

**16 Easy Shortcuts to a More Balanced,  
Happier, Saner Life**  
*Complimentary Guide*

By Marianne Perez de Fransius

Peace Is Sexy, Founder

[contact@peaceissexy.net](mailto:contact@peaceissexy.net)



## 16 Easy Shortcuts to a More Balanced, Happier, Saner life

In our crazy, hectic lives, it seems like all we want (or need!) is a moment of calm, a moment of peace. But just the thought of adding “Find peace” to a to-do list is overwhelming. In this book, you’ll learn 16 of my favorite ways to implement peace in your daily life that are easy and that I and others do every single day. These practices have helped me access a more balanced, happier, saner life.

The people I’ve interviewed below who implement these strategies are successful in some way. Many are founders of businesses or organizations or are experts in their field. But perhaps more important than these external markers of success is that they and I have a sense of meaning and purpose. I believe that it is that sense of meaning and purpose that pushes us to be leaders in our respective areas. We are dealing head on with some of the world’s biggest conflicts, and yet we don’t let the world’s despair bring them down.

The practices outlined below have helped me and others succeed in:

- Waking up happy, energized and engaged... every day!
- Learning to be fully present
- Learning to let go
- Finding ourselves, believing in ourselves and letting our careers be fueled by our true passions
- Connecting (with) people across seemingly insurmountable differences
- Successfully adapting to new situations
- Persevering in the face of adversity
- Sharing our vulnerability to empower others
- Creating organizations, businesses, campaigns, trainings and exhibits that have positively touched the lives of millions around the world
- Advocating for global policies and treaties which have improved the lives of millions
- Happy marriages over decades
- Being proud and engaged parents
- And much more!

Some of the biggest impediments to creating peace and finding balance, happiness and sanity in our lives are scarcity of time and lack of knowledge. We’ve already got so many things on our plate that just the idea of adopting a new practice is overwhelming. We’re already so behind on so many things. Where will we find time to take on something new? And what is this new thing that we should take on? How do you go about “finding balance and sanity in your life”? How do you find something that isn’t hippy-ish or total fluff? And how do you find a way to do it without getting labeled as new-age-y or off in Lalaland? How do you find a more meaningful, happier, saner life in a tangible, concrete, powerful way? This is what I’ll show you below, but first let me share with you a little bit about what others have to say about this guide.

“It’s really hectic right now. I’m doing lots of traveling for work. But I’m practicing peace by focusing on what foods I eat and exercising mindfulness. It’s keeping me balanced.” *–Elizabeth Pezon, Brand Manager, Spendrups Vin*

‘With 16 compelling answers to her questions ‘What is a simple thing you do to create peace? Something you do everyday?’ from people who have a track record of inspirational achievement, the answers have the voice of authenticity and effectiveness. In a world of so much violence, Marianne again reminds us that working for peace makes life meaningful and fulfilling. Here’s a guide to creating such a life.’ *--Robert J. Burrowes, Cofounder ‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’*

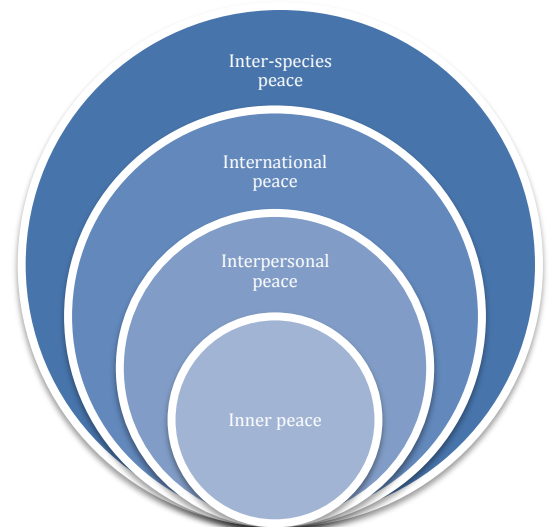
When I was 16 years old, I found myself on the bathroom floor, not knowing how I got there. I remember trying to work out a kink in my shoulder and then everything going black. It turns out that I had fainted and my chiropractor attributed it to the stress, overwhelm and burn-out from the rigorous academics of my high school, juggling various extra-curricular activities, SATs, the search for the right college and family obligations. But it took a second fainting episode to scare me, as I realized that if I kept going like this I could end up fainting in less safe places, like in the middle of the street. So I started taking stock of what was truly important to me and actually paid attention to the lifestyle speakers that spoke at my high school.

In a sense, I was lucky that this happened to me at 16 because it has kept me from ending up where some of my peers have: totally burned out, miserable in their jobs and constantly scrambling for more time. That’s not to say that I didn’t overstretch myself sometimes in college and that I don’t still burn the candle at both ends, but I don’t do it to the point of fainting or making myself ill. One of the practices that’s helped me stay sane and even made me more balanced and happier is doing something for peace everyday.

After I got my masters degree in Peace and Conflict Studies (yes, you can study peace!), I started the website [Peace Is Sexy](#). Through that, I’ve researched peace in many forms and interviewed dozens of people from Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to founders of organizations to regular people. I have come to develop the following definition of peace:

*Peace is the dynamic process of creating right relationships  
Within yourself  
With the people around you  
With other communities and cultures  
With all of humanity and even the Earth itself*

The reason I like this definition is because it shows that peace is not something stagnant, but rather something



that must constantly be worked on. In other words, peace is not the destination, but rather the path. I also like it because it connects the dots or creates a series of concentric circles from inner peace to interpersonal peace to international peace. And I believe that we can achieve more balance, happier saner lives not only if we work on our inner peace, but also if we foster peace at the interpersonal and international levels. Unsurprisingly, when I ask interviewees “What is a simple thing you do to create peace? Something you do everyday?”, I get responses that vary from the inner peace level to the interpersonal level, to the international peace level. It is by working on peace at all these levels that we each find our own sense of meaning and purpose and ultimately what will help each of us achieve a more balanced, happier, saner life.

What I love about the strategies below is that I implement just a few of them and as a result I have meaningful relationships with my family (even my least favorite relatives!) and friends, deeply sourced self-empowerment and a truly well-balanced work-life situation which includes 8 hours of sleep a night, the ability to be highly productive while working at home and plenty of time to hang out with my son.

What follows are 16 of my favorite answers to the question “What is a simple thing you do to create peace? Something you do everyday?” I’m giving you that many options because I recognize that what works for me might not necessarily work for you. But I’m only giving you strategies from real people who have some form of peace, balance and/or meaning in their lives. The strategies broadly encompass the following:

1. Having a daily practice of mindfulness and inner peace
2. Creating or strengthening relationships with others
3. Sharing experiences
4. Mindful consumption
5. Political and social engagement
6. Appreciation for the environment
7. Using social media to share peace resources

A common reaction I get when I tell people I work for peace is “I’m glad someone is doing it, but it’s not something that I can take on.” In this workbook, I am challenging that notion. I think people get easily overwhelmed when they hear the word “peace” and see it as something idealistic and unattainable. Or they see that there are sooooo many problems in the world and don’t know where to start. But it is precisely in our daily actions and interactions that we create peace. Finding the daily opportunities to bring peace into our lives is the first step.

Another myth is that people don’t think of themselves as peaceful or that human beings in general are not inherently peaceful and so by being peaceful they are being passive or, worse, putting themselves in a position to be helpless victims. But the truth is that it requires an impressive strength of character in order to be peaceful in the face of all our and the world’s challenges. To paraphrase Gandhi, “I can teach a soldier to be nonviolent, but I can’t do anything with a coward.”

For those who think that human beings are not inherently peaceful, there is more and more research to the contrary. Increasingly, science is showing that human beings “[are soft wired for empathy](#)” and [function better](#) when their own and others’ well-being is taken into account.

Another myth that we have is that if we start acting differently, our family, friends and colleagues will think that we’re weird. If we start caring about having peace and balance in our lives, they’ll think we’re not serious or trying to get out of work or on an idealistic trip. But really, so many people are looking to make their lives more peaceful, happier and saner. I think that if you take on some of the practices below with grace, you’ll see those around you starting to act in harmony, taking you as a role model.

So, without further ado, 16 answers to the questions:

### **What is a simple thing you do to create peace? Something you do everyday?**

(Note that anything that is in red is a hyperlink that will lead you to more resources, including the full interviews with the people listed below. I’ve also included guiding questions in italics to help you consider if or how each of these might fit into your life.)



#### **Valia Glytsis, Executive Coach**

I begin my day with 20 minutes of mindfulness. Some days it’s a guided meditation, other days it’s journaling in order to get thoughts out of my mind and onto paper, other days it’s a walk through Central Park. Connecting with peace, for me, is remembering that we are part of something so much bigger, so much wiser, so much more magnificent than we can ever imagine. When I surrender, with a simple morning intention, to that vastness, I feel peace exude. And if the day to day becomes chaotic, a simple few deep breaths, no matter where I am, can bring me back to that space of calm and connection.

*Is this something you might be able to take on?*

#### **Matt Johnson, Founder Project Living Well**

I like to write, text or email friends out of the blue to tell them how much they matter. Sometimes I may not have talked to them for months, but then I’ll randomly think of them and say to myself, “I wonder when’s the last time someone told them they mattered? I’m gonna change that right now.”  
*Which friends would you reach out to today?*





**Josselyne Herman-Saccio,**

**Transformational Workshop Leader**

Smile at ten strangers each day and clean up the coffee station at Starbucks.

*How does this contribute to staying balanced and sane?*

**Ashley Woods, Curator Making Peace**

I try to reach-out to someone and create a new relationship each and every day. Building a strong peace network is the answer to making lasting peace.

*How might you start building new relationships?*



**Travis Hellstrom, Founder Advance Humanity**

Ask everyone's favorite question, "How can I help you?" And be completely sincere. When people know you are being honest and truly want to help them, amazing things happen. You cannot overestimate the power of that question and the incredible places it can take you.

*Why might this be difficult to do?*

**Meg Villanueva, Peace and Human Rights Program Director**

My dad's friend and I were shopping for hats one time. As we were leaving the store, he made a point of telling me that as a customer we should treat the salespeople nicely and improve their day because they probably don't want to be doing that job. I try to keep on doing that.

Also, I have this idea of doing something extraordinarily nice every day. For example, I saw this man looking at the stacked trays in a food court once. He was pretending he was on the phone and started eating left over food. That really broke my heart. So when I was done eating, I went and bought him a pizza. And I just left.

There are lots of opportunities that come up like that. Sometimes people don't expect it. For me it wasn't a big deal, but for the other person it can make a huge difference.

*What could you easily do that would make a big difference to someone else?*





### **Clive Jachnik, Former Naval Officer**

Pass on my knowledge and experience by ensuring that I empower my colleagues and counterparts alike. I try to advocate that everyone should realize that she or he has the power to become an ambassador for peace. If future generations feel like they have a voice, then it's a step towards peace.

*What knowledge and experience do you have that might be valuable to pass on?*

### **Allison Pytlak, Control Arms Coalition Campaign Manager**

Well, many days are not peaceful! They include controversy, argument and difference of opinion. But in finding that middle ground and working out differences with others, there is peace.

Separately, exercise brings me much peace of mind. I grew up studying classical ballet and still enjoy taking a class from time to time; running and yoga also make it possible to just tune out and be in the moment and let stress and pressure slip away.

*How do you work out? How do you work out differences with others?*



### **Hugo Lara, Founder A Little Peruvian**

I share food with people, but not just the food, but also my culture, talking about how a certain dish came about. For example, causas, a layered potato and meat dish, came about because of a war between Peru and Chile. Peruvians collected food for the soldiers, for the cause, and that's the history of that food. Sharing new foods with people opens up their minds, opens a door to another culture, in such a way that they might feel

less intimidated or more inclined to explore another culture's way of life.

*What food or meal could you share? With who?*

### **Hannah Renglich, Founder PeaceMeal**

I eat every day. Well, we all do, hopefully. But it is my practice of peace, in that my decisions around what, when, where, why, how, and with whom I eat are conscious ones to foster a bit more peace in this world.

*What factors are important to you for creating peace through food?*



### **Emily Hine, Author Holy Sit!**

I also practice mindful consumption: what I put into my body must be kind and peaceful to my body; what I consume with my eyes and ears is nonviolent. I scan headlines to stay up to speed on current events, but I rarely watch full news coverage as it can really sensationalize violence.

*How could you consume media more mindfully?*

## Jaye Starr, Muslim Chaplain

The principle of unity of creation inspires me to live my testament of faith out loud. That commitment manifests itself daily in my life through some of the most mundane tasks. Stopping to pick up trash, recycling, seeking out organic produce, and carrying my own silverware, travel mug, and towel for when I make my prayer ablutions are ways of respecting unity of creation and my human role as a vicegerent of the earth. I also engage in inter-faith action, purchase fair trade products, and treat people with compassion.

*Which of your mundane tasks could contribute to your balance, happiness and sanity?*



## José Ivan Aquino, Environmental Educator

Everyday, I leave the car at home and use the bus or walk to work. Considering that we have horrible public transportation and I'm the only one in a community of 400 people that acts in this way, what should be the norm is treated like an exception where I've lived and worked for the past 6 years.

*What can you do to contribute to environmental sustainability?*

## Henry Gifford, Founder Energy Saving Science

I make buildings energy efficient, so the U.S. depends less on foreign oil and doesn't need to go to war to secure its energy reserves. I fight terrorism with a caulking gun.

*How can your work be part of making a bigger difference?*



## Josh Weiss, Harvard Negotiation Project Co-Founder

I try to get at least one message per day out into the world — usually through **social media** — that challenges commonly held notions of peace and dealing with conflict. Such a big part of the skepticism we face exists in people's minds. If we get people to see these ideas differently then we go a long way to having them become accepted on a much broader scale.

*How might you turn social media into a tool to help regain your sanity?*

## Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Maybe what I post on my **Facebook page** is how I create peace everyday. I don't post things like "Oh, last night I had a magnificent dinner and now I'm having a mani-pedi." I post articles about the things that are fundamentally important to deal with, everyday, trying to help people look beyond the bullshit media that they see and understand that a lot of serious work is going on in the world and it's not about "Oh my god! They got divorced!" I don't know who





“they” are, since I don’t watch TV. It’s like “Oh my god, Angelina Jolie just adopted all of Africa! Again!” So what? And pretending that crap is news makes me crazy.  
*What could you post on Facebook to truly contribute to your and others’ happiness?*

It is pretty clear how a mindfulness practice or even a stress releaser like exercise can help you increase your inner peace. But, you’ll note that a lot of the shortcuts touch on interpersonal peace and international peace, so you might be wondering how that can give you a more balanced, happier, saner life. Josselyne, for example, lives in a city so she’s constantly surrounded by strangers. By making a conscious effort to smile at 10 people she doesn’t know each day she actually has to see them as human beings rather than as obstacles to her next appointment or the cause of the noise, dirt and pollution that surrounds her. For all intents and purposes, she is changing the frame through which she sees the people around her, using one that gives her more balance. Similarly, she could get annoyed about the coffee station at Starbucks constantly being a mess or she can do something about it, helping her feel both empowered and like she’s positively contributing to others and with empowerment comes sanity and contribution happiness.

For Hannah, the thought that she puts into everything she eats are what keep her balanced, sane and happy. This happens on a physiological level as some foods will literally tip the scales, not only packing on pounds, but also throwing your system out of whack (keeping a food diary can help you track what those are for you), but can also effect your mental functioning and your mood (for example one of my favorite pick-me-ups is coconut water—especially when it comes straight from the coconut—as it rehydrates me and mentally transports me to my favorite seaside hangout). It also occurs on a social level both in terms of who she shares a meal with (we all know that a great meal with meaningful conversation can be a great respite from our daily drudgery) and being aware of who participated in the production of her meal (for example buying FairTrade products can ensure that the food’s supply chain is positively contributing to all those who are involved in the production of the food).

In Henry’s case, being able to connect his work to a greater cause is what connects the dots between his efforts at inner peace and international peace. Making buildings more energy efficient isn’t just his job, it’s his contribution to humanity. Instead of seeing the drudgery in it, he sees his purpose and having a purpose are key to balance, sanity and happiness. How else do you see these shortcuts connecting the dots between inner peace, interpersonal peace and international peace?

## **TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

I hope that in this list you found at least one or two practices that call to you. A few important things to keep in mind as you embark on your path to a more balanced, saner and happier life:

- Don’t get overwhelmed

- Start with something easy and joyful for you
- Make it your own
- Stick to it

You got 16 different options, but you don't have to implement all of them. In fact most of the people interviewed only do one or two of these practices on a daily basis and they still get the benefits of feeling in balance, happy and sane. I gave you many options so you could find the one(s) that work for you.

Sometimes overwhelm can also come from feeling down about a situation. We see something horrible on the news and wonder how things have come to this and perhaps even feel some despair. It's perfectly fine to feel despondent, angry, sad, and/or insignificant in the face of these difficult situations. In fact, it's a sign that you are a living, breathing, empathic human being. Once you feel that you've steeped in these feelings long enough, then you'll be ready to channel your empathic response into something more generative; that's where the suggestions above come in.

So, start with an easy peace practice; something that you can truly do every day because it fits easily into your life. It might mean tweaking a habit to make it more peaceful or adding a step to something you already do. Additionally, it helps to choose a practice that you're actually happy to do; it'll just make it that much easier.

You don't have to do any of the practices the way these interviewees do them. Make the practice your own. If none of the options above seem doable to you, use them as a starting point and brainstorm practices that you can easily introduce in your life. These are merely suggestions that cover a range of options in order to show how many different ways there are to integrate peace in your daily life.

Finally, while these are 16 easy shortcuts to a more balanced, happier, saner life, they'll only work if you actually implement them. Remember, these are things that successful people do EVERY SINGLE DAY. So if you're not getting the balance, happiness or sanity in your life that you're looking for, my first question will be, "Are you doing this practice on a daily basis?"

On the next pages, you'll find three worksheets to help you get started on your way to a more balanced, happier, saner life. Take 5 minutes right now to fill out the first one so you have a clear action plan for bringing more balance, happiness and sanity to your daily routine. You can take it a step further by printing it out and posting it somewhere you'll see everyday as a reminder. Then make a note for yourself to fill out the second worksheet in one week and the third one in one month so that you can measure your progress.

If you've read this far, then you are ready to make a change in your life. So why wait any longer? Peace on!

PS If you can't fill in the fields on the worksheets, you may be viewing this workbook in your web browser. You'll need to download the file and open it in Adobe Reader which, if you don't yet have it, you can access [here](#).

***My Shortcut to a More Balanced, Happier, Saner Life***

**Today's date:**

**How much of the following do you have? (1 - a little; 10 - a lot)**

Balance:

Happiness:

Sanity:

**Which, if any, peace practice(s) do you already do in your daily life?**

**Which peace practice(s) would you like to take on?**

**Which, if any, other practice(s) not listed above would be amazing for you to take on?**

**What support do you need to effectively incorporate it/them?**

Setting a daily reminder in my calendar

Having an accountability buddy

Working with a coach

Taking a course

Just doing it!

Other strategy:

## ***My Shortcut to a More Balanced, Happier, Saner Life***

**Today's date:** (1 week after sheet 1)

**How much of the following do you have? (1 – a little; 10 – a lot)**

Balance:

Happiness:

Sanity:

**Which peace practice(s) did you take on?**

**How often did you practice it/them?**

**How does it feel to have taken it/them on?**

**What did you discover?**

**Do you need to adjust your strategy to effectively incorporate it/them?**

Set a daily reminder in my calendar

Have an accountability buddy

Choose a different practice

Work with a coach

Take a course

Just do it!

Other strategy:

***My Shortcut to a More Balanced, Happier, Saner Life***

**Today's date:** (1 month after sheet 1)

**How much of the following do you have? (1 – a little; 10 – a lot)**

Balance:

Happiness:

Sanity:

**Which peace practice(s) did you take on?**

**How often did you practice it/them?**

**How does it feel to have taken it/them on?**

**What did you discover?**

**Do you need to adjust your strategy to effectively incorporate it/them?**

Set a daily reminder in my calendar

Have an accountability buddy

Choose a different practice

Work with a coach

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Just do it!

Other strategy: