



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Meditation

Meditation is described as a state of consciousness, when the mind is free of scattered thoughts and various patterns. With meditation, one calms the mind to focus on one thing such as their breath or a mantra. The goal is to focus on only one simple thing as you gradually let go of all other thoughts and the outside world.

By controlling your attention as you meditate, you begin to feel more relaxed and at peace. When meditation is practiced on a regular basis, this peaceful feeling can last beyond the meditation itself. Meditation also allows you to become more awake and more deliberate about your actions, teaching you how to respond rather than react to situations in your life.

Let's take a look at some of the key benefits of meditation:

Stress Reduction

Meditation allows you to rid your mind of all the negative thoughts and emotions that are causing stress. This naturally induces relaxation and reduces stress.

Improved Concentration

Meditation requires intense concentration, which can bleed over into

our everyday lives. The more centered and focused we feel, the less distracted we are.

Increased Self Awareness

Meditation takes you deep within yourself and enables you to get in touch with your feelings and emotions and understand where they are coming from.

Increased Happiness

As discussed above, meditation enables you to really get to know yourself, which increases self acceptance and self confidence. In addition, meditation enables you to let go of stressful things and accept that they are simply out of your control, which significantly improves outlook and overall wellbeing.

Improved Physical Health

More specifically, meditation positively benefits both cardiovascular and immune health. Meditation induces relaxation, which increases the compound nitric oxide that causes blood vessels to open up and subsequently, blood pressure to drop, which is great for your heart health. Meditation has also been shown to

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boost antibodies when practiced regularly, which improves immune function.

Although meditation sounds simple, it takes discipline to remain still in body and mind, blocking out the world around you and quieting your thoughts. It can be quite challenging to “quiet the mind” when we are so accustomed to the fast paced, multi-tasking world that we live in today.

The good news is that there are so many different forms of meditation that you can find one that fits your lifestyle. Also, the ability to meditate improves with practice. Feel free to find a quiet place to sit and start with just a few minutes per day and work your way up to 20 - 30 minutes to get the maximum benefits.

Here are a few tips, from Zen Habits*, to help beginners get started with meditation:

Sit for just two minutes. Start with just two minutes a day for a week. If that goes well, increase by another two minutes and do that for a week. Continue this until you reach around 20-30 minutes per day.

Do it first thing each morning. Set a reminder for every morning when you get up. This ensures you will fit it in and it will not get lost in the shuffle. This will also start your day off on a positive peaceful note.

Don't get caught up in the how. Many people worry about where to sit, how to sit, what cushion to use, if you should listen to music, just breath or make a sound... When you are just starting this is not so important. To get started simply sit on a chair, or if you're comfortable, sit cross legged on the floor. Then just focus on just one thought and breathe deeply.

Check in with your feelings. As you first settle into your meditation session, simply check to see how you're feeling. How does

your body feel? What is the quality of your mind? This is a great time to get in touch with your thoughts and emotions.

Count your breaths. Now that you're settled in, turn your attention to your breath. Just place the attention on your breath as it comes in, and follow it through your nose all the way down to your lungs. Try counting “one” as you take in the first breath, then “two” as you breathe out. Repeat this to the count of 10, then start again at one.

Come back when you wander. Your mind will wander. When you notice your mind wandering, smile, and simply gently return to your breath. Count “one” again, and start over. You might feel a little frustration, but it's perfectly OK to not stay focused. Remember meditation takes practice; no one is good at it right away.

Don't worry about clearing the mind. It's so difficult to completely clear the mind. Of course, this can happen with long term meditation but is unlikely to happen right away and this is normal. Just try to focus your attention.

Smile when you're done. When you're finished with your two minutes, smile. Be grateful that you had this time to yourself and stuck with your commitment.

Remember that your Personal Assistant is available to provide you with additional resources to help you get started with meditation.

*Zenhabits.net

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