Participants in a weekly Path meditation workshop in Midtown

The inner office

The hand-on-heart gesture (bottom) represents compassion. Inset: Path founder Dina Kaplan

Young professionals find meditation

BY JUSTIN ROCKET SILVERMAN
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Meditation isn't just for Zen masters and granola munchers anymore.

That's what a growing number of ambitious young tech entrepreneurs, designers and marketers are discovering at The Path, a new weekly meditation workshop that has New York City's digerati crossing their legs and saying "om."

The Path is not the meditation of a Buddhist monk looking to transcend the cycle of life and death – though some of the techniques are the same. Nor is it the meditation of hippies surrounded by free love and ganja. Instead, the program aims to teach a system of mental focus meant to make successful New Yorkers even more successful.

"When you go to a typical meditation center, it's more of a spiritual joint," John Ebner, 29, said after a recent meditation session at The Path. "But I'm a business guy and I'm an athlete, so I like the vibe better at The Path. It's a place to go where you know you will feel good at the end of the class. And maybe network with the other people there."

Every Monday for the past month, about 75 people have paid $20 each to sit in a gallery space in Midtown for an hour to practice various styles of meditation. Each style is designed to help the mind accomplish a different goal. Last Monday, instructor Elena Brower worked through one meditation for increased energy, and then three others, for focus, creativity and compassion.

"There is a lot of misconception out there about what meditation is," said Brower. "It's not just for people who do yoga."

Dina Kaplan, who founded The Path, says: "Meditation literally makes you better at your job. If you meditate, you are learning mind control. So you are able to stay focused if you need to do a PowerPoint for your startup or write a chapter of your book."

Kaplan should know. She's the co-founder of blip.tv, later bought by Maker Studios, and has been named one of the Most Powerful Women Entrepreneurs by Fortune magazine.

Brower encourages her students to meditate for 20 minutes twice a day, but she says that even just five minutes a day can make stressful situations less stressful.

"I just feel good – it was amazing," Ebner said after his class. "Honestly, I think meditation in the workplace is going to be the next big thing."

It's already well on the way, especially in the tech sector. Google employees can take a meditation class at work called "Search Inside Yourself." Facebook and Twitter hold regular meditation sessions in the office, and tech giant Intel offers a course on mindfulness called "Awake@Intel."

There's also a slew of meditation-based smartphone apps with names like Headspace and Buddhify, meant to guide busy urbanites into a quiet space – at least in their own minds.

But The Path specifically targets young professionals, and it gets them to do the unthinkable – turn off their cell phones for an hour.

"That was my first time meditating, and it had as extreme an effect as acupuncture has on me," says Holly Jacobus, 25, who works in business development at a content-marketing software platform. "In New York, most people operate at a very high energy level. Meditation is a way to calm down and recognize what is really important. Otherwise, we're just always running on autopilot."

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YOU SHOULD KNOW

Meditation sessions at The Path happen every Monday at 8 a.m. If you're interested in attending, visit thepath.com and request an invitation.

PHOTOS BY M.B. ELIAN