

Meditation

Symptom Effectiveness

Meditation has been used successfully in the treatment and prevention of high blood pressure, heart disease, migraine headaches and auto immune diseases such as diabetes and arthritis. It has proved helpful in curtailing obsessive thinking, anxiety, depression and hostility.

Time for Mastery

You can learn to meditate within a few minutes. Immediately your body will use less oxygen (a sign of deep relaxation) while you are meditating. However, as with most things, the benefits of meditation increase with practice. Levels of relaxation deepen. Attention becomes steadier. You become more adept at living in the present moment. This is why it is important to mediate regularly.

Instructions

Establishing Your Posture

- A. From the following, select a position that is comfortable for you:
 - In a chair with your knees comfortably apart, your feet flat on the floor and your hands resting in your lap.
 - Tailor-fashion (cross-legged) on the floor. This position is most comfortable and stable when a cushion is placed under your buttocks so that both knees touch the floor.
- B. Sit with your back straight (but not ramrod rigid) and let the weight of your head fall directly down your spinal column. This can be accomplished by pulling your chin slightly. Allow the small of your back to arch.
- C. Rock briefly from side to side, then from front to back and establish the point at which your upper torso feels balanced on your hips.
- D. Close your mouth and breathe through your nose. Place your tongue on the roof of your mouth.

Centering Yourself

A. Grounding

Close your eyes and focus on the place where your body touches the cushion or chair. What are the sensations there? Next notice the places where your body touches itself. Are your hands crossed? Your legs? Pay attention to the sensation at these places of contact. Finally focus on the way your body takes up space. Does it take up a lot of space? A small amount? Can you feel the boundary between your body and space? Notice the feelings there.

Grounding and Breathing Exercises

B. Breathing

With your eyes closed, focus your attention on your breathing. As you breathe in, count to four then hold your breath for a count or two. Count to four as you breathe out, then hold again for a count of two. Repeat this pattern “in, 2,3,4; hold,2; out 2,3,4; rest, 2” for as long as you like. Don’t worry about breathing deeply or slowly when you first begin. The most important thing is to keep the breaths even, so make sure you count at an even pace in keeping with your natural breathing rate. As you continue the exercise, you will notice that your breath naturally becomes slower and deeper.

C. Breath Awareness

With your eyes closed, take several deep breaths and notice the quality of your breathing. Is it fast or slow? Deep or shallow? Notice where your breath rests in your body. Is it high up in your chest? In the midsection around your stomach? Down low in your belly? Try moving your breath from one area to the other. Breathe into your upper chest, then into your stomach, then drop your breath into your lower belly. Feel your abdomen expand and contract as the air goes in and out. Notice how the upper chest and stomach areas seem almost still. This “dropped breath” is the most relaxing stance from which to mediate. However, if you have difficulty taking deep belly breaths, don’t worry. Your breath will drop of its own accord as you become more practiced in mediation.

Please note

When you first begin to practice relaxation or meditation exercises, you will find it hard to concentrate, thoughts will intrude and your mind will wander. Some people call this the ‘monkey mind’. Even the most experienced meditators experience this so don’t give yourself a hard time. When you notice that you’re thinking about something else, be pleased that you have noticed your kind wandering and gently bring your attention back to the meditation exercise.

Source: Optimal Health Program A Collaborative Therapy Intervention Frameworks for Health 2008