

the broad place

JACQUI LEWIS AND ARRAN RUSSELL WANT PEOPLE TO THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT MEDITATION. AFTER YEARS OF FAST-PACED LIVING, THEY SET UP SYDNEY-BASED VEDIC MEDITATION SCHOOL, THE BROAD PLACE, GIVING STUDENTS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE THE TOOLS AND ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE FOR HIGH-GRADE LIVING IN A MODERN WORLD.

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JACQUI LEWIS

Arran and I met in Bondi. I was a single mother, just about to turn 30, and had just moved to Bondi, coincidentally a few blocks from his house. We had some mutual friends and, from the moment we got together, we never spent a day without seeing one another. We have been together now for five and a half years. We first decided to go into business together by launching our marketing and communications agency in 2010. Arran had a clothing brand and a vodka brand, and I was a sole trader in communications and graphic design. We kept all the other businesses going at the same time, then created a lounge bar and restaurant together, which was gruelling and a serious feat. After having such an intimate relationship with stress and trying to keep clarity and creativity alive during that time, we decided to launch The Broad Place – providing education and experiences for people just like us who want to reduce stress and feel more creative, calm and clear. The Broad Place is essentially a school for creativity, consciousness and clarity, providing education via meditation, philosophy evenings, books, online programs, workplace programs, retreats and experiences to help people be their best selves. We also have a collection of products founded on ancient knowledge, including Ayurveda, that encourages beauty, simplicity and daily ritual in everyday life. My role is educator. I teach, write and curate experiences and work with our students daily. Arran's role is Creative Director and he creates all our graphics, designs our books and sources and creates all our products. Vedic meditation is an ancient practice of meditating with a mantra for people who are engaged in daily living and not living a monastic life up in the hills or mountains. It's perfect for those with busy minds and days who seek clarity and connection to who they really are. It completely changed my life and, after trying so many different meditation techniques, I found Vedic so simple to practise. The difference in people's lives is profound: they report a stronger sense of purpose, a desire to be a better person and more compassion, kindness and synchronicity. I hadn't known happiness like this existed. My Vedic meditation practice peeled back all the layers of unnecessary thinking and behaviours. I felt like I became more me and I really wanted to share this with people. The Broad Place has a modern approach, and so everything we do and the way we present is deliberately not too 'hippie'. We want people to feel comfortable and confident knowing they can meditate and still be their regular selves, just a better version.

ARRAN RUSSELL

We have a really similar aesthetic and creative vision, yet there are fundamental differences that make working together really exciting. I am more process driven and love the detail and can attend to it, while Jac is way more "big picture" and excitable. So we keep each other grounded and motivated in unique ways. I love travelling together and working on projects overseas – and we get to do this a lot. Between us we've launched many businesses, so our skill set is very large. Our strength, I would say, is our ability to let the other person go at the pace they need while also adjusting ourselves to that. Jac is a maniac and would like to do everything at speed 10 – sometimes rather messily – and I prefer to cruise along at say a four, with lots of attention to detail but sometimes not getting much completed. So our strength is in slowing down and speeding up each other. Our daughter is nine years old and I have been raising her since she was four. Her dad has her every second weekend so that helps Jac and I juggle working and travelling. Creating a business like ours can be draining at times, but we also really love what we do and are so passionate and driven that it mostly doesn't feel like work. We usually share school pick-ups and drop-offs. Marley is an awesome kid and one of the only things Jac and I argue about is who gets to spend more one-on-one time with her, which we both love. We stopped trying to keep business and family life separate – it was futile. We love what we do so much that it seeps into absolutely everything. Even Marley is involved, doing scent testing, packing bits and pieces for us and helping around the school for events. She loves it. Our dog is here at the school with us every day, and our lives just blend into one. It's usually during relaxation or family time that we get our best ideas – and there's just no way, on a Sunday when we're at the beach, one of us is going to say to the other who is excitedly spinning off ideas, "Yeah, so that needs to wait until Tuesday's planning meeting." We just go with the flow of it more now. The bonus is that when everything is going really well, we don't feel like it's work. The downside is that sometimes, when it's a bit challenging, everything feels like work!

