



## MEDITATION / RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

### Why People Meditate

People meditate for numerous reasons:

Stress.

Health and healing.

Spiritual.

Achievement of goals (e.g. person goals, business goals, etc.).

Performance (e.g. sporting, music, business, etc.).

To get answers to questions (e.g. personal issues, business dilemmas, etc.).

### Mental/Psychological Benefits of Meditation

Reduced anxiety / depression.

Improved coping capabilities.

Happiness less conditional on external circumstances.

Reduced reliance on drugs or alcohol.

Improved sleep.

Reduced aggression and criminal tendency.

Improved IQ and learning capabilities, including improved concentration.

Reduction in personality disorders.

Improved motor and perceptual skills.

These changes are achieved through increased brain blood flow, improved EEG (brain wave) patterns with increased synchronicity of brain waves. There are also changes in brain chemical profile with increased serotonin levels. Prozac (an antidepressant medication) increases this chemical. There is also a lowering of blood chemicals associated with stress.

### Physiological Benefits of Meditation

Reduced heart disease, cancer, nervous disorders, etc. This may be associated to the increase in melatonin levels associated with the technique. Melatonin is associated with mental happiness but also with activity in the immune system. Studies have also shown reduced hospitalisation, reduced doctors visits, reduced blood pressure and longer life in those who meditate.

### Methods of Meditation

There are a variety of methods, all of which achieve the same end. The thing to focus on can vary from:

Candle gazing.

Listening to music.

Saying a word in one's mind (transcendental meditation).

Focusing on the breath.

Visualisation (going to a pleasant place or using visualisation to enhance healing). This is often used in cancer patients, as well as business and sport.

Tai Chi, Yoga, and Martial Arts are movement meditations

## **Basic Principles**

### **1) Symmetrical body position.**

If the body is seated with back upright, feet firmly on the floor and hands on thighs symmetrically, this enhances the relaxation response. Alternatively, the person can lie on the floor in a symmetrical position.

Advanced meditators will use other positions like the Lotus position. The idea is that the person must not become too comfortable lest they fall asleep.

### **2) No effort/no expectation**

If the person worries about the quality of the experience, or what will happen, or how they can make an effort to make this a better experience, they will not relax and not get anything out of the experience. It is most important just to let go and be one's self.

It is important to note that the benefits of meditation are cumulative over a period of time as one meditates regularly. There is no immediate benefit at the time of relaxation itself, apart from the muscular relaxation which is experienced at the time.

### **3) Allow thoughts to pass through the mind.**

Contrary to popular belief, the idea is not to empty one's mind of thoughts as this is too stressful and cannot be achieved. Rather the person is encouraged to become a passive observer of their thoughts, i.e. allow the thoughts to come and go as they naturally would - like clouds going past in the sky - they come and they go. Do not attach onto a thought or develop a thought.

The above methods can all serve as a source of distraction to allow the participant to bring their mind onto that technique, thus avoiding development of further thoughts which may prove stressful.

Studies were done whereby they asked volunteers to sit quietly without any particular activity given to them. They found that these people started to become less comfortable. This is because they were developing their thoughts and worrying about various things.

Therefore, being able to get your mind off your thoughts (which are running through your mind in the background), and onto something to distract you or something to focus on, helps you to allow these thoughts to just pass through your mind rather than take hold of you and carry you along with them.

## **Start Up Suggestion**

The following is a simple but effective way of getting started:-

Put yourself into a symmetrical body position.

Put some pleasant, relaxing music on at low volume in the background.

Get comfortable into position, but not too comfortable.

Take a few deep breaths and sigh as you breathe out (this has a way of quickly relaxing the body).

Listen to the music and / or be aware of your breathing. Whenever you realise you are thinking about something, then gently bring your mind back to your breathing or to the music.

Meditation / relaxation techniques are a powerful way of achieving numerous benefits in health and life, which will influence study, work, performance in all areas including work, exams, sport and music, and in the influence of your physical health as well as mental health and stress levels.

## **Music to use**

Baroque music eg Vivaldi, Teleman, Albinoni, Bach, Corelli, Pachelbel etc. New Age? etc.

## **The Meditation Prescription**

Twice daily before food. If after dinner, not too close to dinner or bedtime. For 15-20 minutes (this needs not be strict.)

## **Books**

How Meditation Heals by Eric Harrison

The Calm Technique by Paul Wilson

Peace of Mind by Ian Gawler

Meditation Pure and Simple by Ian Gawler

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