

The Nature of Nature
A Practical Guide to Being a Witch

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May you see all of who you are.

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A thank you is not enough to all the wise women, wise men, psychics and mystics that have helped me on my journey. I feel blessed to have had you in my life and am eternally grateful for the wisdom you shared so freely.

All my love

Ryan James

x

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Before I begin...

The way I write is quite personal and at points grammatically terrifying but I promise this won't be just a "how to turn your ex-partner into a pigeon" book. It will contain very personal accounts and, at some points, quite private confessions, but all with the intent of allowing you to take a good look at my spiritual practice and me. I write completely from my own experience, as it is through my own experience that I have learned the things I have. I want to show that you don't have to dance naked around bonfires or wear pointy hats to be a witch; though, as fun as that can obviously be, I'd rather you get a little look inside my head and see the witchcraft I practice.

If you're new to this craft then don't take everything I say as the be all and end all. Everything I write is not set in stone; as I grow and learn each day so does my faith. All I can do is show you what works for me *at this point in time*. Hopefully you will use this book as a means to provide a basis from which you can teach yourself and allow your underdeveloped "talents" to enhance your life.

All boiled and bubbled down (no pun intended, honest!) this book is written with the intention to inspire both new and experienced witches in the hope that you take some piece of my craft and apply it to your own. I want you to use this book in any way possible, even if it's to hurl at an unsuspecting, yet vicious, wasp!*

*I sincerely apologise to any wasp enthusiasts and would like for it to be known that wasp sacrifice is not a part of my craft, nor do I believe in hurting any other living creature (unless, of course, it is about to attack me or eat my legs).

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PART ONE

What the Hell Is a Witch?

It is a fair question – what exactly is my definition of a witch? There are no specific criteria, rituals, or religious ceremonies you need to carry out. Every witch I know has a built-in instinct; an instinct that is aware of its surroundings, aware of itself, and has a need to help others. There are no secret handshakes and we don't ask that you learn Latin or hang around on beaches hoping to be struck by stray bolts of lightning. It would be best to forget most of the things that you have seen on the television, as witches are not "charmed" (in fact I am anything but charming until I have had my morning caffeine fix!).

Witchcraft is about finding the truth; growing past your beliefs, past your social conditioning, and past your current awareness. You must take on board the conscious task of stripping down these parts to get to your core. Allowing yourself to be fully aware of who you are and what you are is a key process in this faith and it involves a lot of calming down, slowing down and actually stopping your brain for a second, so, with love and the true spirit of witchcraft, I ask you to shut up and listen (or read).

Can anyone be a witch?

Chances are if you have picked up this book, strange and bizarre things happen to you quite often. Perhaps by now you realised that the cool pointy hats aren't really involved and have put the book down. If you have been drawn to or directed toward witchcraft

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then there's going to be something within this faith that you need to learn.

Witchcraft is not for everyone, but this has nothing to do with ability or knowledge or anything else besides a want to learn. What I mean by this is that witchcraft does not seek out people to join; *you can't force other people to learn witchcraft*. People will learn at their own pace and in their own time.

I have heard that some witches like to say that they are "born witches". While this can be true, you will instinctively search for the path that is a natural extension of yourself, that is, some people, witches included, are aware of their path very early on while others find it later on in life. It doesn't matter whether you come from one hundred generations of witches or fell over a random witch meditating in a park; the fact is you are here now becoming aware of the lessons you are learning – that's what makes you a witch.

Pretty 'Pagan' People

You may have heard the term "pagan" used to describe a witch, or even witchcraft itself. Pagan comes from the Latin word "paganus", which simply means "of earth" (unless, of course, you are speaking Christian Latin in which the term then means "heathen"). Witchcraft falls under the branch of religion called Paganism and the term tends to cover nearly all earth-based religions wherein a reverence for nature is held, such as Wicca, Druidism, and Shamanism.

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Witchy Dos and Witchy Don'ts

There is no “power” to be found in being a witch. You will not be granted special gifts and/or abilities, but you will be made more aware of the natural instincts, both physical and spiritual, that lie in everyone. Further on you will find different exercises that will help you get back in touch with these lost instincts and you will soon come to realise that “power” only exists in the minds of the insecure.

You might have already met these “witches” who claim to be powerful and say that they can command the gods to do their bidding! Despite their obvious entertainment value there is very little in their craft that is about finding personal truth. Use your common sense and take a good look at the extent some people go to in order to make themselves feel important. It becomes clear that the greater the length someone has to go to in order to make themselves feel important or powerful, the more likely they are overcompensating for feeling the complete opposite. I actually met someone that claimed to be one of the last three remaining High Priestesses of Welsh Fairy Witchcraft in the world! She wasn't even Welsh! See what I mean?! **NEVER** give any money to anyone that makes big claims about what they can get for you or do to you. Just like all other areas in life there are frauds. There are people who claim they can kill you, make you powerful, or make everyone fall madly in love with you – use your intuition and never be afraid of anyone's claims.

So if you are brand new to the witchcraft bookshelf at your local bookstore and you have recently met someone there who claims to be one of the only three remaining High Commanding Priests of

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the Last Order of Merlin's chin, give them a slap and run. Be aware that some people do call themselves "witches" only to be seen as being "mysterious" or "powerful". Just remember that witchcraft is a personal journey that can never be taught, only guided.

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PART TWO

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I could spend a huge amount of time and paper drawing out what can be said in a few sentences: When I speak about nature in this book I'm referring to the natural energy force that, to put it quite simply, is everything: every seed, every animal, and every human being is a part of and has its own place in nature. With instinct we are able to remember many of the facets of our own personal nature and our place in the natural scheme of things. I advise anyone to make it one of the very first tasks of walking down the path of witchcraft – learn how to tap into these instincts that most of us have forgotten how to use. They are present in all of us and back in our cave days we lived our lives by them as we knew nothing different.

As a human animal we have a drive to survive and to procreate. I believe it is when we as a human species act in ways that take us above and beyond our everyday consciousness that a nature bigger than us begins to reveal itself. This is when I have seen a nature that is all knowing, all loving and all encompassing (I literally mean that every cell in your body and every thought in your mind is all a part of the same energy). This natural energy is the very essence of who you are.

The mind and body are not separate entities. Your body is no less spiritual than your mind. They are both involved in the process of helping you gain awareness. Most people remember things visually, so here's an image for you: imagine someone putting a

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drop of water into a bowl of water. Just because the drop is in the bowl now does not mean that the initial drop of water has changed. It is still a drop but now it's just part of a bigger drop, a bigger substance. It is completely made of the same stuff but unique in its own right, too. So we don't know for sure whether the other drops are getting on its nerves or whether it feels unhappy in its current position. That still doesn't mean that it is any less important to the whole. I hope that has cleared up things for you; we're a bunch of drips!

The Good, the Bad and the Downright Disturbing

You're all familiar with the terms "Good" and "Evil". One we strive toward achieving and the other we avoid. In the *Wizard of Oz* the good witch is dressed in white and has a wand that can produce bubbles, while the evil witch is of an unhealthy green complexion and is making out with the underneath of a house. Ouch!

In real witchcraft **evil does not exist**. To some of you reading that might be a bit of a shock. So many people are used to blaming evil for all the wrongs in the world but all of the crimes that are carried out are done by man, not the consequence of some nasty force.

As a witch you accept responsibility for your entire life; both the aspects you have conscious control over and those aspects you don't. Believe it or not, you've created your life with such depth and intricacy that, for the most part, you only get barely to scratch the surface. However, responsibility is not to be confused with guilt or blame. You are not a victim of your fate, even though you might not yet know a lot about it. Accepting total responsibility starts to put you

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in the control seat. You have chosen to be a part of the experiences in your life so, for the most part, you “own” them; they are yours to choose what to do with.

There is no cosmic balance and there are few “no go” areas. Consequence is real and there are ethics that I would like you to take into account. These are of your own choosing and will determine how far you develop. Sometimes you have to admit you were a little misguided in your outlook, and sometimes you will hit the mark first time. Every cause has an effect, both physically and magically, so don't play stupid if you act in a manipulative manner or use manipulative magic which backfires.

Which Witch is Which?

The witchcraft I practice works along one simple guideline: **Know thyself!**¹ I make a point of being aware of my “Self”, who I am and what I stand for. I try to be aware of what I am, both as a human animal and a spiritual being (if there's any difference at all). I also try my best to be aware of my potential, knowing instinctively that there is nothing that cannot be achieved as it's all a process of awareness.

We Were Made in This Image

At our very core, we are the universe around us. You are both the drop of water and the bowl; you're also the person carrying the bowl and the one who

¹ First spoken by Aristotle in Greece translated from “gnothii sauton” from the Delphi oracle... apparently!

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made it in the first place! So with all this knowledge and awareness, why choose to be an evolved ape hurtling through space on the chunk of rock we call Earth? It is a matter of choice. Your spirit chose to be here at this point in time to exist as this person and to interact with the people in this mindset. Your part in being a witch is to do your best to understand why, and, in time, to enhance those qualities to enrich your choice.

Now, just because you've realised you're a chunk of universal energy doesn't mean you no longer have to go to work or pay your bills! Even though you sometimes don't consciously choose parts of your life, you always consciously choose whether you learn from it.

Start thinking in terms of why you chose to be you. What are the best bits of you? What could be improved? If you chose everything then ask yourself why chose your body, your parents, the family you were born in to? There's a lot of groundwork to be done there! Get the old pen and paper out and start scribbling away.

The Laws of Witchcraft

Ok, I'll be honest, there aren't any. You do what you want to do and, like any adult, you will be responsible for the consequences. If you're going to spend your time saying nasty things about people and making the choice to use your craft in a demeaning way then try not to expect a peaceful and sleep-easy lifestyle. If you make the choice to use your mind and craft for the betterment of yourself and those around you then it's common sense that you are more likely to attract a positive consequence.

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What Goes Around Comes Around?

I don't believe in Karma, divine retribution or the Threefold Law. The witchcraft I practice runs on the principle that the universe, the divine, and the true self are all perfect. It is only our understanding that is flawed. Our society has built up its own brand of justice and what we consider to be fair punishment! If we have been hurt, it is a perfectly natural reaction to want to hurt back, or even to want the universe along with your perception of God to do it for you. Unfortunately, "an eye for an eye" rarely allows for any healing to take place and never functions for the betterment of yourself and those around you. The gift of your craft would be to understand why you were hurt in the first place. Understanding the reasoning behind the events that take place allows you a greater advantage to change them.

From Time to Time

Time in itself is perception. Even daily it can seem to fly and stand still. There is only one moment in time that your conscious self will ever fully experience and that time is now, though you can revisit the time that you have lived through memory or take a sneak peak of future possibilities through imagination. To actually become aware of all the different possibilities within time, you first have to really acknowledge the only single point in time that ever exists.

I have experienced time in many shapes and forms and looking at it as a whole helped me to draw my conclusion. So far it would be likely to say that you have been mainly experiencing linear time. One moment following the next, this follows the next, and so

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on. The best way to describe how I experience time is to visually think of yourself walking along a timeline, then stand completely still. Instead of you walking toward each experience, the experiences are travelling toward you. All you are experiencing is your human brain cataloguing your life's events, putting them all into their different moments and then labelling them with a date! So, instead of you walking down the street to meet someone, they are already there and always have been standing next to you, you just didn't want to notice them before. You already have all your experiences lined up right next to you, it is just that you only notice the ones you need.

That time you got really angry, the time you were upset, the time you laughed so hard you spilt red wine directly onto your crotch; those moments are still here. Most of these life experiences can be relived through your subconscious; where your memories are really stored, all of the lessons you have learned and also all of the lessons you are about to. It's because time only exists as a single point you are able to unlock some of the events that you haven't yet chosen to notice (what we call the future!). Phew...right, where's my cuppa... .

Fancy Seeing You Here!

Reincarnation is the belief that your soul chooses to live on Earth over and over again as different people and, sometimes, animals until you have experienced all you need to. However, if time is a singularity then all of your lives, both as the person you are and the different people you have been, are still existing. The lives you spent in Egypt, Africa, and, as luck may have it, as a goldfish are all still ticking over.

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Sometimes through what is commonly known as "regression" you can unlock different aspects of these lives.

I know it sounds confusing. I first wondered that if all of my lives are existing right now, then how come I didn't overlap! Well, to be honest, sometimes you do. I haven't experienced this myself but I have often heard of people emerging with certain phobias because of an unresolved issue with a different incarnation. The only reason these incarnations don't fully merge is because the "you" that you are right now is keeping your focus on the lifetime you are living at this point.

All of who you are exists right now. The question why we exist as other people could be to gain a much more complete perspective over our personalities and existence. If you bring all these aspects of yourself together, your Egyptian self, Caveman self, etc., and stood them all in a room, you get a complete overview of each and every part of yourself, each working individually toward the same goal: trying to accumulate as much knowledge, understanding, and life experience as possible.

Broom Broom....

So, I'm guessing by now some of you are a little disappointed: what about the broomsticks and cauldrons? Sorry, although I personally think cauldrons are cute and am (more often than I should be) seen in fancy-dress parties with a broomstick lodged under one arm. They do both belong to a specific period in our history when witches were being introduced back into social awareness (or, to put it more correctly, blamed for crop failure and eating babies) but the image stuck, the long dark clothes and pointy hats.

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During that time, mass hysteria had gripped the globe, the church leaders wanted the money and respect that people gave to the witches. We all know how that one went so I'm not going to give you a history lesson².

Getting Stuff

One of the lessons a witch has to put into practice is the ability to use what you have at hand to teach, express, and develop yourself. I know with the current large interest in Wicca there has been an emphasis on gaining specific candles, herbs, tools, robes, and creating a witch or craft name, but these have little to do with what witchcraft really entails. If you really want them then have them but don't ever be convinced that you need them!

(A Little Word about Witch Names)

You don't need them. Witchcraft is not about role-play. I strongly disagree with choosing a witch name for many reasons but the main one is that it creates a sense of detachment from your normal self. It's as if you are creating a separate personality for your craft, a separate identity, and, as I've said, a major part of the witchcraft I practice is learning about who you are, not creating a themed role-play for who you might like to be. I know some people also like to dress up in ceremonial robes that, again, I dislike for the same reason that they help distance you from your normal persona. If you want to open yourself to what

² I couldn't tell you a lot without regurgitating someone else's work so I suggest you browse the Witchcraft bookshelf once more for a good look at it.

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witchcraft has to offer, you have to open **ALL** of yourself, not just a selective part of you and your time. The way I see it is that if you want your witchcraft to change and enhance your normal life, then witchcraft should be a part of it.

I can already sense the rage from you traditionalists out there but give me a chance before you burn this book in your twelve-inch wrought iron cauldron. If someone chooses to follow a tradition then that's fine; it is your choice. This book is about witchcraft for this day and age. You might have guessed by now I have no romantic view of me sitting there on a rocking chair by a bubbling cauldron. There is nothing in being a witch that means you have to adhere to an image. Use whatever you have at hand. If you wish to send something out into the universe (casting a spell) or speak to your inner universe (path working), there isn't going to be a big problem if you only have one sprig of rosemary and the spell you've searched the Internet for demands two! I'm also sure that your castings efficiency won't be greatly increased if you spend a fortune on all the expensive bits and pieces when you can easily use what's in your home already. Keep your craft an extension of yourself; you are what you are creating. Let it be a form of expression to help you discover and acknowledge who you actually are. If you want to use herbs, rocks, candles, then use them; if you don't, then don't!

While we are still on the subject of names, the name "witch" applies to *both MALE and female practicing witches*. The word "warlock" is a word whose original intent was to be offensive; with its original meaning being "betrayal", "non-believer" or "breaker of oaths". However, I do believe some practitioners of High Magic (a system combining both

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the Old Testament and Kabala) have redefined the word and use it to describe themselves.

Wicca and Witchcraft

I don't like to compare witchcraft to any other religion but, in the cases where such comparisons are needed, I will. Wicca has been described as the religion of the witch; in fact, the first few books that introduced me to the concept of witchcraft were Wiccan. The further I walked down my path, the more I realised that Wicca and witchcraft are two separate entities. The two are confused which is why I thought putting this little section in might help. Being a Wiccan does not necessarily make you a witch; neither does being a witch necessarily make you a Wiccan. Witchcraft is more an internal exploration that is based on the self and is specific to the individual.

Wicca has set guidelines, laws and rules of its own. It acknowledges the cycles of nature and worships in many forms a Goddess and a God. It focuses on the balancing of the five elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Spirit, and its teachings include the *Wiccan Rede* which states "**and if it harm none, do what you will**" and the Threefold Law, sometimes called the Law of Three (that is a karmic law that states what you do will come back to you three times over). Some witches don't feel particularly drawn to a specific deity and don't want to worship a Goddess or a God; they just simply want to allow the natural abilities within themselves to develop.

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Different Kinds of Witches

You can never really adopt an organised religion around witchcraft. It's specific to the person, but this is not to say you can't practice a religion and be a witch at the same time. You can be a Wiccan witch, Buddhist witch, Christian witch or just a plain old witch. There are also people who are Natural Witches, Hedge Witches, and a whole heap of other types of Neo Pagans — far too many for me to describe.

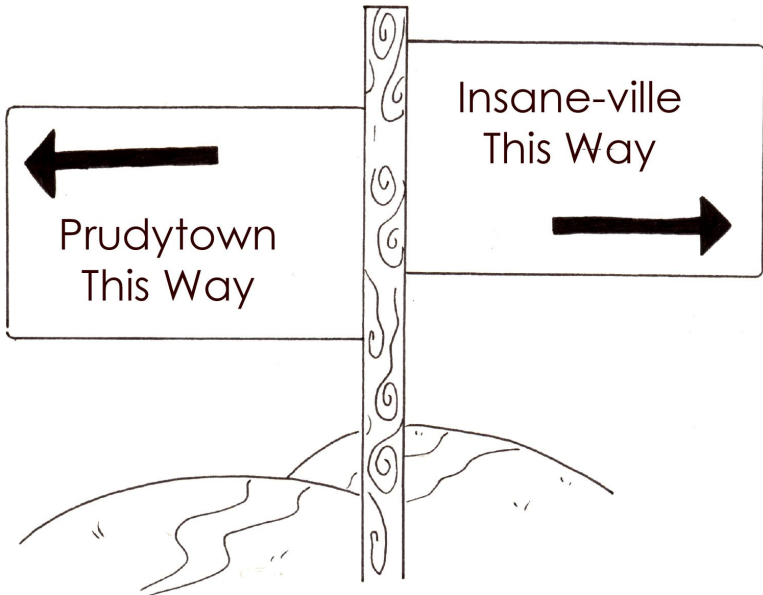
It can be helpful to have a religion while starting out in witchcraft. Whilst you take your time developing your internal structure, it can often be a good starting point to have a structure such as a religion to give you a basis on which you can build your self and relationships with different aspects of your spirituality.

This is down to personal preference. If you've started your path with Wicca, then you can use the symbolism and deities associated with Wicca; the same for Christianity or Buddhism, etc. The most important thing would be to go with your instinct. If you really feel that you believe in a particular faith as well as wanting to be a witch, then you can. *You'll be drawn to whatever you need to learn from.*

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PART THREE

Path Working



When I first started reading about witchcraft I completely skipped chapters like this. What the hell do I want to know about me for? I was quite lucky that I had a very persistent guide on my witch path who rarely let up. She forced chapters like this under my nose and, when I was nearly sending myself blind trying to focus on a candle flame meditation, she allowed me to find and explore all the different paths within myself. My friend's name is Debbie and her way of

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allowing you to learn sometimes involves a sharp pointy stick!

Path working is a term used for the process of exploring the different avenues of your personality and belief systems. It can also be used to make connections with different types of energies. It is through using tools like meditation and visualisation that we come into contact with all the different aspects of ourselves. This is where you meet all of the little pieces, beliefs, and thoughts that, in total, make up who you are! The difference with path working is that you meet all of these “aspects” of yourself face to face! An aspect is a tangible, physical part of your spirit that is usually formed through a previous experience or emotional state. They can also be passed down from family members as learned personality traits and they make up your day-to-day personality in every decision you make. Some are extremely positive whilst others are very inhibiting.

To be able to get in contact with these aspects, you are going to have to start learning how to “get quiet” and listen to yourself. This can be done easily through meditation. Now I know that some people do have a problem with meditating but I will provide alternatives. For now, work with and have a go at these techniques on “getting quiet”.

The Process of Getting Quiet

When you start to explore your mind, I can't stress enough how important it is that you take your time. You're about to be making conscious connections to parts of your mind that you've never been aware you had, let alone using, so don't expect overwhelming results the first time. Patience is a key

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element when learning to use your talents; you don't want to burn them out. The mind is like a muscle in the sense that the more you work with it, the more you can work with it! I know that with our current society's train of thought we are used to immediate and accurate results. It doesn't matter what society's train of thought is; your mind, like nature, will take its time.

When starting on any meditation it is best to get as relaxed as possible. Put your body in a comfortable position (I recommend sitting as opposed to lying down because when you are lying down your body is programmed to go into "sleep mode" so you're a lot more likely to nod off). There are no hard and fast rules so if you happen to be more relaxed lying down, then go with what you feel is best.

There are a few different relaxation techniques below so have a go at each to find which works best for you. Remember, work with your body; if you have an itch, scratch it!

Time to Get Chilled out!

Getting heavy

- Start taking deep breaths with your eyes closed until you start to feel still
- Now tell yourself that every time you breathe out you'll start to feel heavier
- Every time you exhale feel yourself sinking deeper and deeper
- Feel your body get heavier and heavier until you physically can't move
- Your mind should feel awake but your body almost asleep

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A bubble

- Take a few deep breaths and concentrate on your toes
- Take all your attention to the tips of your toes
- Just past your toes, imagine a ball of blue light big enough to fit around your body
- Pull the blue orb up all over your body, from the toes right to the top of your head
- Feel where the blue orb is at each segment of the body
- Feel the orb at your knees, waist, chest, and head
- You may need to pull the orb up a few times until you feel every inch of your body relax and slow down.

Counting down

- Take a few deep breaths until you feel yourself sink into your surroundings
- Concentrate on the number ten
- Tell yourself that by the time you count down to one your body will be relaxed
- Start the countdown, being sure to take a deep, long breath in between numbers
- When you get to the number one your body should be relaxed and calm

Quick tip ~~> Perhaps drinking a cup of chamomile tea or burning lavender incense before doing some of these techniques might help. Both have sedative qualities that can help you relax.

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Think of Nothing

The aim of this exercise is to get you to a point where your mind is completely blank – to get you to a stage where you're literally thinking of nothing. This is a very important step and will help to improve your concentration and enhance the visual aspects of everything else you do.

Once you have found the relaxation technique that works best for you, close your eyes and start to focus on your breathing. You should be nice and relaxed, so just take your complete attention and focus on your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Keep doing this until you find your body starting to slow and your muscles start to relax even further. Allow your muscles to relax and work their way into the curves and the texture of the surface you're on. Some people like to focus on a specific point until everything else blanks out, like focussing on a candle flame or a circle or a specific colour. Then focus on that point until everything else in your mind blanks out. You can also try to focus on a blank space until it fills your screen of vision.

What you will probably find the second you start to get quiet is that your mind actually starts to get louder. Don't worry; you haven't gone insane. This is probably the first time you have cleared your thoughts to this extent, so your brain won't be used to it. It is used to being busy, so expect thoughts to fly and random images to plonk themselves on your lap; with effort you will succeed. Just keep concentrating on your focus point until your conscious mind starts to go blank. The first thing you'll think when you have achieved that is "Ooh, I've done it!" and you'll have