

Stress Reduction Using Mind-Body Practices

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Meditation is not sleeping or daydreaming or spacing out but attuning one's body and mind to a higher source. The goal is to "not think". This is very challenging in today's society with all of the stimulation we receive through radio, phones, billboards, television, work and family obligations. With practice and time, you can achieve calmness of the mind. Studies show that you only need to meditate for 10 minutes per day to produce benefits.

Why do this? There are medical benefits to meditation. In fact, meditation significantly controls blood pressure comparable to prescription brands and without side effects (American Medical Association Journal). Three-fourths of insomniacs who have been trained in meditation fall asleep within 20 min of going to bed (Dr. Gregg Jacobs, Harvard). Meditation decreases cardiovascular parameters like heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure while increasing the brain waves (alpha, theta and delta) associated with calmness (Dr. Herbert Benson, Harvard). Meditators demonstrated increased left frontal lobe activity of the brain, which is associated with calmness and happiness (Psychosomatic Medicine, 2003) and improved brain circuits involved with focus and attention (<http://www.news.wisc.edu/13890>). The risk of having a second heart attack was reduced by 74% in those individuals who learned to manage their stress levels vs those on medication alone (Dr. James Blumenthal, Duke). Meditation has been shown to reduce biological age by 12-15 years vs those who didn't meditate (Health News and Review, 1993). The stress hormone cortisol was demonstrated to decrease in those who mediated before being given the stressor vs this who did not meditate before the stressor (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2695992/>).

Here are a few helpful tips to get you on your way!

Steps for meditation:

- Sit up with a straight spine on the floor or on a chair. If this is not possible, then lay on a bed.
- Reduce background noise in the house or office or wherever you are meditating.
- Focus your attention on your breath. Notice how you inhale and exhale. Is it raspy, shallow, or fast?
- Focus on extending your exhale twice as long as you inhale. For example, if you inhale on a count of 2, then exhale on a count of 4. Try to work towards an inhalation on a count of 4 followed by an exhalation on a count of 8. This may take some time.
- If you are feeling too distracted, you can look at a candle or a pleasant picture or at nature. You can even try something called yoga nidra, which is a guided meditation that systematically guides and relaxes you at every level of being including your physical,
- energetic, mental, emotional and spiritual layers called your five Koshas. For more information on this, please go to: www.JenniferReisYoga.com and look up her CD's, Guided Relaxation or Deep Relaxation or Divine Sleep Yoga Nidra.



For natural ways to manage your health, please visit: www.atyourwittsendayurveda.com

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