



Introduction to Meditation

Yoga for Mental Health

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Introduction to Meditation

Meditation is a well known method for reducing stress and increasing tolerance. There are many different ways that you can practice and you will probably find that some ways are more accessible to you than others. In this brief introduction to meditation you will have the opportunity to try 3 methods - they are described below.

Walking Meditation

Find a safe space, without too many distractions. Identify a path, about 20 feet long, that you can travel. Set a timer for about half of the amount of time that you think you would like to practice. Walk the length of your path, turn and walk back. Observe sensations (including physical, mental and emotional) but avoid getting attached to anything in particular. Let the movement in your body encourage the movement or fluidity of your awareness. Repeat this action until your timer goes off and then stand quietly for a few moments. If you would like to continue, reset the timer and begin again. If you are ready to move on, do so.

Vipassana (Insight) Meditation

Find a comfortable position where you are relaxed but alert, where your spine and torso are long and where you can breathe easily and deeply. Set a timer for about half of the time that you think you would like to practice. You may find that closing your eyes helps to bring your attention inward. Until the timer goes off, simply observe: sensations, thought and feelings. Allow your attention to move from one sensation, thought or feeling to the next without effort. Avoid the temptation to explore associations, make plans or pass judgment. Practice being an unbiased observer of your experience. Practice regularly and consistently for the greatest benefit: one minute every day is a reasonable place to start.

Metta (Lovingkindness) Meditation

Please modify the phrases below so that the words resonate with you and your wishes.

May I be safe and protected.

May I be joyful.

May I be healthy and strong.

May my path unfold with ease before me.

Find a comfortable position where you are relaxed but alert, where your spine and torso are long and where you can breathe easily and deeply. Set a timer for about half of the time that you think you would like to practice. You may find that closing your eyes helps to bring your attention inward. This practice is also helpful "on the fly" when you notice that your thoughts seem out of your control.

Repeat the phrases to yourself, as many times as seems appropriate. After repeating the phrases with the pronoun "I," call to mind a beloved person and repeat the phrases for them, then for a neutral person, a difficult person, and finally, for all beings. When the timer goes off, wish the metta phrases once more for yourself.