

I WAS AT DINNER with a friend when I got this text from the guy I'd been casually seeing: "I'm cool with hanging out as friends, but I don't think we should throw the benefits part in."

My brain went 10,000 places instantly, including *What the actual eff? Were we even friends to begin with? Wait, am I about to puke?* I tried to focus on the short rib in front of me but couldn't stop my pulse from racing. I reached for my beer—but my friend swatted my hand away, passing me her phone instead. It was already open to her meditation app's SOS function. *Ugh*, I thought. Since when did we swap Miller Lite for inner light?

Let me be clear: I know meditation can work for some people. Humans have been doing it for 3,000-some-odd years, and research shows that even a few daily minutes lowers stress levels, decreases physical pain, and helps with depression. But these days, you can scarcely log on to Instagram without seeing a bestie in yoga pants doing prayer hands. Some of my friends swear by classes at fancy meditation studios. One tried to turn me on to a \$250 headband that plays calming rainforest sounds.

Believe me, I've tried (the classes, not the headband).

But anytime I attempt to let go of my thoughts, I end up fixating on them instead. Suddenly, in addition to worrying that I'll die alone, I'm also wondering if I left my flat iron on...and if I should buy renter's insurance. The quieter the room, the more sitar in the music, the more my mind roils.

Luckily, I've found something else that works for me: running. Studies have found

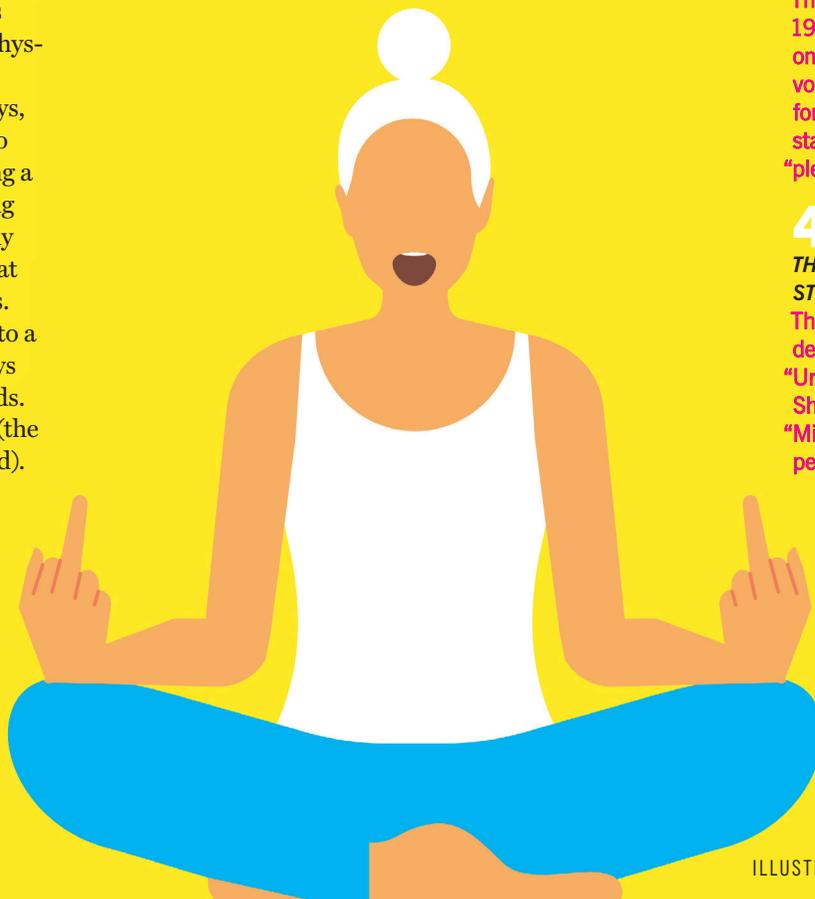
that aerobic exercise can improve focus and help the brain recover from emotional sucker punches. It also burns calories (try doing that while sitting cross-legged on the floor). So I say, calm down *your* way, and don't worry if your third eye is open, blind, or even there.

After an angry night spent fixating on that text, I laced up my sneakers and emptied my mind for three miles on a riverside path. I felt powerful, refreshed... and at peace with myself. No incense required. ■

Om, No Thanks

Please stop telling me to meditate.

BY JULIE VADNAL



MEDITATIONS FOR THE NON-MEDITATIVE

1
"F*CK THAT: AN HONEST MEDITATION"
 A viral send-up of the deep-breath industry, this YouTube vid features lines like, "Now breathe out. Just feel the fucking nonsense float away."

2
APPLE TV 4'S AERIAL SCREEN SAVERS
 Hover in super-realistic slo-mo over snow-covered Greenland and your troubles will seem far away indeed. No Apple TV? Search landscape drone videos on Vimeo.

3
CHILL WITH BOB ROSS
 The mesmerizingly dull 1980s PBS show is now on Netflix—and Ross's voice is a fuzzy blanket for the ears. Just try to stay tense as he paints a "pleasant winter scene."

4
THE ART OF STOPPING TIME
 This new book is full of de-stressing tips from "Urban Monk" Pedram Shojai. His MO: "Mindfulness for busy people." Like you.