

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

Jason Campbell



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Rebekah Kelley: Welcome to the Humanized Podcast, all about personalizing your health. I'm your host, Rebekah Kelley. And today our topic will be "How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music" with Jason Campbell. Before I introduce Jason, I want to remind everyone to subscribe and get all the other variety of casts and audio, video and transcription at HumanizedHealth.com. I'd also like to thank our lead sponsor Village Green Apothecary at MyVillageGreen.com.

A little bit about Jason. Jason's journey into meditation, music, and wellness began 46 years ago at age eight, when his teacher told him to "never listen to notes, but instead to listen to the space in between the notes." An accomplished composer and pianist, he's released over a hundred albums and has been number one on multiple Billboard and Amazon charts. Jason's unique perspective on music, health, wellness, and spiritual growth comes from his lifelong study of both music and the ancient arts of eastern health, medicine, meditation, and enlightenment.

He is a 7th-degree black belt and co-founder of Zen Wellness, teaching meditation, eastern medicine, Tai Chi, Qigong, and Sword and Enlightenment, at their 400-acre ranch in the mountains of Arizona. He worked as the director of music for GeniusX Virtual Reality, creating the first breathing course in virtual reality. His music is also found on performance-based apps such as ChiliSleep, Focus at Will, Fig Tree, The Breath Source, GravyStack, composing the sleep and meditation music for professional sports teams, the Vatican NFT Launch, and others. His signature program is breath mastery for entrepreneurs. As co-owner and Sheriff of the town of Cleator, Arizona, he is combining western culture with eastern wisdom to create a community committed to the uplifting of the human spirit.

Jason, I always love reading your description because you are certainly renaissance, man.

Jason Campbell: Hey, well, thank you. And thank you for having me back.

Rebekah Kelley: Love having you here and I'm so excited to talk about meditation and music. So I know many people use music as an accessory to meditation, and we talked a little bit about that in our previous podcast, but wanted to dig in a little bit deeper here. So, can you just talk to us about how that, how music can be used to deepen the benefits of meditation?

Jason Campbell: Yeah, you know, why don't we start with what is meditation?

Rebekah Kelley: Perfect. Cause we talked about what, you know, is prayer— the same as before, right? Prayer and meditation.

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

Jason Campbell: Yeah, because— okay. So I'm going to oversimplify. And we have such a small amount of time here, so this is one big oversimplification. So, we say, what is meditation? Well, you know, I'll tell a few stories here to point to it. And one is what you mentioned in the intro, when I was eight years old, my very first music lesson, my teacher said to me, "never ever listen to notes, idiots listen to notes, master's listen to the space in between the notes," because when you listen to a note, your mind is cluttered, you hear nothing. When you listen to the space or the silence, your mind is clear, and you hear everything. So, my entry point into music— and later on, I realized it was meditation. We didn't call it meditation, we called it deep listening, was hitting a note, *gling*, and then listening to that silence, *gling*, ah, and then listening. And it wasn't until years later, I figured that out.

Okay. So let me go ahead a few years. I'm a teenager. I say to my martial art instructor, I say, "Hey, what is Zen?" He looks at me and he sidekicks me. He hit me hard. I went flying across the dojo, hit the wall, and hit the back. And he just smiled and then walked away and allowed me the space to contemplate the answer. But if you think about it, in that moment, I wasn't thinking. There was no past. There was no future. There was only now. When you listen to the silence, you turn off the inner dialogue, the cerebral blah, blah, blah, blah. And you come into space, you come into stillness, and you stop thinking. Because see, there's a wonderful teaching in the word human being. We have the *human* part. We have the *being* part. The *human* part is different, Rebekah, than when you and I were eight years old, it's very different. However, the *being* part, the observer, the eternal, I am. It's exactly the same. So we have the thoughts, but what's watching the thoughts? There's something in the back here that's watching it here. And so— and there's many ways of saying this.

When you activate the observer, or you stop the incessant stream of thinking, or you observe your thoughts and create space in between your thoughts because you are not your thoughts. Ah, then you're active in meditation. But see, when we think of meditation, we think of like the monk sitting on top of the mountain. I was like, "Oh, I don't have time for that stuff." And when I work with entrepreneurs, I trick them into meditation. I trick everybody into meditation. Because a lot of times if you have a— you know, let's say a scheduled life or a busy life, I don't like the word busy. Bees and beavers are busy. Never be busy. Always be present, even if you're scheduled. And the mind just races. You can sit here, "Oh, I'm going to meditate because all these, you know, leaders tell me to meditate and everyone tells me it's a good thing. And I need to have less stress." And you sit there meditating in the monkey mind. So it's going, "Hey, you got emails to return. What are you doing here?" Oh my God, you got all this stuff to do. You got to pick up your kids. You got this, you got these emails. And then at the end, you're just more stressed out than when you began. And all you did, is you just sat there thinking.

I learned a new vocabulary word about a month ago, and the vocabulary word is *disasterbate*. And so when you just sit at home, disaster-baiting, thinking about all the things that could go wrong...

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

Rebekah Kelley: I've spent many a night disasterbating, actually. Especially if I have a big project the next day.

Jason Campbell: What a great word. And so instead of— you're not meditating, you're *disasterbating*. So the key is to turn off the mind and become still. And there's many paths. There's an infinite amount of paths to get to that. Now, I gave you the example of deep listening. I gave you the example of being side kicked across the room.

You know, I had one— I had a conversation, you know, there's this one gentleman, one of my students. He said, "Oh, I can't meditate. I can never meditate." He actually was a professional martial artist. He was actually a champion, you know, in the 70s with like stick fighting. And he said, I'm the worst meditating. I'm scatterbrained. I'm all over the place. I said, wait a minute. And as I got his background, I said, no, you're actually a master at meditating. He goes, "what do you mean?" I said, I just need to be attacking you with two sticks. If I attack you with two sticks, you're brilliant. I had another one who needed to, you know, hit 150 miles per hour on a Ducati. And that was the way that he would meditate. Okay. Whatever gets you there. Whatever slows down, or create space, or creates a gap in the incessant stream of thinking.

So if we, again, oversimplify, there's actually three types of meditation, sitting, standing and moving. So the sitting is what we all think of as meditating, but oh no, you can move. You can go for a walk. You could do something physical. And a lot of times, doing something physical is easier, or some of the standing practices, there's different Qigong practices, and Tai Chi, and different movement practices, or for some people it's going to the gym, that you get a deep meditation, where nothing, there's no past, there's no future, there's just one repetition, or one exercise, or something right now, sometimes getting in a cold bath can be a form of meditation, where you just stop the incessant stream of thinking. So let's expand the definition of meditating and chances are, and I'm going to talk to the listener here. Chances are you're actually already doing some form of meditation and I'll bet you you're actually pretty good at it. You just have to set the conditions right for the meditation.

And so what I like to do, especially with entrepreneurs, but with everybody is I like to start with the breath when we start a meditation practice. The breath is the lowest hanging fruit. Let's think about breath here for a moment. Okay, it's estimated we have between 50,000 and 80,000 thoughts a day. 99% of the same thoughts we had yesterday. So we have the thinking. And then if we have— like what puts energy into the body? Well, we know sleep does. You need that. Well, we know you need good nutrients and, you know, food and supplements. And we know that. And obviously we need— like if I say food and water, of course we have to hydrate. We know that. But more than anything else, what puts energy into the body? And that's, of course, the breath.

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

How long can you go without sleeping? How long can you go without eating? How long can you go without drinking? How long can you go without breathing? And then we also expel most of the toxins through the breath. Cellular waste comes out through the breath. And so we're constantly, it's like this distillery, you know, we're breathing in energy and we're breathing out, you know what we don't need. And so the breath is the lowest hanging fruit for wellness. And that's where we start with the breath. And if we sit and we just do a couple of minutes of breathing exercises and breath mastery, well, that can slow down the incessant stream of thinking, especially on an advanced level.

We do some breathing work where it's challenging and you start, maybe you're like holding the outbreath and you start to think— the lizard brain comes out and starts to think, "Oh my God, I think I'm going to die." Well, that's a form of meditation. Because there's no past and there's no future and the good news, you're not going to die. You're going to make it, but you can kind of trick your body into thinking that.

So, many, many ways of meditation. And one of the things that we're doing, again, I'm going to oversimplify. We have this what's called the pineal gland. And, oh boy, we could talk for hours and hours about the pineal gland, but let's just again, oversimplify and call it an antenna. And it's antenna to what? Well, we could say a lot of things. We could say an antenna to God. We can say an antenna to the universe. We can say an antenna to infinite intelligence, whatever reference you want to use. It's an antenna to the great cloud, something a lot bigger than you and I, but there's a problem that we have. And we have these two lobes of interference called left-right hemisphere of the brain. And those are like, think of it like This little tiny transistor radio, it's like hard to get a signal and we have all this static and the static is the thoughts. When you drop the thinking, drop the thinking, drop the thinking, aha! The antenna can listen, can listen.

And that's how I get all my music, by the way. That's one of the techniques I use to produce, you know, a new album every month and new stuff and new meditations on YouTube every week and all of that— I actually don't really do much. I'm not nearly as busy as it may seem. I'm never busy, but I'm not— a lot of times I'll do nothing and I'll just wait, I'll wait for the right info to show up.

Rebekah Kelley: Activate the antenna? Is that what you're saying?

Jason Campbell: Yeah! It's so much easier that way. As opposed to scurrying. I mean, seriously, bees and beavers are busy. Never be busy. Always be present, never wait. "Oh, I was waiting." Oh, no, no, no. Don't wait. Just be present. I mean, if somebody's late, then somebody's later. If something's late, it's late. Whatever it is, but it's a mindset. Don't wait. No, just, it's always you. You're always here. And it's always now.

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

So how about this? How about I do a little breathing example?

Rebekah Kelley: I would love that. Let's give them some experiential learning

Jason Campbell: . You got it. Let's actually do it. So here's what we're going to do. Can you hear my voice in the music okay? The volume's good?

Rebekah Kelley: Great.

Jason Campbell: So, there's a bell every four seconds. And we are going to breathe to the bell and then we'll do a few variations on the breath. So very simple. When you breathe in, you're going to breathe into your nose and let's do a little nuance. Take your tongue, touch the tip of your— where your teeth and your gums meet, your upper teeth.

Here we go. One bell. Breathe in through your nose... Drop your tongue out through your mouth. Two bells out.

Tongue up, breathe in.

Drop your tongue, two bells out.

Okay, one bell in.

Three bells out.

Let's make it a little more challenging. One bell in.

Three bells out.

Okay, now. Don't breathe out. Hold the out breath for two bells. Breathe in. Inhale.

Exhale, three.

Hold for three bells. We'll do one more after this. Last one.

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

Inhale, one bell.

Exhale, three bells.

Okay, now hold the out breath. We're actually going to hold, if you can, seven bells. But, Here's the first key. Put your mind right in your lower abdomen. Wiggle your toes. We're at four. We have three more.

Two more bells. Abdomen's a little tight. And inhale. Should feel so good. Best breath of the day so far.

Rebekah Kelley: Definitely after not breathing for a while, that felt really great! Very oxygenated.

Jason Campbell: You appreciate oxygen when you don't have it for a minute or so. But one of the things we're doing when we hold the outbreath. We're doing a bunch of different things. If we want to get technical, we can call it intermittent hypoxia, but really what it does is it strengthens the immune system. It strengthens the nervous system. It strengthens what we call the Wei Qi field, which is like the energetic force field that pushes away unwanted guests, sickness and disease, that type of thing. And it also activates, what I like to call the lizard brain, of sometimes says, "Oh my God, you're going to die," but it's in a safe environment, because you're not going to die.

So it helps you to strengthen your immune system and your nervous system by creating the space underneath the lizard brain. Because we're bringing it out in a controlled environment. Because usually when lizard brain comes out, it's not a controlled environment. Usually it's some type of panic, some type of stress. Sometimes it's something. So we build the muscle. And so after a while, when the lizard brain comes out, it's not a big deal. Say, "Oh, okay, lizard brain." You pat it in the head. You say "you're so pretty. Everything's okay. Don't worry about it. Okay. No, I can, you can yell and scream. That's okay. But I'm okay."

It's a funny concept, but it really works.

Rebekah Kelley: So it's strengthening your lizard brain so you're not necessarily freaking out cause it shows up in other situations. So it's anesthetizing you to the experience, I guess.

Jason Campbell: Find the space underneath the lizard brain. Because lizard brain comes out when it comes out. And so we're kind of bringing it out on purpose. We're summoning it in a

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

safe environment where you're actually okay. Because if you really need to breathe in, just breathe in. And then you'll be okay. You're not going to die. And so it's a really, really powerful system. But then the other thing that happens is perhaps you went to split second without thinking.

Maybe, maybe not. It depends. Like if you're used to this or if you're not used to this, everyone's in a different place. But we do this enough, you'll have a moment where the incessant stream of thinking goes blah, "blah, blah, blah ... blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." It's like you create a little gap. The Japanese have a word for that gap and the word is called Satori, S-A-T-O-R-I, which loosely translates to mean a glimpse of enlightenment.

And then there's the old saying, "a glimpse of enlightenment is forever enlightened."

Rebekah Kelley: I really felt my body actually when we were breathing. Very aware of my body, especially with the not breathing.

Jason Campbell: Yes. You might sometimes feel the fingertips and the toes. Sometimes you feel in the extremities. That's why I say wiggle the fingertips and wiggle the toes when you're doing it.

Yeah. It's really, really powerful. So the breathing is the lowest hanging fruit, especially— even if you go to the gym, just breathe with each movement. Don't hold your breath. Like as you're, as you're exerting. And then if you add a third thing, if you close your eyes and put mind into whatever muscle group you're moving. You get even a better experience. It really becomes a form of meditation.

Rebekah Kelley: Actually, I do a lot of strength training because I do bodybuilding competitions. And I will say the breath is really what gets me through some of those tough lifts or pull ups even like it's all about the breath. So it is very powerful.

Jason Campbell: It's so true. The lowest hanging fruit and just even a little bit of breathing throughout the day. When I teach the breath work, I teach the breath mastery, but I tell everyone, "Hey, your time with me it's like being in the dojo or the temple or the ashram, the gym." And that's when you do it. But then, you know, whatever we spend 30, 45 minutes together, then you have, 23 hours and 15 minutes, you're still breathing. You're still doing it, but you do it with purpose. You do it with intent. You do it with mind-intent, while you're doing other stuff. And at the end of the day, you just have more energy. You have less stress and then you have more energy. Why? What's the most powerful way of bringing energy into the body is the breath.

How to Deepen Your Meditation with Music

So I think of it as the bank account. So if we think of energy as your bank account, if you spend more than you deposit, you're going to go into deficit. After a period of time, you're going to have a problem. And if you spend, give more out, more energy goes out, then you put back in, eventually you're going to get sick. Your body's not going to be able to do it. You're going to have some type of deficit, some type of bankruptcy. However, for most people, if I say, look, spend less. Like meaning energy. Spend less energy, do less things. You're not going to do it. So as opposed to saying, "Hey, you're overspending." Why don't we flip it and say, you're under depositing. And so we just deposit more and then you go do all your stuff. You go do your schedule and do all— do everything that you're doing.

Rebekah Kelley: Awesome. Well, I do have one wrap up question about your music. Like that was beautiful. Like, where can we find you? Where can people find your music?

Jason Campbell: Well, if you look at Jason Campbell, I'm on all the Spotify and iTunes and all that stuff. But an easy way— two easy ways to find me: go to ZenPiano.com. And then we have a mailing list and you can get updates and I have breathing courses and I have all that. And then you can also find my YouTube channel where I do new music each week and that's just Jason Campbell's Zen Music, but that's all on the Zen Piano website. You can find everything there, ZenPiano.com.

Rebekah Kelley: Wonderful, Jason. Thank you so much for those valuable insights. Please come back and share more with us.

Jason Campbell: Thanks for having me.

Rebekah Kelley: Let me remind everyone to subscribe and get access to all our Humanized videos, podcasts, and transcriptions from all our thought leaders on personalized health at HumanizedHealth.com. Thanks so much.