

CONFESSIONS OF A MONKEY MIND

I was about 10 when I first heard about meditation. My parents, who weren't hippies but embraced things like food co-ops, Beat poetry, and *Ms. Magazine*, got into transcendental meditation briefly in the '70s while we were living in England. They each had a mantra that my brother and I begged them to tell us. They never did. My father, a type A businessman, didn't stick with it much past those early days, but my mother, an artist and seeker, continued to meditate on and off for decades, through the devastating illness that took her life at 68.

In high school, I took an independent study course to learn Taekwondo. Our teacher wanted us to have a well-rounded experience, so he took us out for a sushi lunch and taught us to meditate. He led us through a **guided meditation**, and I remember feeling a calm that I had never felt before. Sure, my mind wandered to things like homework or a new crush, but in between those thoughts were blips of peace. This was a revelation. I was a big worrier — even as a kid — and saw disaster around every corner. I would stay up at night, listening to the airplanes overhead and imagining nuclear bombs dropping. I was more of an insomniac at 9 than I've been in my entire adult life.

Those fears and worries eventually abated, and as I entered my teens, I figured out how to have more control over the thoughts that scared me. Even so, my mind was in constant motion. Many of the thoughts that plagued me were negative, a constant swirl of teenage angst. Frankly, it was exhausting.

**AM I A DIFFERENT PERSON? NO, BUT I CAN
STEP BACK FROM MY THOUGHTS AND GET
SOME PERSPECTIVE.**

I returned to meditation in my mid-20s, on a monthlong family trip to Tuscany. I was there with my brother who had just moved back from the West Coast and was coming off a speed bender; my dad, who was deeply depressed; and my mother, who had just been diagnosed with an incurable illness. We were staying with an old family friend who was struggling with what I now know must have been menopausal rage. *Under the Tuscan Sun* it was not. The villa was between two small Italian villages, and you couldn't get anywhere without a car. I tried to escape by taking walks along the dirt roads, but that proved to be dangerous.

Fortunately, I met a young **yoga instructor** who was also staying at the villa. I would see her practicing on the terra cotta terrace overlooking the hills of Tuscany. Curious about what she was up to, I wandered over one day and she asked if I wanted to join her. I enthusiastically said yes.

At the end of each yoga practice, we'd lie in shavasana and meditate for a short time. Calm washed over me and soothed my frenetic mind. I had a chance to momentarily take a break from worrying about my mom's illness, my weight, arguments with my dad, and other distractions. I came to think of meditation as a little mental vacation. It wasn't a total escape — the thoughts were always there, sneaking in between the spaces — but it was an opportunity to take control over my monkey mind, a Buddhist phrase that means “unsettled; restless; capricious; whimsical; fanciful; inconstant; confused; indecisive; uncontrollable.”

While I continued to practice yoga regularly throughout my 20s and 30s, I let meditation fall by the wayside. Until, in August of last year, at age 49 and struggling with **sleeplessness** for the first time in my life, as well as hot flashes, I decided to give the **Headspace app** a try. The simplicity of the app, the short time commitment (10 to 15 minutes), and Andy Puddicombe's comforting (and, dare I say, sexy) voice hooked me.

Now, 18 months later, I've completed 29 hours of meditation and 128 sessions, all conveniently tracked in the app. Am I a different person? No, but I can step back from my thoughts and get some perspective. That frustrating client who might have had me stewing for days now isn't such a big deal. I'm less reactive, and there's a growing sense of calm deep within me that didn't exist before. I'm sleeping better, too.

I've also noticed that meditation is almost like a palate cleanser for the mind, helping clear away the debris as I transition from one part of my day to the next. Another unexpected benefit is that it gives me a quiet moment to think about my mom, her soothing influence, and how much meditation helped her as she neared the end of her life. I may still have monkey mind, as we all do to some degree, but now I look forward to my daily practice and time to recalibrate in the space between my thoughts.

CANNABIS FOR MENO

Mood swings, hot flashes, sleeplessness, weight gain. If you're over 45, you're probably all too familiar with these common symptoms of menopause. And you've also probably discovered that finding relief can be a challenge. Not every woman is a candidate for hormone therapy, and natural herbs and supplements have varying degrees of effectiveness. Could medical cannabis be a panacea?

Constance Therapeutics founder Constance Finley says that cannabis may provide natural relief for women going through perimenopause. "Our endocannabinoid system is a network of cell receptors that helps to regulate all of our body's systems — immune function, mood, sleep, pain, appetite, reproductive cycles, and temperature. Many of these systems are directly tied to menopausal symptoms: hot flashes, insomnia, fatigue, pain, anxiety, irritability, and so on."

In fact, a recent study by **BDS Analytics** (which surveyed 1,281 women in Oregon, Washington, California, and Colorado) found that menstruation, sex, and menopause are the top three reasons that women use cannabis for self-care.

Dr. June Chin, D.O., an integrative cannabis physician, agrees that cannabis can be useful in treating common symptoms of menopause such as anxiety. "Cannabis works to help alleviate anxiety by its mediation of a neurotransmitter called GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid). GABA tells the body it's time to power down. Since millions of neurons all over the brain respond to GABA, the effects of cannabis on GABA can include calming the nervous system, help with sleep, and relaxing muscles," says Dr. Chin, who herself takes sublingual tinctures for sleeplessness as well as hybrid vaginal suppositories for vaginal dryness and low libido.

**WHEN IT COMES TO USING MEDICAL
CANNABIS, IT'S IMPORTANT TO LOOK FOR**

FULL-PLANT-EXTRACT CBD, PURITY, AND A STANDARDIZED PRODUCT.

Mara Gordon, 59, founder of **Aunt Zelda's**, a pioneering, data-driven developer of cannabis-based plant medicines, has created several products specifically for women going through perimenopause, including Women's Blend, a whole-plant-infused olive oil. "I started making it in 2011 for a couple of women who were in their late 40s and early 50s. They wanted something to help them deal with lethargy, erratic moods, and aches and pains without feeling 'altered,'" says Gordon. "I selected particular profiles of cannabis varieties and mixed them together to have the correct ratio of cannabinoids and terpenes. It's approximately a one-to-four ratio of THC to CBD."

Both Gordon and Finley, as well as the other experts, say that when it comes to using medical cannabis, it's important to look for **full-plant-extract CBD**, purity, and a standardized product. "Many of the side effects people associate with cannabis are actually coming from toxins from the growing or extracting processes, and choosing a high-quality product will help ensure you don't confuse byproduct and its effects with the true effects of the cannabis," explains Finley.

As with other uses of medical cannabis, Dr. Chin suggests patients seek out an integrative cannabis specialist and don't take no for an answer if you hit a dead end with your regular physician.

SEEK OUT AN INTEGRATIVE CANNABIS SPECIALIST AND DON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER IF YOU HIT A DEAD END WITH YOUR REGULAR PHYSICIAN.

In addition to making sure you are taking a high-quality product, dosing and the method of transmission (edibles, tinctures, vaporizers, etc.) are also critical. A vape pen can deliver benefit almost immediately and last an hour, possibly two. The effect of an edible, on the other hand, won't be felt for an hour or two but can last eight to 12 hours.

"You wouldn't use an edible for someone who has epilepsy and needs immediate relief," says Chanda Macias, MBA, PhD, who runs the **National Holistic Healing Center** in Washington, D.C. "It's important to focus on a comprehensive treatment plan, ensuring that

you're getting just the right dosing for specific issues." For instance, to help treat pain from cramps and endometriosis, Macias says that hybrid-strain tinctures, infused Epsom salts, and micro-dosing throughout the day can really help with pain. "People often use medical cannabis as a last option when it should be one of the first," she says.

Since there are no clinical studies specifically about cannabis and menopause, and because cannabis is legal in only a handful of states, it's important to seek expert advice and be aware of **your state's laws**.

What to Know Before Taking Medical Marijuana

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We suddenly feel inundated with advertisements and information about medical marijuana. We've been invited to tea parties, seen friends recommend lotions and potions on social media, and gotten emails about a range of products that purportedly remedy every ailment from occasional sleeplessness to muscular dystrophy. To be honest, it's all too much to consider when you know *nothing* about it.

That's why we asked **writer Sacha Cohen** to dig into the facts and give us the 411. Here's what she found.

Medical marijuana, or medical cannabis, is not what you may or may not have inhaled during college. For starters, it's far more potent and, in cannabis-legal states, is being used to treat wide variety of ailments and serious diseases — from helping to manage chronic pain to reducing the frequency and severity of **seizures in people with epilepsy**.

“Cannabis receptors exist in virtually every brain region. In our body, it blankets our nervous system, muscles, tissues, organs, and bones, which is why cannabis is useful in treating all different kinds of diseases and symptoms,” says **Dr. June Chin, D.O.**, an integrative cannabis physician in New York. “It's not a silver bullet or a panacea, but can be very effective if used in an integrative/holistic approach with conventional treatments.”s

Medical cannabis is currently legal in 29 states as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico, with 17 additional states having **legalized cannabidiol** (CBD), a non-intoxicating cannabis extract. But because it's illegal at the federal level, standardization and regulation are extremely difficult, if not next to impossible.

And despite acceptance in parts of the medical community, medical cannabis is still a source of controversy and confusion. That's one reason that consumers can find clearing through the clutter of myths and misinformation pretty daunting.

UNPACKING THE CBD MYSTERY

The first step on the road to canna-knowledge is becoming familiar with a few key terms like “cannabinoid,” which refers to the chemical compounds secreted by cannabis flowers. Research into these compounds has found that they can provide relief for an array of symptoms including pain, nausea, anxiety, and inflammation.

Cannabis contains **more than 100 types of cannabinoids** — including two of the best known: tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, and CBD. Simply put: THC is the compound in cannabis that gets you high. CBD, which is not psychoactive, doesn't. Even though CBD doesn't get you stoned, measurable doses are still illegal under federal law.

Leafly.com, one of the larger and better-known online resources for cannabis breaks it down like this:

- THC-dominant strains are primarily chosen by consumers seeking a potent euphoric experience. These strains are also selected by patients treating pain, depression, anxiety, insomnia, and more.
- CBD-dominant strains contain only small amounts of THC and are widely used by those highly sensitive to THC or patients needing clear-headed symptom relief.
- Balanced THC/CBD strains contain balanced levels of THC, offering mild euphoria alongside symptom relief.

While the terms “sativa” and “indica” are commonly used to describe the properties of a given strain — sativa purportedly is more uplifting and produces euphoria, while indica is believed to be more sedating — recent research suggests that these terms refer more to the shape of the plants themselves. Another term you'll probably start hearing more about is “terpene,” which is a fragrant oil emitted from cannabis plants (as well as many other herbs,

fruits, and plants). Terpenes produce a wide variety of smells, from sweet and citrusy to woody and musky, and have their own purported medical effects.

Medical marijuana can be inhaled, ingested, or taken as a pill. It's even being used in topicals that may help with things like inflammation and pain, although the research in this area isn't as extensive. Edibles take much longer to enter the system, so it's more difficult to predict their effects and they should be used with caution and under close supervision.

A DOCTOR'S ADVICE ABOUT CBDS

Dr. Jordan Tishler, M.D., a Harvard physician and cannabis therapeutics specialist based in Massachusetts, advises women new to medical cannabis to pay particular attention to the following:

- **Dosing is everything.** "Patients generally benefit from much lower doses than recreational users use, and may be misled by recreational users' experience or guidance," says Dr. Tishler. "Five to 10 milligrams of THC component is usually all that is needed."
- **Edibles are not a substitute for inhaled cannabis.** Each route produces different effect: inhaled is quick and of modest duration, edible (oral) has unpredictable onset and long duration. "For episodic needs, inhaled is better, for constant pain oral has advantages — and often for severe pain, a combination of both works best," he says.
- **Watch out for rip-offs.** "There are many BS products out there to separate you from your money," says Tishler, like sublingual tinctures and topicals. "CBD is probably the biggest rip-off. It's remarkably expensive, and at the doses available, has been shown to be pure placebo for most adults. Also some products are not safe — like oil-cartridge vape pens. Please avoid those, even when the dispensary folks tell you it's OK."

The old adage *caveat emptor* definitely applies to medical marijuana. Since it's illegal at the federal level, the FDA does not conduct safety testing on medical cannabis plants or products, "safety regulation falls to the individual states which have adopted medical marijuana legislation," says Dr. Tishler.

Lastly, Dr. Chin urges anyone who is thinking about using medical cannabis to seek proper medical care. “We now have an option that wasn’t available to us before. Patients should seek out an integrative cannabis specialist — and don’t take no for an answer if you reach a dead end with your own doctor.”



MEDICAL MARIJUANA MYTHS

Dr. Christine Boudreau, M.D., who works with online medical cannabis advisory service **[PrestoDoctor.com](https://www.presto-doctor.com)**, clears up some additional medical cannabis myths.

MOST PEOPLE WHO USE MEDICAL CANNABIS JUST WANT TO GET HIGH.

False. Most patients I see are either on or have tried a prescription medication that either did not provide adequate relief, caused significant side effects, or both. Many specifically request to be guided toward something that will not make them high.

CBD (CANNABIDIOL) IS MORE "MEDICINAL" THAN THC.

False. Both are very effective medications. There are times when CBD is more effective — for example, for the treatment of seizures. However, THC is more effective when treating nausea and decreased appetite in patients with cancer.

CANNABIS IS NOT ADDICTIVE.

False. Cannabis has an addiction rate of 9 percent. Comparatively, alcohol and tobacco have addiction rates of 15 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

YOU CANNOT OVERDOSE ON CANNABIS.

True and False. You do not have enough cannabis receptors in the breathing centers in your brain to make you stop breathing. However, it is possible to overmedicate, and that could be dangerous. For example, THC increases heart rate. If you are 22 years old, this is usually not an issue. However, an older woman who has a significantly increased heart rate for an extended amount of time due to a potent edible could have a heart attack.

This article is for informational purposes only.



NOT YOUR MAMA'S POT PRODUCTS

Cannabis products are having a moment. From CBD-enhanced **candy** and **water** to **lip balms** and skin care to sexy and sleekly designed **stash kits**, this is not the pot of three decades ago.

Carla Baumgartner, 50, founder of **Ganjarunner**, a California-based cannabis delivery service, says she has personally found "extreme relief from menopause by medicating with THC/CBD along with living an active, healthy lifestyle." She takes 10 to 15 milligrams of CBD oil during the day to help deal with anxiety, which has plagued her since her early

teens, and credits cannabis, along with surfing, eating well, and yoga, for helping her do a “pretty good job of getting through menopause.”

Baumgartner is also a fan of THC-infused lubes, which she says may help with loss of libido and trouble with lubrication. “THC-infused lubes not only offer a nice, tingly sensation, but they also help relax the body, promote overall comfort for cramping, and may enhance your libido.”

Marci Freede and Amber Laign, co-owners of **Plant Juice Oils**, offer CBD-enhanced essential oils that they say can help with some of the most common symptoms of menopause, such as sleep issues, stress, hot flashes, and lack of energy. “We have found through our research that many essential oils blended with CBD have incredible results in combating many of these symptoms,” says Freede.

BOSS BABE IN MILLENNIAL WORLD

For a while, I thought being a boss babe meant being a glowy, fabulous, carefully lit someone who saunters to #werk carrying a fresh-pressed juice in one hand and a Bullet journal in the other. But I found out fast that too much juice sends my blood sugar soaring and I prefer my trusty green Moleskine. And I definitely don't wake up with a perfectly piecey lob or flawless skin.

Recently, I tried taking a selfie for an **Instagram** story while sipping pour-over, locally roasted, single-origin coffee, but I spilled it on my crisp white Vince shirt. Later that day, I went in search of my #squad and got lost because I entered the wrong address into Google maps (#fail). Being a #bossbabe is harder than it looks.

I'm making progress, though.

I founded **Grassfed Media** in 2013. We work with companies and organizations that want to make the world a better place. No two days are the same, which I love (that's the Gemini in me). One day, I am with a client doing a television cooking segment. The next, I'm with

another working on social media strategy. It took me awhile, but I'm finally comfortable with videoconferencing (but not before noon), and I'm down with FreshBooks, Squarespace, and even Instagram pods (although I hear they're sooo 2016). Still, some days are more challenging than others.

Hoping to find a boss babe road map, I googled around and discovered an actual Boss Babe Academy. Yes, you can learn to be a boss babe for just \$9.99 a month! Just "bring wifi and a dream," and you can have more freedom and the time to do what you love! One caveat: You must be a millennial or pretend to be one from the privacy of your cozy-chic Apartment Therapy-inspired home office.

I WAS FEELING A LITTLE HOPELESS WHEN IT HIT ME: I AM *ALREADY* A BOSS BABE. I WAS A BOSS BABE BEFORE BEING A BOSS BABE WAS A THING!

I was feeling a little hopeless when it hit me: I am *already* a boss babe. And I've been one nearly my whole life. I was a boss babe before being a boss babe was a thing!

The entrepreneurial bug bit me at age 10, when I drew up a business plan for babysitting and pet sitting services. I didn't call it a "side hustle." It was **a job**. I made flyers with a clear call to action ("hire me!"), set competitive pricing after polling kids on my block, and even offered incentives like freshly baked cookies to my clientele.

In my 20s, more than a decade before Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, I got tired of working for a struggling dotcom and jumped into freelance writing. I'd like to say I had a vision that time around, but I succeeded on sheer force of will and a deeply ingrained fear of missed deadlines.

For four years, I wrote for national magazines (*Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *The Washington Post*) and created content for websites. I even launched my own online arts and culture zine before blogging was a thing. We coded in HTML and took photos using a point-and-shoot camera. We had monthly launch parties at now defunct bars that have been converted into small-batch distilleries and craft breweries. It was a heady time, full of promise and the occasional overdue rent check.

Nowadays, being a boss babe means something a little different to me.

I MAY NOT BE A SHINY, CAREFULLY CURATED, ALWAYS CENTERED, INSTAGRAM VERSION OF A BOSS BABE, BUT I'M MY OWN AUTHENTIC VERSION.

It means being independent, driven, and visionary. It means being able to snuggle with my pets between conference calls. It means treating others with kindness and courtesy. It means being a trusted advisor for clients and friends. It means having integrity and grit. It means answering to no one but myself for a paycheck. It means being a mentor and giving back to organizations that are making a positive change in the world. And, yes, it means working hard and earning every last wrinkle.

I may not be a shiny, carefully curated, always centered, Instagram version of a boss babe, but I'm my own authentic version — a version that comes from years of hard-won experience, occasional failure and self-doubt, and a deep-rooted desire to live on my own terms.

And you know what? With just the right lighting, the perfect **smoky eye**, a glass of bubbly, and my iPhone at the ready, I am the #girlboss of my dreams.

To learn more about Grassfed Media, go to grassfedmediadc.com.

BY **Sacha Cohen**
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