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# THE YOGINI

# YOUR MAT SPACE

How far do you need to travel to find serenity?

How much space do you need to find peace and quiet?

Have you been asking these questions lately?

**T**HE answer is simple. You do not need to travel far and the space you need can be as small as your yoga mat space or the spot you are sitting on right this very moment. If you're lying down, then it can be a bit longer. When sitting down, the space becomes smaller. It is the physical space you occupy when you meditate. You only need a small rock to sit on to appreciate the vastness of peace and quiet that you may find within. The physical space maybe small or crowded but the vastness you find when you go deep within yourself maybe as big as the universe.

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda, Swami Vishnudevananda introduced the five points of yoga—proper exercise (asanas), proper breathing (pranayama), proper relaxation (savasana), proper diet (ideally vegetarian), and positive thinking (Vedanta) and meditation (dhyana).

Nowadays, with lots of technological gadgets available, it is very easy to get distracted and to stress instead of relax. Often, we leave work at 7 on the dot but the moment we get home, we find ourselves still checking our emails, thanks to email push, or checking out Facebook and Twitter updates. Even when dining out with friends, we find time to check-in at Foursquare. The distraction is endless.

Different forms of entertainment that are not at all relaxing are marketed as R&R. Concerts, movies, and out of town trips may deviate your attention from work or stress but it do not allow the body and the mind to relax and rejuvenate.

News on increasing dengue incidence, shooting at The Dark Knight Rises screening, ever-increasing prices of commodities are just some of the news which sadly we read either early in the morning during breakfast or watch on late night news. On top of this, we have personal issues to deal with.

Until one day, your body and your mind breakdown. How? It is when you feel fatigued even after eight hours of sleep and your work performance suffers. Even relationships may suffer. So how exactly do we relax in this



modern age? Finding peace in this chaotic world is a big challenge.

Relaxing in the time of dengue There are three types of relaxation—physical, mental and spiritual relaxation. At the start and end of each yoga practice, relaxation in savasana or corpse pose is crucial.

In physical relaxation, when the body is resting, we do autosuggestion meaning giving instructions to the body to relax. You start from toes going all the way up to crown of the head and sometimes, it may include the organs of the body. You do it in this series so as not to disrupt the flow of energy. In Sivananda yoga, the relaxation is from toes to head while other relaxation classes may start from head moving down to the toes. You do it slowly, first feeling the part of the body and then ordering it to relax. A common autosuggestion is, "I am relaxing my feet... My feet are relaxed... and so on."

You may also be asked to feel the different sensations of the body and patiently wait for the sensation to disappear without attaching any emotions to it. Example while lying down, you feel a prickly sensation on your feet. Instead of wishing for this sensation to disappear, you simple observe it. Slowly the sensation will disappear. Other than relaxing the body, this also teaches the impermanence of things—that nothing is permanent—and being attached to these impermanent things will only bring sorrow, anxieties and fear.

For mental relaxation, breathing is key. As soon as the body is completely relaxed, you follow the gentle flow of the breath moving your attention away from any distractions. During relaxation, you may hear some noises outside the meditation space. By following your breath, your attention is transferred from the noise to your breathing. Mental relaxation may sometimes give you a feeling of being half-asleep.

Spiritual relaxation comes in when you are no longer identifying with the

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body and the mind. After physical and mental relaxation, you may choose to go deeper. You identify with your higher self or the pure consciousness or the soul. You know that the higher self, pure consciousness or the soul is the source of your strength and that the body is only a temporary vehicle.

One way to go deep is finding the stillness within you. As soon as the body is relaxed and the noises around have faded into the background, you shift your attention inside you and look for that point of stillness within yourself. It is that ever strong, ever powerful energy within you. You may find that point of stillness in the heart area or it may run along your spine. But you will feel it and know that this is the source of your strength. It is what balances you and makes you thrive despite problems. It is the ever peaceful you within. When you find it, you allow it to spread throughout you, to envelope your being.

You end the relaxation with a gentle reminder that "I am this stillness. I am this pure consciousness."

#### Beyond your mat space

How do you keep your balance outside your mat space?

Keep in mind that you can always tap the stillness you found while meditating. Remember that this stillness is you and that it is always available for your use. When in the middle of stress, pause, breath and bring back that feeling of stillness. And you will see that it is there and it always has been.

Even when riding public transport or walking to work, you may relax by simply slowing down the breath and again tapping to the stillness.

Everyday, spend a few minutes before you start your day and another few minutes before you end it meditating. Find time to be with nature. Or simply sit on the park and just be. No stress. No worries. No attachment.

Practiced daily, this can be the best gift you give to yourself.

You may ask, will relaxation solve the world's problem? It may. It may not. But it will change the way you view the problem and the way you respond to it. ☺

BELOW is the Stillness meditation I have created for my students. Hope this will start your journey to a happier and more relaxed you.

Now lie down. Do the autosuggestion from toes moving all the way up to your head. Slow down the breath and...

Listen to the sounds around you. All sorts of sounds from the nicest melody like the chirping of the birds, the gentle breeze or sounds of flowing water to the most distracting sounds like sounds of cars, chatting neighbors... Allow this sound to gently fade into the background. Do not push it. Just gently allow it to fade into the background by not attaching any emotions to the sound.

As soon as the sounds have faded into the background, focus on the sensations of the body. It can be a cold sensation, hot sensation, or prickly sensation. Focus on these sensations but do not attach an emotion to it. Just feel the sensation. Without attachment. Now allow the sensations to gently disappear.

Now that the sounds around you have faded into the background and the sensations of the body have disappeared, try to go deeper within you and find that point of stillness inside. It can be a point in the heart chakra or it may run along the spine. Keep finding this feeling of stillness inside.

It is balanced, strong, and always calm. Unattached but compassionate. As soon as you find this point, allow the feeling of stillness to spread throughout your body, throughout your being. Let the feeling of stillness spread throughout you.

If you cannot find it yet, be comforted with the thought that it is there, waiting to be discovered and that soon enough, you will find this stillness.

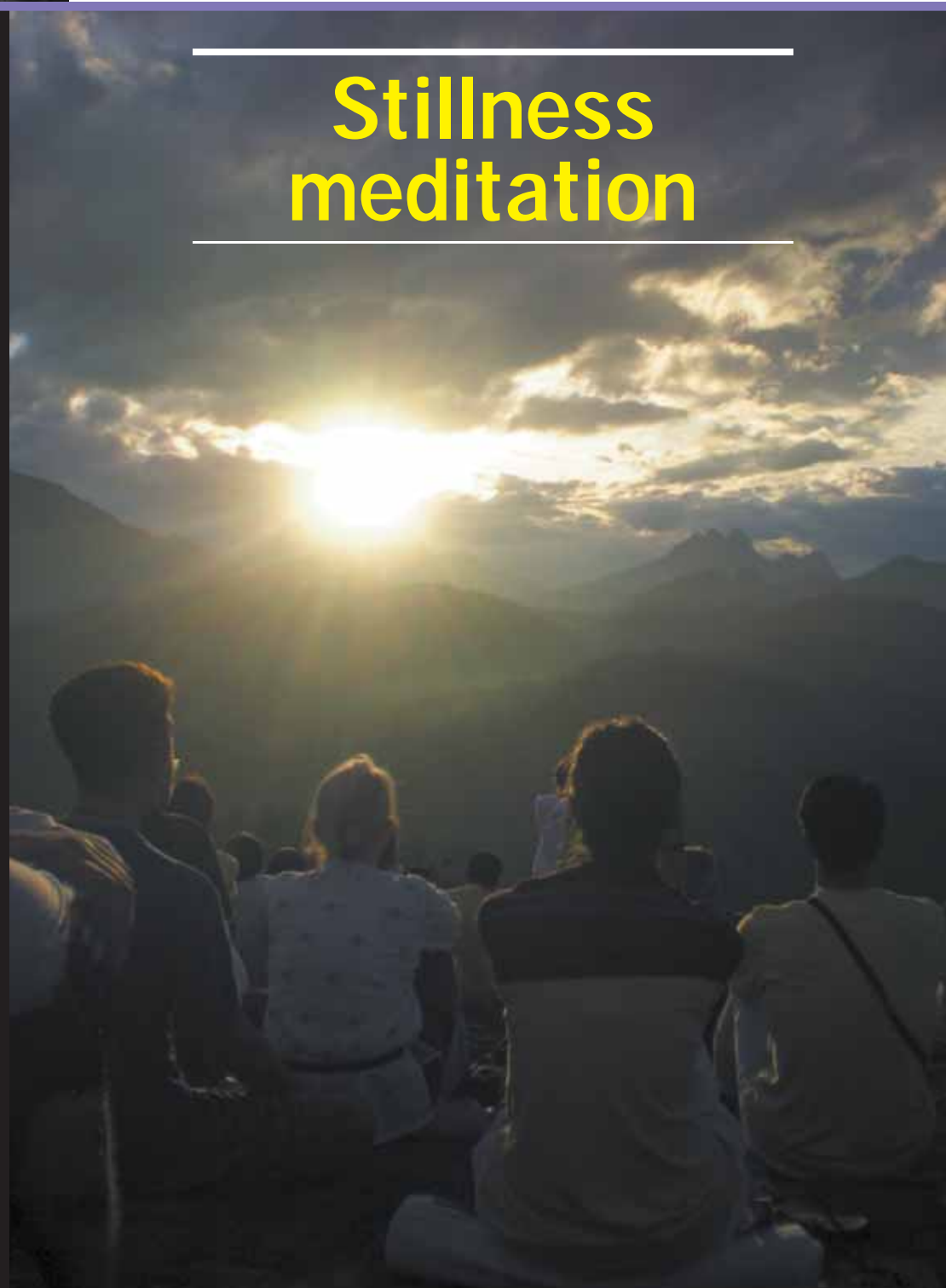
Whether you felt this stillness now or not, be comforted with the thought that stillness is always within you. That you may always go back to it and allow it to be your being, for it is who you are. Still, balanced, strong and calm.

As you start another day, always remember that stillness is within you and that you can always go back to it. When chaos happens, when there are problems in your life, stillness is there.

Sonia (spiritual name: Savithri) studied yoga at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram in Kerala, South India. She is registered with Yoga Alliance as a 200-hour level yoga teacher. She is a reiki practitioner since 2007 and is attuned to the 2nd degree of the traditional Usui lineage by Reiki Master Nina Manalang. She has organized and attended several health and healing workshops on Chinese Integrative Medicine, tuina massage and hands-on acupressure. She also practices Ashtanga Vinyasa yoga. Vegetarian since 2005, she is an avid believer of regular food detox program and is always willing to share her detox stories. Yoga, for her, is the experience of being firmly grounded to the earth yet connected to the divine world; a way of living that is peaceful, mindful, dispassionate and non-attached to mundane concerns. Aside from teaching yoga, Sonia works as the Communications and Press Campaigner for environmental health NGO, Health Care Without Harm-Asia Pacific.

Check out her blog at [veggiegypsy.blogspot.com](http://veggiegypsy.blogspot.com)  
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## Stillness meditation



## Barbie Forteza and Bea Binene step into the world of

# LUNA BLANCA

AFTER taking viewers into the magical and colorful world of the mystical twin sisters Luna and Blanca during their childhood years, the Kapuso series now enters its second book with the introduction of the teen characters in GMA Pinoy TV's first multigenerational drama, Luna Blanca.

As the characters of Jillian Ward and Mona Louise Rey in the first generation come to an end, Luna Blanca welcomes the teen personalities who will play the covered roles of Luna and Blanca in the second generation, two of the most popular Tween stars of the Kapuso Network, Barbie Forteza and Bea Binene.

Bea as the dark-skinned Luna and Barbie as the fair-skinned Blanca now continue the journey of the twin sisters as they enter their adolescent years. In this generation, Luna and Blanca will not only hurdle the distance between their separate lives but also become more deeply involved in dealing with love and their relationship with family and friends.

Adding more color to Bea and Barbie's lives in the story are the characters of Derrick Monasterio and Kristoffer Martin. Derrick plays the role of Kiko, the boy from the slum community in Payatas who will become close friends with Blanca. They will grow up together and Kiko will develop special feelings for Blanca. Though he is jealous of Blanca and Joaquin's closeness, he will do everything to win her heart.

Kristoffer is Joaquin/Aki, a popular singer who becomes Luna's defender and

confidant. He is Divine's brother but unlike her who despises Luna, Aki would always protect and look after her. Luna secretly loves him but his heart belongs to Blanca. Joaquin's relationship with Luna and Blanca threatens to cause a rift between the twin sisters.

Joining the second generation



are the new characters associated with Luna and Blanca including seasoned actress and TV director Gina Alajar as Nida, Donya Consuelo's helper who will adopt Luna and raise her as her own daughter; Allan Paule as Crispin, Nida's husband and Donya Consuelo's driver; Yassi Pressman as Kate, Joaquin's singing partner; Ryza Cenon as Ashley, Divine and Joaquin's sister.

Playing equally vital roles are Raymart Santiago as Luis, Camille Pratts as Rowena, Chynna Ortaleza as Divine, Marissa Delgado as Doña Consuelo, and Buboy Villar as Samboy, the son of Nida and Crispin.

How will the separate lives of Luna and Blanca affect their relationship? When the time comes and their paths cross again, will the sisters be able to reconnect with each other? What will be Rowena's reaction when she finds out that Luis already married Divine? Will Joaquin's admiration for Blanca destroy the relationship of the twin sisters?

Under the direction of Dominic Zapata, witness how Barbie Forteza and Bea Binene begin their journey towards discovering their identities, family ties as well as their first loves and first heartbreaks in Luna Blanca on GMA Pinoy TV. Call your preferred pay TV provider now to subscribe. ☺