

## Spotlight On...Los Angeles Associate John Tschirgi

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As part of the firm's Mindful Winston program, Director of Coaching and Well-Being [Diane Costigan](#) recently hosted "Mindfulness/Mediation Pop-ups" in several offices to help interested firm members integrate this stress-reducing tool into their daily lives. Associate [John Tschirgi](#), a Vedic Meditation teacher-in-training, joined Diane for her August 13 pop-up in the Los Angeles office. We recently caught up with John to get his take on the benefits of meditation and mindfulness in the life of a busy attorney.

### **What attracted you to Winston and how has your litigation practice evolved during your time at the firm?**

I chose to summer at Winston back in 2011 for the same reason that I have stuck around ever since: the people. I've had the chance to work with, and learn from, incredibly talented attorneys and staff. And, more importantly, I've also developed lifelong friendships during my time at Winston.

All things evolve and my litigation practice is no exception. Before moving to California three years ago, I started out in New York doing mostly antitrust work and gradually have expanded my practice to include securities, sports, and complex commercial cases.

### **When did you start practicing meditation and what kind of meditation do you practice?**

I've been practicing Vedic Meditation for going on five years. It's a twice-daily practice of 20 minutes a pop—once first thing in the morning and again in the afternoon or early evening. That may seem like a lot, but the return on investment is huge: using 2% of your day to make the other 98% significantly better strikes me as a pretty good bargain. Added bonus: Vedic Meditation doesn't involve sitting in lotus pose, battling discomfort, and struggling to fight the mind; rather, it's an effortless mantra-based practice that is designed to relieve accumulated stress by allowing the mantra to lull the body into a state of deep rest. So 20-minute sittings are really a lot less daunting—and a lot more pleasant—than they might sound. That's why Vedic Meditation is lovingly referred to as "the lazy (wo)man's meditation." (I should confess that before finding this specific practice, I would tap out of week-long "5-minutes-a-day meditation challenges" by Tuesday.)

### **What made you decide to become a trained Vedic instructor?**

Having experienced some pretty immediate benefits when I first started practicing meditation, I was always intrigued by the thought of becoming a teacher so I could introduce it to others. My interest in teaching grew over time as the benefits of a sustained practice came into focus. The idea of actually pursuing that path finally crystallized after I

moved to California and realized the stress that I had seen people (myself included) carry in New York was neither unique to life in the Big Apple nor limited to lawyers. It's called "the human condition" after all, and mellow though they may be, even Californians aren't immune. Motivated by a desire to help people learn this simple stress-relieving tool, I decided to embark on an 18-month course to become a Vedic Meditation teacher.

**In what ways has meditation helped you reduce stress and stay centered?**

There are a ton of benefits, from better sleep to increased energy, focus, and creativity, all of which have helped me operate less at the mercy of stress. I've felt these effects viscerally and would be just as happy if it turned out to be one big placebo effect, but the science backs it up. Study after study has shown that meditation encourages neuroplasticity, which is the brain's ability to rewire itself to function more efficiently. Meditation has definitely been a game-changer for me and one I've come to love and rely on. Missing a sitting now leaves me feeling as out of sorts as not brushing my teeth. (Incidentally, it was not until after WWII that Americans started brushing their teeth regularly. Maybe meditation is on the same track to becoming part of people's daily routine, with Oprah, Jerry Seinfeld, and Kobe Bryant leading the charge.)

**What advice would you give to others who are interested in meditation but aren't sure how to get started?**

There are many, many different practices and it can be especially confusing because the word "meditation" is bandied about pretty casually these days: "work / the gym / cooking / Facebook / etc. is my meditation!" Not to suggest that these things can't be relaxing, but I'd posit that none are meditation. So, as a first step, I'd recommend trying a dedicated meditation or mindfulness practice (bearing in mind that the two differ in approach and outcomes). The Calm App the firm has provided is a great way to try mindfulness practices. With respect to meditation, in addition to Vedic, there are also Vipassana, Kundalini, and many other practices you can explore. My best advice would be to not get discouraged if one practice doesn't click for you. As I noted above, before learning Vedic Meditation, I couldn't do two days in a row of sitting for just five minutes. Finding a practice that is right for you will be the best gift that you can give yourself.

No matter what practice you explore, you'll do well to shed the common misconception that meditating involves clearing the mind. It isn't true and leads to a lot of frustration when people inevitably realize that the mind doesn't just stop. The good news is that, unless we're in dire medical straits, the mind isn't supposed to stop. So "clear your mind" of that fallacy and enjoy the journey to finding what works for you!



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