

LAUREE DASH

AND THE JOURNEY TO PEACE



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The desire to reach the stars is ambitious. The desire to reach hearts is wise. 99

— Maya Angelou

WRITTEN BY KATHERINE H. FONDREN
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LAUREE DASH

Some people spend a lifetime searching for meaning in their lives and never seem to find it. The endless pursuit of fortune and fame in our culture has led many of us to seek happiness through our achievements rather than looking within our hearts and living our lives through compassion. Nichols Hills Resident Lauree Dash has experienced many successes throughout her life and career, from acting on Broadway stages to producing Emmy award-winning television shows, but through a life-changing experience, she finally learned what it meant “to let herself be” and discovered the joy of just “letting go.” Today, Lauree shares her knowledge of mindfulness and meditation to guide others on their healing journeys so they can find their own inner wisdom and peace.

Lauree grew up in New Jersey, just 20 minutes away from New York City. She pursued her love of musical theater



at the Boston Conservatory of Music and finished her studies at NYU. She went on to play Maria Elena Holly in the first national tour of *The Buddy Holly Story* and worked in many regional theater productions, but soon began looking for other avenues to express her creativity. “I had an idea to produce a television show,” recalled Lauree, “and I started producing and writing content after that.” Some of the shows she has worked on over the years include *Access Hollywood*, *The Doctors*, for which she won an Emmy® Award, and the ABC digital show *She Talks*, which received a Webby honor.

During her time acting, Lauree was cast in a play called *Lavvyers*, where she met fellow cast member actor Ford Austin, who would later become her husband. Ford moved to Los Angeles, where he began making independent films and eventually joined The Actor’s Studio, where he was mentored by fellow actor and Academy Award winner Martin Landau. Soon, Lauree would join him in LA and eventually started working at ABC. But in March 2011, their lives

would change forever when Ford was in a catastrophic car accident.

“He was in the hospital, initially, for six months, spending two weeks in a coma and six weeks in the ICU. He had a 1% chance to live. He had to learn to walk and do math all over again,” Lauree remembered. “He spent two to three years having surgeries and seven years in physical therapy.” She remained by her husband’s side during his miraculous recovery, continuing to work as a producer to the best of her ability, but her Type-A personality and perfectionist mentality, which served her well before the accident, no longer felt tolerable. The stress, the sleeplessness, and the anxiety didn’t feel worth it anymore. Her values had changed. They both knew their lives had been irrevocably changed by the accident and that they needed to make an even bigger change in their paths.

“One day, Ford suggested we move back to Oklahoma City. There was this 90-year-old family home, the first lot ever sold in the Nichols Hills development, that we could live in, help

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restore, and be nearer to his family,” remarked Lauree. “We wanted to spend more time together and to do something meaningful with our lives. I knew I wanted to help other people and share what I had learned through this epic experience of my husband’s accident.”

When Lauree gave her notice at work, her boss asked her to look into one more thing for the network — a meditation studio called “The Den.” In her research, she discovered they were offering a 400-hour teacher training program, so she signed up without hesitation. While Lauree meditated as a young person, her busy life as a television producer prevented her from exploring it further. But, she never forgot the experience of doing her first Yoga Nidra (“Yogic Sleep”) when she was 16 and how great she felt afterward, so she went all in.

Today, Lauree is a certified meditation teacher. In addition to completing her initial training at “The Den,” she is an Advanced Yoga Nidra Teacher in the Integrative Amrit Method of practice.

She is certified in Mindfulness and is finishing an additional two-year certification through the Greater Good Service Center at UC Berkeley with Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach. Lauree completed her 200-hour yoga certification with Allison Candelaria at Soul Yoga here in Oklahoma City, where she now teaches meditation. In the community, she offers practices through the INTEGRIS Cancer Institute Wellness Center, where she is currently launching a new Mindfulness program for cancer patients. In the workplace, she helps many busy, stressed-out



professionals at Chesapeake Energy and Oklahoma City’s Public Strategies. She maintains a private practice in person and on Zoom with clients all over America.

“Teaching is a calling,” said Lauree. “I love to teach people how to meditate and how to learn to cultivate the heart qualities of joy, loving-kindness, compassion and equanimity. Ultimately, meditation is about meeting yourself wherever you are in your life, with kindness.”

Lauree is planning to offer an 8-week Mindful Self-Compassion program in the

future. “Self-compassion is the missing ingredient,” she added. “We’re doing this to grow our hearts because, at the end of the day, that’s what it’s all about. I want to know that I made a difference.”

Lauree and her husband, Ford, have lived in Nichols Hills for four-and-a-half years, and they love living in Oklahoma. “I feel at home here — like I can breathe,” smiled Lauree. Ford continues to work on films and acting, starring most recently in the movie *Digging to Death*. He has also just embarked on a real estate career. When Lauree is not teaching meditation, she enjoys knitting, walking in the neighborhood, playing with their kitten, Zooey, and exercising.

To learn more about Lauree’s classes, workshops, or private instruction, please call 323-353-9191, email Lauree@meditationrebound.com or visit her website: meditationrebound.com.

Lauree’s Mindful Practices for Being with Holiday Stress

- **Slow Your Roll** — When possible, move more slowly. This helps us get out of our “to-do list” mentality and energy. Do one thing at a time, instead of our habitual multi-tasking and be as present in the moment as you can for that one thing. My teacher, Tara Brach, likes to say, “When I move half as fast, I see twice as much.”

- **Break to Breathe** — Build in little moments throughout the day, especially stressful days, to breathe and gather yourself. Try this Mindful Breath: Close your eyes or look down with a soft gaze. Take a full, deep inhale through the nose. Then gently purse your lips together and exhale very slowly, as though you were blowing the air out through a tiny straw. Do this three times and see how you feel. [Elongating the exhale kicks in our “rest and digest” emotional nervous system]

- **Practice a Daily Loving Kindness Phrase** — Since what we practice grows stronger, this supportive repetition builds a new neural network that will be there for us in times of stress and need. I suggest something like, “May I meet this with kindness” or “May I do my best and let it go.” You can begin your day with some checking in with your body and breathing, and then repeat whatever “May I” phrase that is supportive to what you are feeling to yourself a few times.

- **Practice a Self-Compassion Break** [This is the work of Kristin Neff, Ph.D. and Christopher K. Germer, Ph.D.] — When difficult situations or feelings arise, stop and pause. Give yourself a soothing gesture — I like placing my left hand on my heart center — close your eyes — feel the connection of your hand to your heart as comforting. Notice and recognize what you are feeling. Maybe even name it for yourself. Recognize that this is a difficult moment — a moment of suffering. You can notice where you feel it in your body if you like. Remind yourself that we all feel these things from time to time. This is a part of being human and our shared humanity. Then talk to yourself gently and kindly as though you were speaking to a loved one. What would you tell a loved one feeling what you are going through and then offer those phrases/ thoughts, that kindness, to yourself.

- **Savor Special Moments** — Savor these once-in-a-lifetime moments that we often take for granted, like hugging a loved one, making a meal, and sharing a



loved one’s joy as they open a gift — sharing intimate conversations. If we stop and notice how good something feels, if we are mindful of it, we can amplify it and let it fill us. These moments of savoring cultivate more good feelings. Then express some gratitude to yourself or out loud to others, appreciating this beautiful life that we have been given.

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