



Meditation

Connecting with Something Greater

What is meditation?

Meditation is a simple, natural process which benefits you on all levels: body, mind and spirit. You remain conscious, alert and inwardly peaceful. Your body and mind are rested and healed. You become increasingly aware of your true nature which is in command of mental attitudes, states of consciousness, mental processes, feelings and behaviors. Meditation-in-action includes carrying the meditative experience of focus, awareness, calm, and confidence out into daily experience to guide choices and achieve more harmonious results.

How does one meditate?

Meditation techniques widely vary according to culture and spiritual tradition. Many people, when presented with meditation techniques, say to themselves, “Oh! I’ve done that spontaneously!” So you see, meditation is not mysterious and only for special people. If you can breathe, you can meditate.

Techniques generally include choosing a focus for the mind. As the mind gives attention to this focus, unwanted thoughts dissipate, making space available for innate wisdom to reveal itself and deep rest to occur. Meditation has been described as “the space between thoughts”. Using this analogy, when there is no thought, there is complete openness. Complete oneness. What might then occur? What reveals itself is unique to each meditator and will change as you evolve.

Is meditation easy? Techniques commonly are, yet practice can be challenging because we have conditioned our minds to chatter, sort, analyze, and judge. Therefore, meditation benefits occur from consistent practice which, in time, the mind learns to enjoy. When a busy mind realizes benefits of quiet, it begins to welcome the respite. It helps to be reminded that you are not your mind; you are Something Greater, Something that observes. Something that can utilize the mind as a marvelously engineered assisting tool. You are not the body. You are not the mind. You are That...Something Greater. Meditation establishes you in That-ness.

Who Meditates?

All over the world, throughout centuries, humankind has meditated. *It is as natural as breath or thought.* Although continuously taught in multiple traditions, many have lost connection with it because of focus upon worldly concerns. Now it is being rediscovered and recognized for its multifaceted benefits.

Sit in the world; sit in the dark. Sit in meditation; sit in the light. Choose your seat. Let wisdom grow.
~ Dhammapada, 20 (Buddha)

Wakan Tanka, Great Mystery, teach me how to trust my heart, my mind, my intuition, my inner knowing, the senses of my body, the blessings of my spirit. Teach me to trust these things so that I may enter my Sacred Space and love beyond my fear, and thus Walk in Balance with the passing of each glorious Sun.
~ Lakota Prayer

...just stay at the center of the circle and let all things take their course.
Stop thinking, and end your problems...
~ Tao de Cheng, 19:20 (Lao Tsu)

Scientific Studies

Heart Rate

Most studies of Herbert Benson's "Relaxation Response", Transcendental Meditation (TM), Zen Buddhist sitting and other calming forms of meditation indicate that meditating subjects generally experience lowering of the heart rate. Results vary to some degree because they depend on different kinds of subjects, and varying types of meditation.

- Bagga and Gandhi (1983) found an average decline as high as 15 heart beats per minute among some of their subjects.
- Bono (1984) found reduction of heart rate during transcendental meditation was greater than reduction resulting from sitting quietly with the eyes closed.
- Cuthbert (1981) clearly found slower heartbeats for meditators using Benson's relaxation response as compared to heart rate biofeedback.
- Jerving (1976) found an average 15% increase in cardiac output, average 20% decline in liver blood flow and average of 20% decrease in renal blood flow among six meditators.
- Jevning and Wilson (1978) found that frontal cerebral blood flow increased an average of 65% during transcendental meditation for ten teachers of this technique (with 5 to 8 years of regular practice), and it remained elevated afterwards, with brief increases up to 100-200%.

Heart Blood Pressure and Hypertension

There is strong evidence that meditation helps lower blood pressure in people who are normal or moderately hypertensive. This finding has been replicated by more than 19 studies.

- A study by Wallace (1983) measured systolic blood pressure. The subjects (112 transcendental meditators) had a mean systolic blood pressure of 13.7-24.5 less than the population mean. Analysis also showed that meditators with more than 5 years of experience had a mean systolic blood pressure 7.5 lower than meditators with less than 5 years of experience.
- Patel (1975) study: 20 hypertensive patients treated by psycho-physical relaxation exercises were followed up monthly for 12 months. Age- and sex-matched hypertensive controls were similarly followed up for 8 months. Statistically significant reductions in blood pressure and antihypertensive drug requirements were satisfactorily maintained in the treatment group.

Psychology

- Gehr, JT., Nerstheimer, U; and Torber, S. Study of personality changes resulting from a Transcendental Meditation Program: Less nervousness, less aggressiveness, less depression, less irritability, greater sociability, greater placidity, less tendency to procrastinate, less tendency to dominate, less inhibition, greater emotional stability, greater self-reliance.
- Abrams, A: Pilot study of Transcendental Meditation program, University of California at Berkeley found better learning ability and superior recall.

Unwavering, internalized concentration is meditation.

~ Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, 3:2

I am That. You are That. That is all there is. ~ Ramana Maharshi

Thus, meditating you will no longer strive to build yourself up in your prejudices, but, forgetting self, you will remember only that you are seeking the Truth.

~ James Allen