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FINDING PEACE THROUGH MEDITATION

BY YVETTE TEE

Find out how meditation can help you attain peace amidst a stressful life.

In today's society, in spite of a wealth of new age technology and entertainment offerings, millions of people around the world are suffering from mental depression, chronic diseases, stress and sleeping disorders. It appears that the more developed and affluent a society, people are less happy and lead more stressful lives. If prosperity and good economic measures are insufficient to generate a society of happy people, what is the secret ingredient of attaining peace and happiness?

The problem lies with the misconceptions and mental blockages about meditation. Here is the truth:

- Meditation is non-religious. It can be practised by anyone of any gender, culture or religion.
- You do not need to change your lifestyle to meditate. You can start meditating wherever you are and just as the way you are living. It is not necessary to leave your job and travel to the mountains to meditate.
- Meditation can definitely help you to train your mind to be more focused and to be still. Hence, even if you have a busy mind with hundreds of thoughts constantly, you can use meditation to calm and relax your mind.
- All you need is a few minutes of meditation a day to reap and enjoy its benefits. You need not sit for prolonged hours of meditation if you have a busy lifestyle.


In the 1800s, archaeologists examining the history of life in the Indus Valley (one of the oldest civilisations in the world) found clay seals of people in sitting posture of meditation. This evidence showed that humans practised meditation thousands of years ago. Today, meditation is becoming widely popular and millions of people are practising it all around the world. Even Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew is known to practise meditation. Worldwide, celebrities including Richard Gere, Madonna, Demi Moore, Gisele Bundchen, Orlando Bloom, Miranda Kerr and Jessica Alba have publicly shared the benefits they enjoy from regular meditation. If they can find time in their busy schedules to meditate, surely so can we.

Meditation does not only relieve stress and anxiety. It is highly effective in slowing down the ageing process, strengthens the immune system, promotes good quality and deep sleep,

reduces blood pressure, improves blood circulation in the body, decreases the incidence of heart attacks and helps to deal with depression and mental tension. In addition, meditation optimises brain function and reduces one's dependency on drugs. Studies have shown that long-term meditators that have been practising meditation for over five years were physiologically twelve years younger than their chronological age. People who meditate are also able to recover quicker from illness and injury and have significantly lower levels of cortisol (stress hormone) in their system than non-meditators.

So what is meditation and what do you really do when you meditate? Many people mistakenly confuse meditation with contemplation, thinking, hypnosis, daydreaming or fantasising. Meditation is none of the above. Simply put, meditation is a scientific and systematic technique of focusing and observing the mind inwardly in a relaxed and concentrated manner. It is the simple technique of learning how to pay attention to and understand the various levels of yourself – the body, the breath and the mind. Meditation is not having an internal conversation or argument with yourself or intensifying the thinking process. Meditation is simply a quiet, one-pointed focus of attention and awareness. By giving yourself an internal focus of attention, you help the mind to stop other stressful mental processes, such as worrying, reasoning and having an internal conflict or struggle within yourself.

There are numerous techniques of meditation, ranging from breath awareness, the practice of mindfulness in our daily activities such as walking, eating and drinking, and focusing on a sound or visual image. If you are serious about taking up meditation, the first step is really to decide that you want to learn how to meditate and that you are ready to set aside a good few minutes a day for your practice. The second step is to find a good teacher and attend a workshop that you can learn from. The third step is to practise what you have learnt.

There are a few more reasons why you should practise meditation. Studies have shown that regular meditators cope better with stressful situations and lead happier and more fulfilling lives. People who meditate are more effective as leaders, work better with others and are more focused. At the same time, they also have better relationships, lead healthier lives and are more joyful to be around with. 

For more information on meditation, please visit Yvette's website at www.yogawithyvette.com.

