

Meditation: A Beginner's Guide

*The material presented in this article is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to diagnose or prevent any illness.

In my article "Self-Healing Basics" I briefly discussed meditation and its important role in whole-being wellness. Meditation has an abundance of benefits, but can appear daunting to newcomers due to the many misconceptions surrounding it. Through this series of articles I will explore the art of meditation in depth- addressing misconceptions, highlighting the benefits, answering frequently asked questions, and also sharing different techniques.

I believe very deeply in the power each person has to heal themselves. Meditation is one of several tools I teach to empower others on their quest for spiritual and personal growth. I have found that many who have committed themselves to developing the practice have reported dramatic results. Many have shared with me an enhanced sense of purpose, reduced stress and anxiety levels, and other life altering changes. There are numerous types and styles of meditation, and with persistence and practice everyone can find one to benefit them.

Meditation Myths:

There are many misconceptions and generalizations in regards to meditation that unfortunately keep many people from trying it. Before going into all of the benefits and techniques, I feel it is necessary to first address some of these issues. In doing so, I hope to provide a better understanding of just how simple and worthwhile meditation can be.

One common misunderstanding surrounding meditation is the belief that it is religious in nature. Although it is incorporated into the religious practice in many traditions, it is not in and of itself, religious in nature. Neither is it reserved to any one faith system. Many people from a variety of cultures and traditions successfully integrate meditation into their lives without conflict.

Another commonly held belief is that meditation requires a lot of time to achieve results, however, as I will demonstrate later on, it truly does not require hours of rigid daily practice to be effective. Most of us do have busy lives, and meditation is an act that can be effectively incorporated into any lifestyle. Is it a discipline? yes. It needs to be developed into a routine, much in the same way that walking the dog or going to the market are also established as routines. The benefits will be well worth the few minutes a day invested.

Last but not least, is the misconception that the mind must be void of all thoughts for meditation to be effective. The key in meditation is not necessarily to "empty" the mind, but to gain control of the mind, to know and understand where it travels and why. The main goal of meditation is to "know thyself" and by learning the hidden motivations and reasons behind our seemingly random thoughts we begin to do

just that. The process aids in removing random mind chatter, and streamlining the thought process.

If you are paying attention, you will notice that as you read this, your mind has likely churned up several thoughts that have popped up as you have gone along. If you haven't noticed this, you are not alone. Many never really pay attention to just how much "noise" the mind makes. The simple act of paying attention and noticing is a first stage of a positive meditative practice. Through dedication we learn to sift through the noise and retrieve what is necessary and beneficial to us on our path. We are better able to slow the mind down, which in turn reduces stress and anxiety.

Meditation is a practice that costs little to nothing and can benefit anyone willing to put some time and effort into it. It requires no special talents, merely the desire to grow and learn. For those seeking a more fulfilling and rewarding life experience, meditation offers a simple but powerful method to pursue personal and spiritual growth. Throughout the rest of this series I will share answers to common questions, explore the many benefits, and detail some different meditation techniques that can be modified to each person's unique preferences.

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