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THE (BIG) BUSINESS OF MEDITATION

Teaching people the benefits of mindfulness is a booming industry. Find your om away from home at one of these spots. BY JANET LEE

Is meditation the new yoga? According to trend watchers the answer is yes. Meditation is a fast-growing part of the overall wellness industry boom (a \$4.2 trillion economy worldwide) that includes health tourism, complementary therapies such as yoga and acupuncture, beauty products, spas, preventive health, fitness and nutrition, according to a Global Wellness Institute report. (The same report says meditation is “where yoga was two decades ago.”) A 2017 Centers for Disease Control survey found that almost 15 percent of U.S. adults reported meditating. That was triple the percent that copped to the trendy habit in 2012. On its own, the meditation “industry”—studios, teacher trainings, retreats, apps, online classes—has topped the billion-dollar mark.

How could something as simple as sitting and being aware of your breath or thoughts become such a moneymaker? Because people are stressed-out. They’re willing to pay for something that’s easily done solo for free and they often want to do it with others. Turns out, simple meditation classes may just be the tip of the iceberg.

“The business is totally different than what I thought it was going to be,” says Unplug Meditation founder Suze Yalof

celebs who meditate

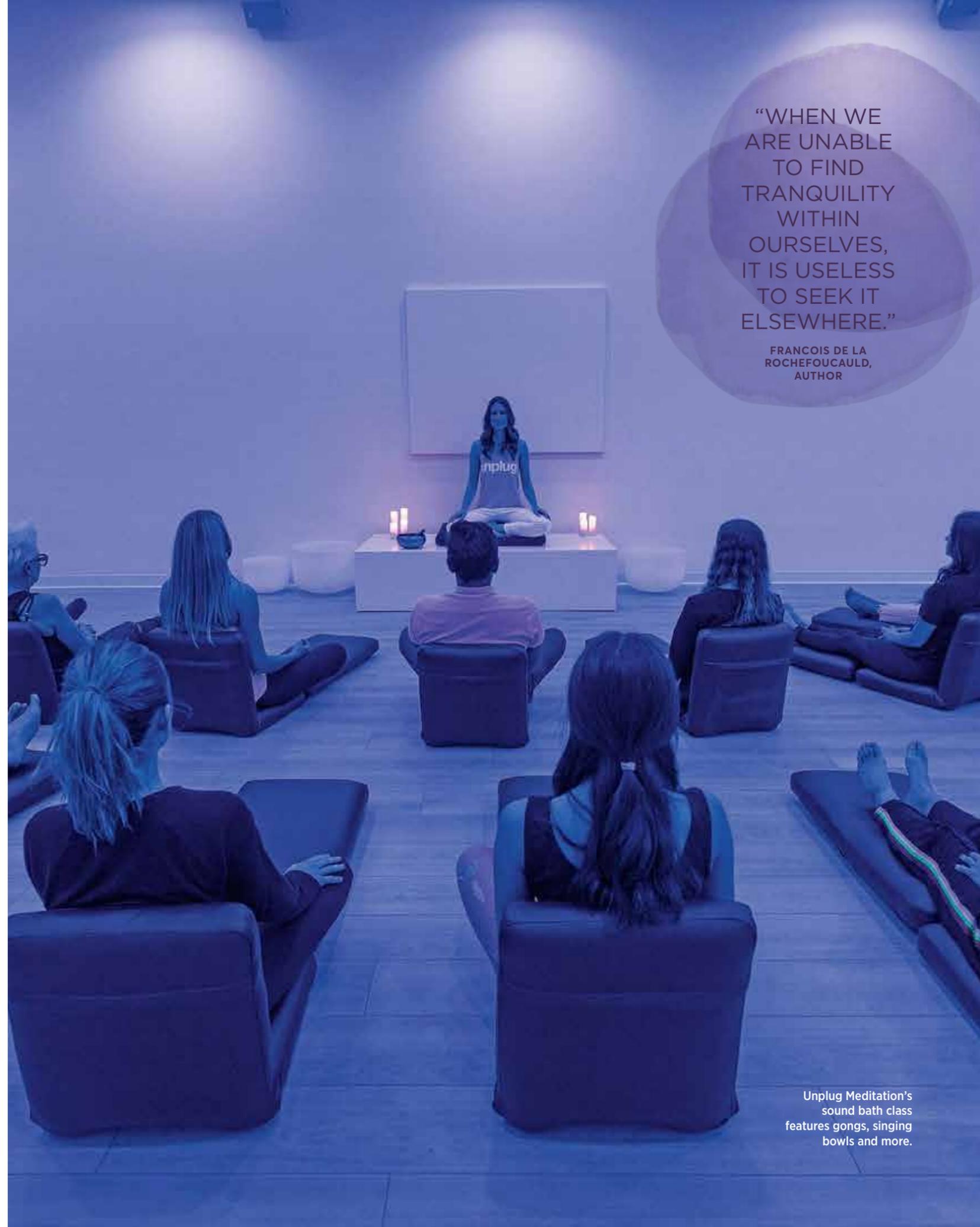
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Schwartz. When she opened the first-of-its-kind studio in Santa Monica in 2014, it was just focused on mindfulness. “Now we have guided imagery, aromatherapy, crystal healing, breathwork. There are so many ways to get to the same place and people kept saying they wanted to go deeper.”

While the stressed-out masses on the East and West Coasts are seeking drop-in meditation classes at studios where they can be surrounded by others, meditation hasn’t quite reached the tipping point in mid-America. Tim Mulville owns Denver’s The Lotus meditation studio, which recently shut its doors. He may have just been a few years too early. “Twenty-five years ago there were less than a handful of yoga studios in Denver and now there are more than 100 just in a five-mile radius of me,” says Mulville. “Although there is an awareness here of the benefits of meditation, we just didn’t quite have the interest to keep it going.” He still works with a variety of businesses, teaching employees meditation techniques that will benefit them both at work and elsewhere. “There is definitely an interest,” he says. “People say, ‘Oh, I should do it.’ Or sometimes they say they can’t do it. There’s not that awareness that meditation is like a lot of things in life—you need someone to teach you how to do it.”

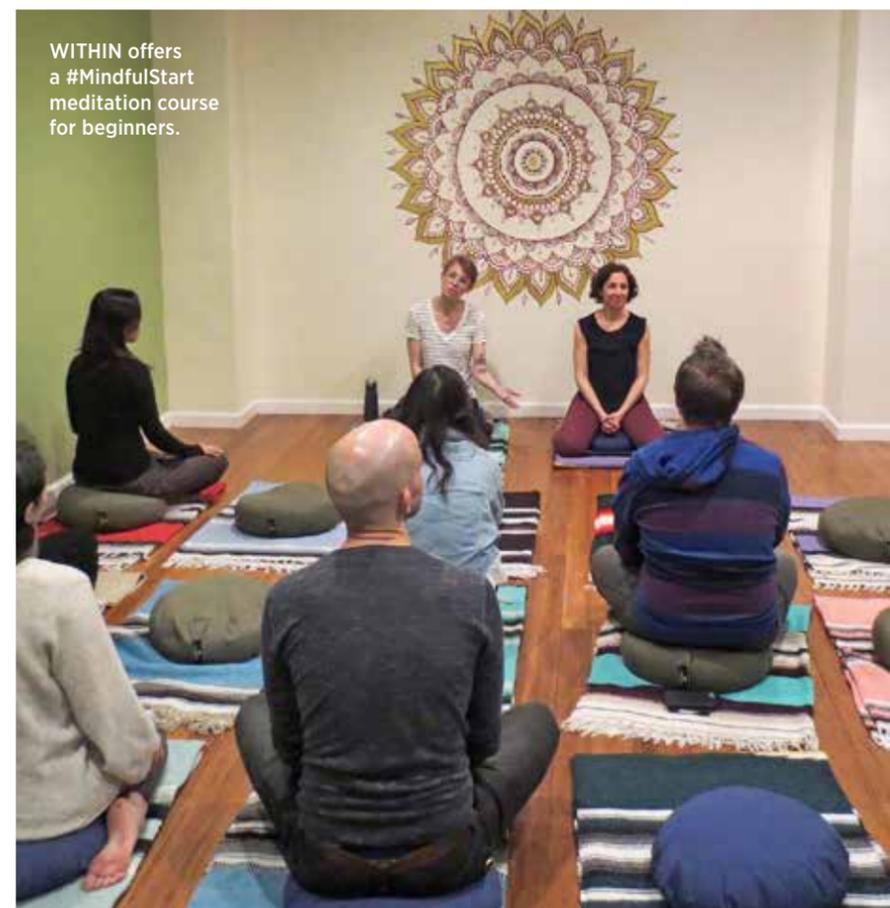
“WHEN WE
ARE UNABLE
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IT IS USELESS
TO SEEK IT
ELSEWHERE.”

FRANCOIS DE LA
ROCHEFOUCAULD,
AUTHOR



Unplug Meditation’s sound bath class features gongs, singing bowls and more.

Innergy Meditation is just a few blocks from the ocean in Miami Beach.



zen on wheels

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GET YOUR CHILL ON

While meditation spots aren't as ubiquitous as yoga studios (you can often find meditation there too, though), they may not be far behind. If your city doesn't have one yet, seek out classes at your local college or university, Buddhist temple, church or community center. Don't hesitate to try several spots until you find a teacher, style and space that feel comfortable for you. They probably won't offer the same zen aesthetic of more

modern studios, but you're not really there for the looks.

Here's a peek at some meditation havens across the U.S. (To find out how you can study with top meditation instructors, see "Find A Meditation Guide," page 46.) Many of these spaces offer teacher trainings and workshops, too.

LOS ANGELES
The DEN Meditation

The first dedicated meditation studio to launch "over the

hill" in the Valley (Studio City), The DEN now has two studios in the greater LA area and more than 15 classes a day between the two. Offerings include yoga nidra, tapping, breathwork and Kundalini yoga as well as retreats and certifications. (denmeditation.com)

Unplug

With studios in Santa Monica and West Hollywood, Unplug is branching out. Founder Suze Yalof Schwartz, who

learned to meditate from her mother-in-law, also launched an app this year and is offering teacher trainings. The class list is impressive, with everything from hypnosis and tapping to sound baths. (unplug.com)

MIAMI
Innergy Meditation

An early 2017 start-up, this studio has plans to expand nationwide. In the meantime, they're keeping Miamians calm with a variety of classes, including

sound, visualization and some using the Muse headband (see page 45). Check out their fun roster of events, including mindful dinners and meditation-yin yoga combo workshops. (innergy meditation.com)

NEW YORK CITY
MNDFL

Despite the vanity license plate name, MNDFL is low-key and unassuming (although it bills itself as New York City's "premier" meditation

studio). It has the requisite sleek, calming interiors (think: white) and three locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Besides offering on-site and corporate classes, the group has a program that brings meditation to area schools. (mndflmeditation.com)

The Path

Opting for pop-ups around the city over a brick-and-mortar space, the Path offers weekly "sits" (classes)

as well as teacher trainings and special events. The group, which was founded by former tech exec Dina Kaplan, also sponsors luxe "melas," or retreats, where high-powered CEO and Hollywood types mingle with top meditation instructors. (The 2019 mela featured Will Kabat-Zinn and Sharon Salzberg.) (thepath.com)

PORTLAND, OR
Pause Meditation

This soothing space offers four-, six- and

eight-week courses to immerse students in meditation as well as drop-in classes and private sessions. Pause has created a systematized approach to "mental training" that combines neuroscience with spiritual teachings and other wellness research. They're aiming to help clients find more emotional balance, clarity and connection, not just 30 minutes of calm. (pause meditation.org)

SAN FRANCISCO
WITHIN

Opened in January of 2017, WITHIN offers drop-in classes at two different locations in the Financial District, in addition to online options. Founded by two former techies, Hannah Knapp and Megan Parker, and with a deep, experienced teaching staff, WITHIN is also branching out into retreats, courses and meditation challenges. (within meditation.com)