more harmonious life. Wise, practical, elegant, inspiring and genuinely helpful.’

Mick Brown,
author of The Spiritual Tourist

‘Lesley Garner is one of those remarkable women who is original, full of insights and common sense, while writing with a sparkle and fluency that is envied by her peers and hugely enjoyed by her many admirers.’

Sir Max Hastings
– former Editor of the Daily Telegraph and the Evening Standard
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Acknowledgements

This is both my acknowledgement of my debt of gratitude and my dedication of this book to those who have helped and accompanied me.

This little book represents the distillation of years of my own efforts to get a grip on both happiness and the meaning of life. Luckily for me, there was always good company along the way. Some people have been there for the long haul, others simply shared a part of the journey. Some just said or did the thing that made all the difference at the time. Some were fellow students, some valued teachers, and of course it is quite possible to be both at once.

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And of course I want to thank my immediate family – my parents for their wisdom and example, and my two daughters, Harriet and Rachel, for their energy and their continual invaluable reminder that you can be happy, wise and optimistic without ever going on any courses at all.
A total stranger wrote to me this week. She said, ‘Dear Lesley, I just wanted to say I bought your book, *Everything I’ve Ever Done That Worked* and I wanted to tell you that I found it inspiring and very relevant. I was made redundant a month ago. It is a very uncertain and scary time but your stories made me realise I should be working in a way I love rather than just scrabbling for any job. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas.’

And thank you for letting me know that this book has a life of its own. Thank you to everybody who has written in to me over the last five years since first publication, to say, in different ways, ‘You’ve made a positive difference to my life and I am very grateful to you.’

Books can be many things: adventure, revelation, guidance, entertainment, oracle, inspiration. This book, while being a little bit of all those things, has turned out to be loved and valued as a friend. This is what readers write and tell me. Friends are people you love to have around, to see again and again. We rely on friends when times are hard, whether it’s to buck us up,
re-energise us, give us fresh insight or simply to make us laugh.

Many people have told me that this book is a friend to them. It sits on their breakfast table or by their bed, in the loo or on the hall table, ready for a quick random dip and a flash of inspiration. It gets re-read until it falls to bits and you have to buy a new one. It makes me very happy to think of all those thousands of books, born out of my own struggles, insomnia and search for happiness. They have all found good homes.

So now it is being re-printed and sets off on another journey. This book has grown up and has a life of its own way beyond my first A4 ringbinder, my ‘Resource File’. It has become the resource file of thousands of strangers who feel like friends. I wish it – and you – well on its journey. May it be a good friend to you.

—Lesley Garner, 2010
Introduction

Some people have first aid boxes. Some people keep recipe books. Some people have tool kits. I keep a resource book – everything I’ve ever done that worked. In moments of confusion, indecision, panic, depression, stress and plain insomnia I can pick it up and know I’ll find something in its pages that will dig me out and move me on.

There are things in here that work in darkness and things that work in daylight. There are techniques that will help you in planning your journey through life and techniques that will light the next inch of the path when you’ve lost your way, or even dig you out of the swamp into which you have fallen.

This isn’t the single-answer approach. This isn’t a guide to the one true Way. There are hundreds of ways and I have tried many of them. This is my personal greatest hits, my tested and recommended short cuts.

I am not a guru, a psychologist or a workshop leader. I am a journalist, a writer and someone who has followed many
alleys out of personal need and curiosity. I have collected what is in these pages from workshops and journeys, professional experience and private crises, altered states and guided meditations, tribal wisdom and family lore, religious tradition and successful improvisation, and from the tried and tested experience of friends and teachers. But none of it is second hand because everything here has worked for me, personally, at some moment in my life.

My resource book represents a lifetime’s searching and finding, and I think it is too good and too useful to keep to myself. I would love it to help other people too. I know as a writer that the best communication is when a reader says that what I wrote really helped or enlightened them. I hope this book will do that. I hope it will be a friend to other people.

Is it really everything I’ve ever done that worked? No. I don’t tell you how to fix an electric plug or roast a chicken, though I can do those things too, and they work. I admit that knowing how to change a plug and roast a chicken are also life-enhancing, even life-saving, skills, but you can find household and cookery tips elsewhere. What I am interested in here is what you can do that can turn dark to light in the middle of a sleepless night, improve the quality of your relationships, help you decide on and follow a true course of action, rekindle enthusiasm and passion, give you fresh perspectives and new ideas and throw you a lifeline in the dark nights of the soul that come to everyone.

We begin coping with whatever life throws at us from the moment we are born, and we cope with it in a way that is partially determined by our inherent make-up, the gifts and characteristics already determined by our genes. The business of learning what works for you begins at once. One baby can cry and immediately be fed. Another, born into a time of famine or into a different family, can cry and never be fed. But for you, reading this book,
life isn’t so extreme. You have survived infancy, adolescence. You have made choices and maybe you are beginning to learn that what worked in one situation is a disadvantage in another.

You may have done all the things that worked up to now. You may have got the education, found a job, been through relationships, but you wouldn’t have picked up this book if you weren’t wondering whether there might be something more, something you’ve missed, something else that might make you happier, turn up the colour and volume of your life, give it narrative and meaning.

You’re not alone. Since the Greeks of the fifth century BC, if not before, people have applied their minds to considering the meaning of life and our part in it. They have wondered how to behave in relation to everything that is larger than us—the gods, the universe. They have asked what it means to lead a good life. Our lives are immeasurably different from the lives of the ancient Greeks, but the fundamental questions and longings remain the same: how, in a time of danger and chaos, can an individual find meaning and fulfilment? And how, specifically, can I, with my personality, upbringing, tastes and talents, find a place in the world which satisfies me and relates me to the people who matter in my life?

So this book is partly philosophy and partly self-help. Self-help books sell in their millions and they are a very soft target for those who never read them. But the ancient Greeks were in the business of self-help as they argued about the good life on the hillsides of Athens. Where they differed from us today is that they used the tools of rigorous intellectual debate. They weren’t in the business of providing emotional comfort, which is the territory of the self-help book.

Self-help books offer a refuge when your friends’ patience or experience has run out. Self-help books offer comfort. Self-
help books are friends. The danger is that they offer easy formulae, glib answers. They can encourage self-indulgence, sloppy thinking, clichéd thought. I hope I don’t do that. I am not offering answers, only ways in which you might arrive at your own. This is why the emphasis is on what I’ve tried that works. I’ve kept an open mind. I’ve been eclectic. I haven’t subscribed to one school of thought. I’ve tried to reconcile what I was taught through tradition with what I’ve worked out for myself.

And this book is partly memoir. The more I have written, the more I realize that it is a kind of autobiography. You will learn something about the life I’ve led, the places I’ve lived in and travelled to, the jobs I’ve done, what upsets me, what moves me, what thrills me. I am naturally a reflective and contemplative person and you might be very physical and active. Nevertheless, I might have had experiences that you might find helpful. The things in this book work for me because of who I am and the way I see the world. I am me, separate from you. But we are also both human. If we share 90 percent of our DNA with a mouse, I share a lot more than that with you, though you could be another race, another age, another sex.

Whenever I have a new experience I wonder how it could be useful, how I could relate it to other people. This is where being a writer comes in. I’ve been a journalist all my working life, which means that I am innately curious. I get to meet and question a lot of people, sometimes in extreme situations. I have been in presidential palaces and refugee camps. I have interviewed royalty, rape victims, millionaires, illegal immigrants, film stars, artists, politicians, musicians, sportsmen and women, children and the very old. I have learned from all of them and I love making the connections, picking up the experience and information that I can pass on.
Introduction

Being a journalist also means I constantly have to justify myself to my peers – highly sceptical, critical people. As one former colleague famously said, his first reaction on interviewing any politician was to think, Why is this bastard lying to me? I’m not that cynical, but I’m trained not to be credulous either.

I am also a daughter, a mother, a friend. My life, like that of millions of women around the world, has been a constant micro-shifting balance between keeping myself, my employers and my family happy. I have spent years constantly monitoring this balance and being aware that somewhere at my centre is a still, true point. It is a point at which I am at rest but not inert. It is a point at which self-belief, energy, vision, enthusiasm and the capacity for happiness are renewed.

This point, which exists in all of us, is like a wellspring which is constantly under threat from pollution, weeds, other people’s rubbish. It may be clogged, poisoned, dried up, built over. Some people aren’t even aware that it exists. I wasn’t even aware, until I started to write this paragraph, that this was how I saw it. We are our own source, our own wellspring. When I say ‘everything I’ve ever done that worked’, I mean ‘everything I’ve ever done that worked to locate, maintain and protect my own wellspring’.

This is constant, vigilant labour and sometimes we need help. I have taken myself – my body, my intelligence, my heart, my spirit, my imagination – into all kinds of byways in search of more understanding and experience. I’ve taken part in workshops and rituals, retreats and processes. I’ve read books, undergone therapy. I’ve travelled. I’ve talked. I’ve cried, danced, sung, walked, explored, painted, talked with hundreds of others on the same search. Often I’ve thought, If my friends could see me now.
If I think I will learn something that will enlarge my experience of life, balance body and soul, heart and mind, and give me more understanding as a writer, more patience as a mother, more loving-kindness as a daughter, more sensitivity and perception as a listener and more creative energy as a writer, and if the people offering the something seem to have integrity, talent and skill, then I’ll do it if the moment is right. The only path I have never trodden in pursuit of opening my doors of perception is that of drugs. I have learned to avoid experiences that give you hangovers or let-downs or which might permanently damage you. Besides, there are many more subtle and less dangerous ways to alter your state of consciousness and your view of the world than taking toxic substances. Some of them are in this book.

This is a circular book, by the way. You don’t have to read it in any order. You can dip in and out as you please. I hope it will be of use and comfort to you, but only you know what your needs are. I would add to everything I have said here that there are times when self-help isn’t enough, and this book is not a substitute for medical, therapeutic or professional help if you need it. In emergencies I recommend you turn to ‘Emotional Freedom Technique’, ‘Fleeting Feelings’, ‘Calm Down’, ‘Practise Gratitude’, ‘Write a Letter to God’ and ‘The Magic of 20 Minutes’.
Let me tell you a story.

It’s a story about a point in my life when I was without a regular job and in a great deal of confusion as to what I should do next. A 10-year relationship with a newspaper had come to an end, as these things do, and part of me wasn’t at all sorry. I was burnt out. Only that summer I had been having dinner with an old friend who was also a journalist and we’d confessed over our glasses of wine that she wouldn’t care if she never gave another piece of advice ever again and I wouldn’t care if I never had another opinion.

But having opinions was what I did for a living and as the days went past I began to realize that I had been doing the same thing for too long to have any fresh ideas at all. I found myself approaching editors and saying that I would love to write for them, while a tired little voice in my head muttered, ‘Oh no, you wouldn’t.’ I am sure that ambivalence communicates itself just as powerfully as enthusiasm and I wasn’t surprised when these meetings failed to translate into jobs which I didn’t really want
anyway. So why was I wasting their time and mine? What else could I do?

One very beautiful morning in March, I got up and followed my routine. Make coffee. Scan the papers. Make notes of topics I could write on. Ring a couple of editors with suggestions and then wait for them to get back to me after morning conference. It was half past 10 and I knew nobody would get back to me before 12. Blow it, I thought. I’m going out for a walk.

I’m lucky enough to live near Richmond Park, an ancient deer forest and nature reserve on the edge of London, where herds of red and fallow deer graze freely and woodpeckers, owls, even a flock of green parakeets perch in ancient trees. In the woodland garden at the heart of the park I sat on a log and watched small birds building nests in the treetops while white spring clouds flew smartly overhead in the fresh wind. Really, I thought, it’s not so bad being out of work. I thought of all my friends and colleagues stuck behind computers in grey airless offices while I breathed in the fresh scent of grass and watched tiny birds ferrying twigs overhead in the budding branches. Lucky me.

But I still needed an answer to my dilemma. What on earth, I thought, should I be doing? All I knew was that the way I was going about pursuing my career wasn’t working.

I began to think about a book I’d bought in Paris a month earlier, An Inquiry into the Existence of Guardian Angels. I’d bought it because when I’d flicked through the pages I’d read that the author was a journalist who had had the extraordinary experience of being inexplicably saved from a sniper’s bullet. He quoted other witnesses to acts of miraculous protection and timely guidance, many of them tough old reporters, foreign correspondents who had inexplicably been diverted from disaster, seasoned old
cynics who nevertheless acknowledged an intervening mystery at some crucial moment in their life. I could relate to them and their experience and I was intrigued.

The author’s argument was that guardian angels do exist. ‘What is more,’ he said, ‘you can build a relationship with your guardian angel by creating a dialogue, preferably out loud. You’ll find that angels will communicate and that they often have a strong sense of humour.’ It was an interesting book but I hadn’t thought about it until it came into my mind on my log in the wood.

There were no other people in sight on that spring morning and as I idly watched the clouds and the nest-building birds I found myself talking out loud. ‘OK, guardian angel,’ I said, ‘if you exist, I’d like to know what on earth I should be doing about my career. Should I be looking for another column? A full-time job? A contract? With whom? Please give me a clue, and I’d like some sort of answer before I get back to the car park.’

I carried on sitting on my log. The birds carried on twittering and nest building. The little clouds carried on sailing over from the west. Nothing happened. Eventually I got up and carried on walking and I was so absorbed by the signs of spring all round me that I quite forgot about my request for an angelic message.

Half an hour later I had turned back towards the car park and I was crossing a wide open area of grassland when something caught my eye by the side of the path ahead. The plain where I was walking was deserted, nothing but grasses bending in the wind and little clumps of trees. Nobody else seemed to be out walking and I hadn’t seen another person in the hour I’d been in the park.
What I found, planted in the grass at the edge of the path where no such thing had ever been or has been since, was a rough wooden stick with a square of brown cardboard stuck on the top of it. Written on the piece of cardboard were the misspelt words: ‘B glad your free.’

*Be glad you’re free.* I laughed and laughed out loud. I turned and looked round 360 degrees. Nobody. ‘OK,’ I said out loud. ‘Thank you. I get it.’ And I got it.

Those words changed everything. I was free. Why was I struggling to chain myself up again? When I got home I wrote them down in my diary, a daily reminder not to panic, not to do the conventional thing, not to try to walk back the way I’d come. *Be glad you’re free.* The price of freedom is insecurity, but security is often an illusion. Each time I wobbled or got into a panic I remembered I was glad I was free.

Those words and the manner of their delivery stopped me in my tracks. They turned fear and negativity to hope and courage. They stopped me banging my head against a brick wall and encouraged me to take a deep breath and look around. With those words in mind I took advice that led me to decide not to do any work that didn’t positively excite me. I went to art school and I began to write about art. By the time I found myself being a columnist again, which I did, I was renewed. I had different experience and perspective to bring to my writing.

I don’t know if I’d had an angelic encounter or experienced a purely human coincidence. It doesn’t matter. It had worked and it carries on working. The message is for you too. Be glad you’re free. Because you are as free as you think you are.
It is Tuesday morning. I’m already a day late. Why didn’t I start on Monday? I am sitting at a table in my office and I am feeling besieged and overwhelmed. This is the morning I am determined to get into the daily rhythm of writing this book. This is the day I stop procrastinating.

I am feeling slightly sick. I am surrounded by piles of files and notes and feel that if I open my mouth to scream, a flock of papers will fly in and suffocate me. I know that I am feeling what thousands of people, millions of people, feel at the outset of a big project. I feel panic. I’ve got project paralysis. My thoughts are jeering at me from the branches of my mind like a flock of sassy black crows. *Think you can write a book? Everything I’ve Ever Done That Worked? Well, nothing’s working now. Who are you? Thought it was easy when you had lunch with the publisher, didn’t you? Thought it was clever when you wrote lots of headings down on a sheet of paper, didn’t you?*
And what makes you so precious that you think you can retreat into your own world to do this? You do realize there’s no food in the fridge and you’ve got to go down the supermarket? You know that the frame of your office window is rotting and you meant to call the carpenters two weeks ago. You know there’s a pile of ironing waiting for you and that’s why you can’t find your blue shirt?

And if you’re so determined to devote yourself to writing this book, why have you let this week’s diary get so full? Check it out. You’ve got a dental appointment tomorrow, followed by an editorial board meeting, followed by a choir rehearsal. Won’t get much writing done then. You’ve arranged to see your mortgage adviser the day after tomorrow and she needs an update on your financial situation which you haven’t prepared. You meant to send flowers to that friend who drove you to hospital last week and you ought to ring your sick parents to see if their medical test results have come through…

Aaaaargh! That’s the thing about having a head full of crows – they never shut up. And they have a wonderful vantage point. Your fears and insecurities are laid out below them like so much roadkill. There is only one way to deal with them. There is only one cure for procrastination. There is only one answer to the perennial fear of getting started, and that is to take an action, no matter how small, that will move you towards your goal.

In this case my goal is a neat pile of manuscript on which I have just typed ‘The End’. These are some of the many tempting actions that will not get me there: Getting up to make a cup of coffee. Taking my ruler and pencil and drawing myself a lovely neat timetable. Sticking little labels on all my files and giving them names. Cutting interesting and possibly relevant articles out of the newspaper. Phoning a friend. No. All these actions could be useful in the right time and place, but that is not now, not here.

The journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step, always, without exception. And the step must be in the direction
of the goal and not towards the kitchen or the telephone. To have written the book I must begin, in however small a way, to write the book.

I tell the crows to come back again in half an hour, if they must. It is Tuesday morning. I didn’t start writing on Monday morning and that’s that. Too bad. I have this moment, always this moment. I confront my fears the best way I know how, by naming them. Failure. Ridicule. Inadequacy. Shame. Not being half as clever as I think I am and everybody knowing it. Not being able to sustain what I start. But I have started. The crows have fallen silent. They may be shuffling their feet along the branches, getting ready to croak, but for the moment they have nothing to say. That’s what happens when you really begin. Like Indiana Jones stepping out into the chasm, it’s only when you really take the first step that the bridge creates itself under your feet.

I must remember, when this happens all over again tomorrow morning, that it’s the steps that make the road.
In 1991 I sat in a rehearsal room in Sapporo, Japan, with the dying Leonard Bernstein and had a conversation about the relationship between inspiration and hard work. Bernstein was nearing the end of his life and he was very sick, but I’d just watched him electrifying the London Symphony Orchestra through a rehearsal of Sibelius’s First Symphony. Now, with a large Scotch in one hand and a forbidden fatal cigarette in the other, he lay exhausted in the corner of a sofa and talked about the way in which he identified with the composers whose music he conducted. If he’d done his preparation thoroughly, he said, he absorbed the score into his very bones. He could feel that he was composing Beethoven and Mahler anew in the performance. He became the music.

I had an idea to swap with Bernstein, one I’d been given by Anthony Rooley, lutenist and specialist in early music. I told Bernstein that he was talking about the art of Sprezzatura, and once I’d explained it to him, he agreed.
The musicians of the seventeenth century, Rooley told me, believed that a great performance had three elements: Decoro, Sprezzatura and Grazia.

Decoro is all the preparation and hard work. It’s the lonely research, the checking, the rehearsal, repetition and often futile-seeming effort and drudgery which prepare the ground.

Then comes Sprezzatura. It is the art of spontaneity. It is the art of standing on the hot spot and performing with such invention and freshness that it is as though the work is flowing through you for the first glorious time. It is the experience of being inspired. This is exactly how Bernstein said he felt about the music he conducted.

Sprezzatura is impossible without Decoro. Imagine a mountain. Decoro – hard work – is probably nine-tenths of the climb. Sprezzatura is the peak – it’s magnificent, but you don’t hang about there for long. And Grazia – divine grace – is the blessed light which illuminates the summit. Grazia is what touches a performance in which Decoro and Sprezzatura are in perfect balance.

But this theory applies to far more than musical performance. It is a Theory of Everything. Leonard Bernstein’s life, as I wrote when he died three months later, was a perfect illustration of how these three elements can be the essential ingredients of a successful life as well as a memorable concert. He had astonishing talent but he worked like a dog. His performances, even his rehearsals, were full of Sprezzatura, spontaneous to the point of shock. And many people, millions, can testify to the Grazia, the grace, that his work teaching, composing and performing brought to their lives.
You don’t have to be a kind of genius to use these elements in your life and work. They apply to every kind of human endeavour from sitting school exams to throwing a party to fighting a campaign. *Decoro* without *Sprezzatura* will not do. It is no more than uninspired plodding. But *Sprezzatura* without *Decoro* can lead to the leap which misses the trapeze, the blazing but unprepared talent destroyed by nerves, the dazzling lawyer tripped up by the unexpected question. No *Grazia* there.

Work and play are both essential to human endeavour, but I know from experience that the work comes first. Anyone who has become deeply involved in a project knows that moment when a brilliant creative solution suddenly appears after hours, days or even weeks of labour. Or as Mark Twain said, ‘The more I work, the luckier I get.’ The luck is *Grazia*. You only get it when you know how to work and then play.
Meditation

People who have no experience of meditation tend to think that it is a matter of sitting and letting your mind go blank. On the contrary. Meditation is the practice of unswerving concentration. It is an intense mental discipline and that is what makes it such a valuable tool in the decluttering of the mind and the destressing of the heart.

Meditation, for those who have embraced it, is as essential to their functioning as \textit{barre} practice to a ballet dancer or scales to a musician. Without it there is no internalized self-discipline to hold everything else together. It was the Dalai Lama who said, ‘The more I have to do, the more I meditate.’ Meditation means replacing useless fretting and random worrying with a thought-free mental space which allows renewal and change.

The baby meditator has just as much trouble meditating as a baby pianist might have trying to play Beethoven. I am not as regular or as disciplined a meditator as I might be, so this is what often happens when I sit down to meditate. I close my eyes. I focus my attention on the sensation of my breathing. I use a simple sequence of phrases I learned in a retreat led by
the Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out. Breathing in, I remember that I didn’t finish clearing up the kitchen which leads me to the fact that we’ve run out of bread and before I know it my mind is racing down the high street and into the supermarket. I pull myself up. I focus again on my breath. Breathing in, I am breathing in. Breathing out, I am out tonight because I’m meeting friends for a drink. I must remember to return that book I borrowed and would I be better taking the car, which means finding somewhere to park, and my friend got towed away last time, which means a £200 fine, and … I focus on my breath again.

And so it goes. And so goes everyone. Controlling thoughts is like herding cats. Push them out and they come right back through the cat flap, bringing other stray cats with them. That is why we need to meditate.

When my mind is at its most random and overloaded, victim of the need to multi-task, active in a frantic way like a randomly disfunctioning radio tuner, that is when I need to meditate. When I have a sensation of anxiety deep inside, a feeling that I daren’t stop, that is when I need to meditate. When I realize that my thoughts, perhaps about another person or a relationship which is in trouble, are obsessive and repetitive, that is when I need to meditate.

To meditate is to return to a state of still potential out of which organization and order can grow. And it can help order us on the physical level too. I know for a fact, because I check it, that meditation immediately lowers my blood pressure.

Like all regular practices, meditation can create long-term changes in attitude and behaviour. The regular experience
of internal stillness and calm creates a recognition and knowledge of the state that can draw you back in times of turmoil. People who are meditators have a tool which can prevent them from acting out their inner turbulence in a way which harms themselves and others. This is why meditation can be so effective when it is taught in prisons and workplaces.

There are many, many ways to meditate. By this I mean ways to attain a state of inner focus and concentration. Musicians, dancers, sportspeople, craftspeople, children lost in a game, anyone whose work requires concentration knows what it is like to get into a meditative state. But the meditative state can be experienced anywhere. The ultimate aim of mindfulness meditation is to make each moment of daily life – preparing breakfast, doing the dishes – an act of mindfulness. By ‘mindfulness’ I mean nothing more complex, or more difficult, than the simple art of doing and thinking about one thing at a time.

If you have never tried meditation, here is a very simple way to begin. It is the way I always follow. Find a quiet, undisturbed place to sit. Sit upright. Relax your hands loosely on your knees. Close your eyes. Become aware of your breathing. Simply concentrate on your breath without attempting to control it. Be aware of the sensation of the incoming breath in your nostrils, in your throat, in the rise of your ribs and stomach. When the impulse to release the breath occurs naturally, simply observe the same process in reverse. That is all. Simply observe, without interference, the sensations of your own breathing.

The breath is there to save you from distraction. Hardly will you have started this simple process than your mind will take you anywhere but where you are trying to be, within yourself at this particular moment. It is shocking how hard it is to focus on one simple thing. It is humiliating how easy it is for the uncon-
But our thoughts are not in charge of our mind. We are. Meditation is the process of discovering, isolating and strengthening this ‘we’, this ‘I’, this calm, detached, compassionate observer that need not be swept away in the chaos of our lives. Meditation is the art of building an inner lighthouse to guide us home in the turbulence.