MEDITATION

Meditation can be more accurately called relaxation.

It is striving to reach a state of serenity within your body and mind. Achieving a balance between the two leads to self-actualization and inner peace. Who couldn't use that?

Meditating is actually easier than you might imagine. Most of us have probably dabbled in meditation by participating in *conscious relaxation* – perhaps during an exercise class or to manage pain at the dentist or anxiety before a test. *We start by paying attention to our breathing.*

The practical effort of meditation is to focus completely on our breathing taking our minds away from the *"mind clutter"…all that "head trash"…*that constantly tries to invade our mind and eliminates feelings that would otherwise lead to calm.

With repeated effort the goal of clearing your mind – to think of nothing, does occur and the process of meditation takes on its own energy. The result is peace, serenity, calmness, eventually opening you to new insights.

Our world can be fast, fun and exciting. It is also challenging, trying, demanding and frightening.

These two sides of our lives produce stress, emotional reactions, anxiety, worry and anticipation. Our bodies and minds can tolerate only so much of any of these. After a while, each of us reaches a saturation point and the results become uncomfortable at best; for some it may be unbearable, even unendurable.

No magic pill is available to eliminate these feelings. The reality is, as the wise old man said, *the answer is inside all of us.*

To manage these universal concerns we must go inside ourselves…the answer *"lies inside."*

Among the steps we can take is learning and practicing meditation.

There is no right or wrong behavior during your meditation. It is your time for you. Everyone deserves this kind of personal attention. *This is a self-care activity; loving oneself! It is the unconditional love you've been searching for.*

Teach it to your children instead of a time-out in their room or corner. Teach it to your friends, family, anyone who will listen. We can share this gift and get back as we give. We are all better because of each person who meditates.

The peace and joy felt by those who meditate enters the world for all of us as positive energy. From it the world is a better place.

What Is MEDITATION?

So what exactly is meditation? There are many types of meditation. The one definition that fits almost all types is...

"Consciously directing your attention to alter your state of consciousness."

There's no limit to the things you can direct your attention toward... symbols, sounds, colors, breath, uplifting thoughts, spiritual realms, etc.

Meditation is simply about attention... where you direct it, and how it alters your consciousness.

Traditionally meditation was (and still is) used for spiritual growth...i.e. becoming more conscious; unfolding our inner Light, Love, & Wisdom; becoming more aware of the guiding Presence in our lives; accelerating our journey home to our True Self... our Spirit.

More recently, meditation has become a valuable tool for finding a peaceful oasis of relaxation and stress relief in a demanding, fast-paced world.

It can be used for healing, emotional cleansing and balancing, deepening concentration, unlocking creativity, and finding inner guidance. Meditating is also the culmination of yoga exercises as your body reaches a state of relaxation, so should your mind.

When you begin your meditation, *put your expectations aside, and don't worry about doing it right.* There are infinite possibilities

and no fixed criterion for determining right meditation. There are, however, a few things to avoid.

Don't try to force something to happen. Don't over-analyze the meditation and don't try to make your mind blank or chase thoughts away. There is no one "right" way to meditate, so just concentrate on the process and find the best way for YOU!

Find a quiet, comfortable place to meditate. You can sit in a comfortable chair, on the bed, on the floor... anywhere that's comfortable. It's not necessary to sit cross-legged. Your legs can be in any position that is comfortable. Eliminate as much noise and as many potential distractions as possible. Don't worry about those things that you cannot control.

When you sit to meditate, sit comfortably, with your spine reasonably straight. This allows the spiritual energy to flow freely up the spine, which is an important aspect of meditation. Leaning against a chair back, a wall, headboard, etc. is perfectly all right. If, for physical reasons, you can't sit up, lay flat on your back. Place your hands in any position that is comfortable.

There are many types of meditation you can practice. *We'll explore some of the more popular and effective ones.*

UNIVERSAL MANTRA MEDITATION

This meditation comes from an ancient Indian text called the Malini Vijaya Tantra, which dates back about 5000 years. It is a very easy meditation, *yet very powerful* in its capacity to quiet your mind and connect you with your Essence or Inner Spirit.

This meditation uses a mantra as your object of focus. A mantra is a word or phrase that has the power to catalyze a shift into deeper, more peaceful states of awareness. The mantra most used for this meditation is: Aum. ***Aum does not have a literal translation. Rather, it is the essential vibration of the universe.*** If you were to tune into the actual sound of the cosmos, the perpetual sound of Aummm is what you would hear.

Although this mantra is sometimes chanted aloud, in this meditation, you will be repeating the mantra mentally... silently. Before we get to the actual steps, there are a few important points to be aware of.

- One of the keys to this meditation is repeating the mantra gently or faintly in your mind.
- The power of this technique comes from letting go and allowing your attention to dive into the deeper realms of awareness. Therefore, even though you will be focusing on the mantra, staying focused on the mantra is not the aim of this meditation. Trying too hard to stay focused would keep your attention from descending into the deeper realms. Instead, you will be repeating the mantra with "minimal effort", and giving your mind the space to wander a bit.

- Resist the temptation to make something happen, and allow the mantra to do the work.

This meditation easily produces a shift into deeper, more peaceful states of awareness. (The degree of this will vary from session to session.) It increases the flow of energy to the brain and clears away a good deal of physical and emotional toxins.

Because of this detoxification, it is best to keep this meditation to 10 or 15 minutes a day when first beginning. After a month or so, it can be increased to 20 minutes, but that should be the maximum for anyone who does not have quite a few years of meditation experience. Also, it is advisable to drink a lot of pure water.

Finally, mantra meditation accelerates spiritual growth as you achieve a state of relaxation and self-awareness.

1. Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
2. Begin repeating the mantra gently in your mind.
3. Repeat the mantra at whatever tempo feels most natural. There is no need to synchronize the mantra with your breathing, but if this occurs naturally, it's ok.
4. Allow the mantra to arise more faintly in your mind... repeating it with minimal effort.
5. Continue repeating the mantra faintly, and allow for whatever happens.

6. If at any time, you feel that you are slipping into a sleep-like or dream-like state, allow it to happen.
7. If and when you notice that your attention has drifted completely off the mantra, gently begin repeating it again, and continue with minimal effort.
8. After 10 or 15 minutes, stop repeating the mantra, and come out of your meditation slowly.

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RELAXATION MEDITATION

This remarkably easy and relaxing meditation *makes use of a little-known secret about the eyes.* Allowing the eyes to rest in a soft downward gaze has an instant, automatic relaxing effect. Relaxation meditation provides a great deal of stress reduction and can be used as a quick 2 minute relax and refresh break almost anywhere. You will also realize a heightened sense of alertness.

1. Sit comfortably with your spine reasonably straight.
2. Allow your eyes to rest comfortably downward, gazing softly, but not focused on anything.
3. Without closing your eyes completely, let your eyelids drop to a level that feels most comfortable.
4. Continue gazing downward... the act of gazing is your primary focus (rather than the area at which you are gazing). You may notice your breathing becoming more rhythmic.
5. It's ok to let your attention drift a bit. If your eyes become very heavy, it's ok to let them close. If you notice you've come out of your relaxed space, simply bring your attention back to your relaxed downward gaze.

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ENERGY HEALING MEDITATION

In this simple healing meditation, you send the powerful healing Life Force directly to the area in need of help. This Life Force is the energy behind all healing. Wherever this energy is flowing and in balance, there is health and well- being. Wherever this energy is blocked or out of balance, illness manifests.

Many people believe in visualization as a key healing tool. Energy healing meditation helps you to concentrate your positive energy on an afflicted area and alleviate any adverse symptoms and feelings that are being manifested through the physical pain.

1. Sit reasonably straight and close your eyes.
2. Breathe slowly, as silently as possible. (Holding your breath after inhaling or exhaling is not recommended.)
3. As you inhale, feel yourself breathing the healing Life Force in through your solar plexus. Picture this Life Force as a very refined, light energy.
4. As you exhale, gently direct this light energy to the afflicted area. If there is not a specific ailing area, disperse this light energy throughout your body as you exhale.
5. Continue until you feel the area has received enough Life Force.

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COLOR HEALING MEDITATION

We are not just our physical selves. *We are multi-dimensional beings, composed of an Inner Spirit, a mental body, an emotional body, a vital body, and a physical body.*

The energy of these bodies becomes progressively subtler from physical to spiritual. ***Illness begins with disharmony in one of these energy bodies.*** If not harmonized, the disease moves outward, affecting the denser bodies, ultimately manifesting as physical illness.

Total healing requires restoring harmony to all of our bodies. This meditation is designed to cleanse and harmonize your various bodies with the healing energies of color.

Color healing meditation will provide you with cleansing, balancing, & healing at all levels: Spiritual, Mental, Emotional, Vital, & Physical. It also will develop concentration & visualization abilities.

1. Sit comfortably with your eyes closed.
2. Visualize a large ball of radiant Golden light a few inches over your head. Visualize that ball of light slowly descending through your crown, filling your entire being with golden light.
3. Imagine yourself absorbing that light as it nourishes, cleanses & heals your whole being - your Spirit and all of your bodies - dissolving all blocked and toxic energies.

4. Repeat this exercise, visualizing a ball of Red light. Continue through the entire spectrum like this, visualizing a ball of Orange light; Yellow light; Green light; Blue light; Indigo light; and Violet light. Go through the spectrum at whatever pace feels appropriate.

5. Take some time to visualize yourself in a state of perfect, radiant health.

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CENTERING

Centering is meditation in action. Within you is a space that is always calm and at peace. This space is often referred to as your "calm center." Being centered means remaining in your calm center amidst the busyness of everyday life. Being centered means not allowing your inner light to be overshadowed by stressful circumstances or negative thoughts and emotions.

When you are centered, you are in a state of clarity, focus, peace, and balance. When you are not centered, you are unclear, unfocussed, stressed, and off balance.

A good centering technique will require only minimal attention, allowing you to keep some of your attention on the activity at hand.

Here are some very easy, effective centering techniques.

1. **Simple Breath Awareness**

   While involved in whatever you are doing, bring some attention to your breathing for just a few moments... it needn't be your full attention... just enough to bring you back to your calm center. Breathe naturally, or perhaps just a little more slowly and deeply.

2. **Reclaiming Your Energy**

   When you are feeling stressed and scattered, take several slow, deep breaths. With each in-breath, imagine you are pulling all of your scattered energy and attention back to your inner self... your calm center.

3. **Letting Go**

   This centering technique combines breath awareness with the phrase or mantra, "Let go." It is especially helpful when you are tense and/or fixating on a stressful situation or a negative thought or emotion.

   As you inhale, (silently or aloud) say, "Let"

   As you exhale, say "go"... while letting go of all that is stressing you.

4. **Inner Sun**

   Imagine a bright sun filling your heart chakra... the calm, subtle energy field that permeates your chest area. Imagine that sun gently emanating peace and joy throughout your entire being.

Meditation along with yoga are effective tools to lesson stress and provide a sense of calm that cannot be achieved through conventional exercise.