

MEDITATION

*Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80.
Anyone who keeps learning stays young.
The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.*

...Henry Ford

WHY Meditation?

1. Achieve Great health - The Healing Effects of Meditation
2. Enjoy Peace of mind - Meditation reduces Stress and Burnout
3. Increase mind power - Meditation enhances Concentration, Memory and Ability to Learn
4. Find fulfilment - Meditation helps you to create Harmonious & Loving Relationships
5. Be inspired and innovative - Meditation improves your Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills
6. Be emotionally stable - Meditation decreases Depression, Anxiety, and Insomnia
7. Be Enlightened - Meditation connects you with something greater than you - the true self

What it is?

Meditation is a peaceful & silent state of mind, our natural state of BEING. In fact, meditation is a state of no mind. All the chit-chat of mind simply vanishes when we are in meditation.

How to do?

At first you choose the primary benefit you desire.

Secondly, make a 100 % commitment to yourself that you will meditate daily for one week, then two more weeks and 3 more weeks. By the end of 6 weeks you will be the master of meditation.

Process

Meditation is EASY. Meditation is doing nothing but BEING, so, we do not do meditation. We simply BE in Meditation.

Meditation means closing the eyes and being with your breath. Patience is required. Whatever may be the turbulence in the mind, eyes shall always be closed. Attention of the mind should be constantly brought back on to the breath. The mind wanders... but it should be collected and brought back... to... the... breath.

The important steps are as follows:

1. Take ANY COMFORTABLE POSTURE. (Sit relax, take back support if you want)
2. Clasp your hands.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Observe your incoming and outgoing breath

We have to be aware of our natural & normal breath only and nothing else. When you observe your breath and simply witness your thoughts, your normal mind's broadcasting and receptor functions totally ceases and you reach in a 'thoughtless' state - Meditation. With regular practice, reaching thoughtless state is possible.

When and where should we meditate?

Any time is right time for Meditation! Any place is the right place for Meditation!

How long should we meditate?

If your age is 20 years then meditate for 20 minutes, if your age is 60 years then meditate for 60 minutes in one sitting every day. It means meditation 1 minute for 1 year of your age. Simple... Science of Meditation.

Overcoming Difficulties

Sufficient scientific research made in the past 4 decades shows that an average human mind goes through 60,000 thoughts everyday in waking state. It means more than one thought per second. Are you aware of your thoughts? No, not at all. Generally, we are not aware of our thoughts but of our emotions and we consider our emotions as thoughts.

When we sit in meditation with our body and mind getting relaxed, for the first time we become aware of our thoughts that keep coming at a great speed, most of them negative or wasteful. This disturbs us a lot and that is why initially, most people complain that they cannot meditate.

This is just an initial phase. When you encounter such difficulty, do not get up; just bring your attention back to your breath; with practice the speed & number of your thoughts would reduce dramatically and you enter into a state of no thoughts...

Meditation experiences

When our mind enters into the gap between 2 thoughts and then into no thoughts zone, we receive a lot of cosmic energy due to which we may have following experiences. Just feel them, don't judge them.

1. Head Region may become Heavy.
2. Below Head Region, Body becomes very light.
3. You see colours around the middle of your eyebrows and forehead area (called third eye)
4. Pain in Lower Back/Waist Region.
5. Even though the physical body is still, you may feel like your body is swaying
6. You feel like flying high or Levitate (this is of the Astral - subtle body not of physical body)
7. You may see scenery like Mountains, forests oceans, water fall etc.

There exist no process of meditation as it is a state... STATE of BEING...

However, there are processes of relaxation & concentration. These processes are generally identified as process of meditation.

Some of the techniques are as follows:

Be in a calm room where you are undisturbed - sit on an armed chair with your feet on ground - Take few slow & deep breaths - Close your eyes - focus on your breath - [see how the breath is coming in and going out](#) - Relax your body with each outgoing breath.

Initially, your thought would interfere, mind will wander. However, every time it wanders, focus your attention back to your breath. Gradually, thoughts will slow down and then there is a state when there is no mind but still there is somebody watching - YOU.

Awareness increases and you just BE IN MEDITATION.

With regular practice, you discover yourself uncovering many layers..

Benefits

1. The Healing Effects of Meditation

Meditation is one of the best tools we have to counter the brain's negativity bias, release accumulated stress, foster positive experiences and intentions, and enjoy the peace of present moment awareness. A large body of research has established that having a regular meditation practice produces tangible benefits for mental and physical health, including:

- Decreased blood pressure and hypertension
- Lowered cholesterol levels
- Reduced production of "stress hormones," including cortisol and adrenaline
- More efficient oxygen use by the body
- Increased production of the anti-aging hormone DHEA
- improved immune function
- Decreased anxiety, depression, and insomnia

2. Meditation Reduces Stress and Burnout

Chronic, unmanaged stress can make you sick and accelerate aging. As many scientific studies have found, prolonged stress can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, stomach ulcers, autoimmune diseases, anxiety, cancer, insomnia, chronic fatigue, obesity, depression, and accelerated aging.

In meditation, your body releases stress and reverses the effects of the flight-or-fight response - that ancient instinct we all have to either run from perceived danger or take it on in battle. Intended as a short-term protection mechanism, fight or flight causes our body to speed up our heart rate, increase our blood sugar, suppress our immune system, reduce insulin production, pump out stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, and reduce the blood supply to our digestive organs. All of these reactions happen so that our body can focus on either running away as fast as it can - or staying to fight. Although few people reading this face daily threats to their bodily existence, many live in a prolonged state of fight or flight, generating stress in response to bad traffic, criticism from a spouse, or a disagreement.

Regular meditation dissipates accumulated stress and cultivates a state of restful alertness. There are many compelling studies showing the power of meditation to relieve stress and promote inner calm. For example, a 2011 study published in the Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine Journal found that full-time workers who spent a few hours each week practicing mindfulness meditation reported a significant decrease in job stress, anxiety, and depressed mood.

3. Meditation Enhances Concentration, Memory and Ability to Learn

As researchers have found, meditation can help you tap into your brain's deepest potential to focus, learn and adapt. While scientists used to believe that beyond a certain age, the brain couldn't change or grow, we now know that brain has a quality known as plasticity, enabling it to grow new neurons and transform throughout our lives. Meditation is a powerful tool for awakening new neural connections and even transforming regions of the brain. A recent study led by Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital found that after only eight weeks of meditation, participants experienced beneficial growth in the brain areas associated with memory, learning, empathy, self-awareness, and stress regulation (the insula, hippocampus, and prefrontal cortex). In addition, the meditators reported decreased feelings of anxiety and greater feelings of calm. This study adds to the expanding body of research about the brain's amazing plasticity and ability to change habitual stress patterns.

Many other studies provide evidence for the value of meditation in improving the ability to stay focused in world filled with increasing distractions and demands on our attention. For example, research conducted by the UCLA Mindful Awareness Center showed that teenagers and adults with ADHD who practiced various forms of meditation for just eight weeks improved their ability to concentrate on tasks, even when attempts were made to distract them.

4. Meditation Helps to Create Harmonious & Loving Relationships

When you're feeling balanced and centred, it is much easier to respond with awareness rather than have react in a knee-jerk way or say something that creates toxicity in your relationships. Meditation cultivates equanimity and compassion, allowing you to be present with a loved one, client or co-worker and really listen to what they are saying and what they may need.

As you meditate on a regular basis, you develop what is known as "witnessing awareness" - the ability to calmly and objectively observe a situation, notice when you are being triggered, and consciously choose how you want to respond. The ability to be present and aware is extremely valuable in every relationship.

5. Meditation Improves Your Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills

We each have an estimated 60,000 to 80,000 thoughts a day - unfortunately, many of them are the same thoughts we had yesterday, last week, and last year. The mind tends to get stuck in repetitive thought loops that squeeze out the possibility for new ideas and inspiration. Meditation is a powerful practice for going beyond habitual, conditioned thought patterns into a state of expanded awareness. We connect to what is known as the field of infinite possibilities or pure potentiality, and we open to new insights, intuition, and ideas.

The world's great innovators, athletes, and other high achievers have described this state as "being in the flow," being in the right place at the right time, or a state of grace. Time seems to stand still and instead of struggling and trying to force things to happen, everything you need comes naturally to you. You do less and accomplish more. You aren't burdened by the past or worried about the future; you're flowing in the ever present eternal now. This higher state of consciousness is the birthplace of all creativity. The mind is in an open, receptive state and is able to receive flashes of insight and fresh perspectives. As Marcel Proust wrote, "The real journey of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes."

6. Meditation Decreases Depression, Anxiety, and Insomnia

The emotional effects of sitting quietly and going within are profound. The deep state of rest produced by meditation triggers the brain to release neurotransmitters, including dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, GABA, DHEA, Melatonin and endorphins. Each of these naturally occurring brain chemicals has been linked to different aspects of happiness:

- **Dopamine** plays a key role in the brain's ability to experience pleasure, feel rewarded, and maintain focus.
- **Serotonin** has a calming effect. It eases tension and helps us feel less stressed and more relaxed and focused. Low levels of this neurotransmitter have been linked to migraines, anxiety, bipolar disorder, apathy, feelings of worthlessness, fatigue, and insomnia.
- **GABA (Gamma Aminobutyric Acid)** is an important neurotransmitter found in the central nervous system. It inhibits the production of stress-producing hormones, such as cortisol.
- Insufficient amounts of GABA in the body are linked to tension, anxiety, insomnia, and epilepsy. GABA supplements help to correct mood disorders. Sufficient levels of the neurotransmitter are essential for proper brain function. In a Yale study, scientists found that people suffering from panic disorders or addictions have considerably lower amounts of GABA.
- Studies show that people who meditate or use binaural entrainment on a daily basis have significantly increased levels of GABA. Researchers at the University of California hypothesize that meditation produces its anxiety-reducing effects by promoting GABA action in specific areas of the brain, via a mechanism similar to the effects of synthetic anti-anxiety and tranquilizing agents.

- **DHEA (Dehydroepiandrosterone)**

DHEA is a hormone found in the adrenal gland. Research suggests that DHEA can have a number of health benefits, including:

- *alleviating depression*
- *regulating sleep*
- *reducing stress*
- *improving memory*
- *increasing sex drive*
- *improving overall psychological health*

DHEA deficiency has been linked to obesity and chronic fatigue, as well as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, osteoporosis, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Meditation has been shown to dramatically increase levels of DHEA in the body. According to a study published in *Biological Psychiatry*, patients who were given DHEA experienced significant improvement in their depression, as well as improved memory performance.

- **Melatonin**

Melatonin is an essential hormone produced by the pineal gland located in the brain. Levels of melatonin in the blood rise at night, allowing for restful sleep. It is also a very powerful antioxidant. Studies at the Washington School of Medicine have discovered that there is a significant link between low melatonin levels and weight gain, especially around the stomach area.

Low melatonin levels severely inhibit your ability to get adequate sleep. Lack of sleep increases the production of hormones such as leptin and cortisol. Too much of these hormones cause you to gain weight, in addition to making it difficult to lose weight.

Practitioners of mindful meditation have been found to have considerably above-average levels of melatonin, according to a study published in *Biological Psychiatry*.

- **Oxytocin** (the same chemical whose levels rise during sexual arousal and breastfeeding), is a pleasure hormone. It creates feelings of calm, contentment, and security, while reducing fear and anxiety.

- **Endorphins** are most commonly known as the chemicals that create the exhilaration commonly labeled "the runner's high." These neurotransmitters play many roles related to wellbeing, including decreasing feelings of pain and reducing the side effects of stress.

Meditation choreographs the simultaneous release of these neurotransmitters, something that no single drug can do - and all without side effects. A growing body of medical research is providing scientific evidence that meditation and mindfulness alleviates depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mood-related disorders. A pivotal study (published in the April 2012 issue of *Emotion*) led by scientists at the University of California, San Francisco, found that participants who underwent a short, intensive meditation program were less depressed, anxious, and stressed, while also experiencing greater compassion and awareness of others' feelings.

Meditation also can benefit people suffering from chronic pain, potentially decreasing or eliminating the need for medication. A study conducted by Wake Forest University School of Medicine (published in the April 2011 issue of the *Journal of Neuroscience*) found that participants who attended four 20-minute training sessions over the course of four days experienced a sharp reduction in their sensitivity to pain. In fact, the reduction in pain ratings was significantly greater than those found in similar studies involving placebo pills, morphine, and other painkilling drugs.

7. **Meditation** connects you with something greater than you - the true self

Beyond the substantial benefits meditation creates for the mind-body physiology, the greatest gift of meditation is your connection with something greater than you, call it Higher self, All that is, The Source, God, Almighty, Infinite being or whatever, the connection is deeply felt. Feeling of 'oneness' - one with the existence. It is tangible and it is transcendental. The experience transforms you and you transform the world. Meditation is the primary tool to find the ultimate truth, to rediscover who you truly are beyond this body - mind mechanism. Meditation helps you find your true purpose. In different traditions this is called Enlightenment - Nirvana - Moksha - Liberation.

Numerous studies have indicated the many physiological benefits of meditation, and the latest one comes from Harvard University.

An eight week study conducted by Harvard researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) determined that meditation literally rebuilds the brains [grey matter](#) in just eight weeks. It's the very first study to document that meditation produces changes over time in the brain's grey matter. (1)

“Although the practice of meditation is associated with a sense of peacefulness and physical relaxation, practitioners have long claimed that meditation also provides cognitive and psychological benefits that persist throughout the day. This study demonstrates that changes in brain structure may underlie some of these reported improvements and that people are not just feeling better because they are spending time relaxing.” – (1) Sara Lazar of the MGH Psychiatric Neuroimaging Research Program and a Harvard Medical School Instructor in Psychology.

The study involved taking magnetic resonance images (MRI) of the brain's of 16 study participants two weeks prior to participating in the study. MRI images of the participants were also taken after the study was completed.

“The analysis of MR images, which focused on areas where meditation-associated differences were seen in earlier studies, found increased grey-matter density in the hippocampus, known to be important for learning and memory, and in structures associated with self-awareness, compassion and introspection.” (1)

For the study, participants engaged in meditation practices every day for approximately 30 minutes. These practices included focusing on audio recordings for guided meditation, non-judgmental awareness of sensations, feelings and state of mind.

“It is fascinating to see the brain's plasticity and that, by practicing meditation, we can play an active role in changing the brain and can increase our well-being and quality of life. Other studies in different patient populations have shown that meditation can make significant improvements in a variety of symptoms, and we are now investigating the underlying mechanisms in the brain that facilitate this change.” – (1) Britta Holzel, first author of the paper and a research fellow at MGH and Giessen University in Germany

How To Meditate: A common misconception about meditation is that you have to sit a certain way or do something in particular to achieve the various benefits that it can provide. All you have to do is place yourself in a position that is most comfortable to you. It could be sitting cross legged, lying down in a bed, sitting on a couch etc, it's your choice.

Another common misconception about meditation is that you have to “try” to empty your mind. One important factor I enjoyed reading from the study mentioned above is that participants were engaged in “non-judgmental awareness of sensations, feelings and state of mind.” When meditating, you shouldn't try to “empty” your mind. Instead, try to let your thoughts, feelings and whatever emotions you are feeling at the time flow. Don't judge them, just let them come and go and be at peace with it.

I also believe that meditation is a state of being/mind more than anything else. I feel that one does not have to sit down for half an hour and “meditate” so to speak in order to reap the benefits of it, or to be engaged in the practice itself. One can be engaged in meditation while they are on a walk, for example, or the time they have right before they sleep. Throughout the day, one can resist judging their thoughts, letting them flow until they are no more, or just be in a constant state of peace and self awareness. Contrary to popular belief, there is more than one way to meditate.

“You will have to understand one of the most fundamental things about meditation: that no technique leads to meditation. The old so-called techniques and the new scientific biofeedback techniques are the same as far as meditation is concerned. Meditation is not a byproduct of any technique. Meditation happens beyond mind. No technique can go beyond mind.” – Osho

“Courage is the quality most essential to understand the language of the world.”

...Paulo Coelho