

The Importance of Connection (to Self)

Let us focus on connection.

The Pandemic taught us a lot about connection... how much we need it, how important it is, how we grow from it. Throughout that time of physical disconnection, most of us continued to stay connected and busy, with life stuff in general, and also with life stuff that helped us get through the uncertainty and disruption of what "covid life" brought our way.

When our mind is occupied by worries stemming from activities that occur outside our control, besides bringing on stress, we actually become less connected to our own self.

For this reason, and especially in our current age of media, it is even more important than ever to take a few minutes a day to think about NOTHING. To intentionally sit (or stand, or lay down, or float – the point is intention, not doing it someone else's way) and release your mind from having any thoughts. Through this intentional practice, we naturally deepen our connection to self.

If you have a hard time meditating here are two questions you could think on when you take time to close your eyes: What does my breathing sound like? What does nothing look like?

The idea is to let go.

To let go of thoughts as they occur, and especially without judgment.

To let go of expectations and results.

To let go of the need to accomplish anything.

If you keep a steady practice of meditation, just 2-3 minutes a day even, you will see a change in your perspective on life. And calm comes, as well.

Please share your experience with meditation in the comments

below.

Finding Inner Peace and Calm in a Time of Chaos

Have you started to spend less time on social media in an effort to avoid the seemingly never-ending negative messages?

Do you feel like you just want to put the news on mute for a while so you aren't constantly exposed to the negativity?

With all the chaos we're exposed to on a daily basis, it can seem overwhelming and stressful to be trapped in the house, full of uncertainty. However, it is important to realize that peace and tranquility come from within and can be found even in the most challenging times. Making an effort to find this inner peace is one of the most important things you can do in this chaotic time.

Here are some ideas for you to find inner peace.

Meditation

Meditation is great way to calm the mind. There are so many ways to meditate, but you can make it really simple. Just focus on the air moving in and out of your body as you breathe for 10-20 breaths. This will help you stay present in the moment. A meditation practice allows you to feel balanced from within and allows you to reflect on outside surroundings rather than consuming them. You can also listen to a guided meditation to keep your attention more focused on "nothing." Download one from my store, or find a free one on YouTube. You will learn different breathing techniques that can help you

calm down when you find yourself stressing out. If you keep up a short, steady practice of meditation, you will begin to notice that you are not as anxious and overwhelmed.

Routine

Developing a routine, even when stuck at home, is a crucial way to find structure in your life when there are challenges put in front of you. Waking up at the same time, making time to meditate or journal each morning, and reading before bed are a few examples of tasks you can incorporate into your daily routine to keep you feeling calm. I've noticed that most everyone chooses to take two minutes daily to brush his or her teeth. Imagine creating a daily routine of just 10 minutes that incorporates a couple other self-help practices. Start small to see a big impact on your life. When you keep up positive habits, it gives you confidence to continue and motivation to put even more time into your personal development.

Nature

"Nature is the best medicine." Not everyone has a back yard filled with trees and a meditation garden. If you DO have access to that, try to get out for a few minutes every day. Enjoy fresh air and the peace that nature holds. If you *don't* have nature in your backyard, make it a priority to take a walk in nature at least once a week. Find a river or stream to wander next to, a path in a park, or a trail in the woods. Being in nature takes away the feeling of being trapped in the house. It is also a great stress reliever that will help you feel gratitude and inner peace during tough times. If you are committed to bringing inner peace to your life, schedule a 30 minute walk every day. It is a great way to stay active and get a breath of fresh air to reduce your stress and anxiety levels. When you are constantly surrounded by technology,

filled with news that may seem concerning, your stress is likely to rise. When you intentionally step away and let go of this attachment, you will instantly feel calmer.

Watch Your News Intake

When chaos is going on around the world and there is stress in the air, the news is the main source that people base their opinions off of and process information from. However, it is no surprise that news sensationalizes negative situations. The more disturbing the information, the more viewers, right? The ever-increasing bad news can make the brain feel overwhelmed, anxious, and stressed. While it is important to stay up to date with current events, it is also important to not let it consume you. Many of these things are out of your control and after you take the precautionary measures that you can, it is important to step away from the news in order to relax the mind.

Read

Reading a book is great way to clear your mind and distract yourself from your surroundings when they seem overwhelming or negative. It is a great way to restore your emotions and reduce stress without staring at a screen or scrolling through social media. When you read a book, you are improving your brain function, and this has proven to improve mental wellbeing. Whether it is an educational book, self-help book, or fiction, you will find that you are able to learn a lot and grow both professionally and personally in an enjoyable way.

While each of these activities is “easy” on its own, it takes YOU to make the first step. Making yourself a priority, especially in chaotic times, is the only certain way to come to your own inner peace and find calm.

Start by doing just a few minutes a day of healthy habits. See how it affects your life in a positive way. Then add a few more minutes. Once you are up to 30 minutes a day of putting your well being first through practicing calming habits, you will easily recognize the peace developing within you.

What new positive habit will you take on first?

Can Meditation Keep Your Brain Young?

As people age, their brains lose weight and volume. These changes may start to occur in people as young as their mid-20s. Astoundingly, research has shown that people who meditate to lose less brain mass over time than those who do not. In particular, research concluded people who meditated showed less of a decrease in their white brain matter.

White brain matter acts as a connector and insulator for gray brain matter. It carries nerve impulses between the functional parts of the brain. Gray brain matter houses the various neurological centers of the brain, which direct speech, motor skills, memory, and more.

It is estimated that meditation is practiced by more than 15 million Americans and many more people around the world. It has its roots in eastern culture, but has been whole-heartedly embraced in western societies.

Meditation has a wide variety of benefits, including:

- Improves sleep
- Inner peace and tranquility
- Reduces chronic pain

- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Reduces depression
- Boosts attention
- Improves immunity
- Helps with weight loss
- Boosts memory
- Improves heart health and lowers blood pressure
- Improves wellbeing and allows for deeper relationships

Now researchers are finding that meditation may also help to keep our brains young!

Interesting Experiments

A team of researchers from UCLA wondered if meditation preserves the gray matter of people who meditate as well. The researchers found meditation to have a widespread effect on the entire brain not just specific regions of the brain associated with meditation. The study compared people having years of meditation experience with those who had none.

The meditators had an average of 20 years of experience with meditation practice. The age range of the of the study participants included people in their mid-20s to their late 70s. Nearly equal numbers of men and women participated in the study with 28 men and 22 women. They found the meditators still experienced a decline in gray matter with age but less than non-meditators. The researchers noted the positive outcome of the study but caution people reviewing the results: they were unable to establish a direct link to meditation and the preservation of gray matter.

Another UCLA study conducted in 2012 showed meditators to have more gyrification, folds in their brains, which may contribute to an ability process information faster than usual. Meditation appears to allow practitioners to maintain both white and gray matter and form increased connections in the

brain; it seems to keep the brain young. Along with its positive effects on white and gray brain matter, meditation appears to have a positive effect on other body functions.

Anti-Aging Benefits Of Meditation

The youth-preserving and renewing benefits of meditation include:

- Meditation increases DHEA, which facilitates the production of the hormones that maintain fat and mineral metabolism.
- An increase in Melatonin, which acts as antioxidant, supplies immune support and fights depression.
- A decrease in cortisol, the stress hormone that encourages the body to retain dangerous belly fat associated with heart disease and diabetes.

The Effects Of Meditation

Part of feeling and maintaining a youthful mental outlook centers around the quality of one's thinking patterns. Meditators learn to quiet mental chaos and build their ability to concentrate. They experience greater clarity of thought and tend to react less and respond more to circumstances. In short, they maintain their ability to be highly adaptive and think quickly with the additional benefit of choosing their response to situations rather than reacting to them.

How To Meditate

Meditators in the studies above, typically meditated twice a day for 20 minutes per sitting. Some schools of thought recommend meditation to start the day and to close it. However, a person may meditate whenever they have time in their schedule to accommodate it. And not everyone is ready to sit for a 20 minute stretch. Meditation is not an all or nothing proposition. It is also beneficial to meditate in shorter increments of time, sitting for 5 or 10 minutes. Consistency is the key here, not so much the length of time.

There are also several different methods of meditation,

including:

- Primordial Sound Meditation
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
- Zen
- Transcendental Meditation
- Yoga Meditation (Kundalini)
- Focused Attention Meditation
- Open Monitoring Meditation
- Vipassana Meditation
- Loving Kindness Meditation (Metta Meditation)
- Mantra Meditation (OM Meditation)
- Qigong (Chi kung)

Getting Started

A person new to meditation needs to be patient; it takes time to train the mind to focus and settle into a meditation practice. The first step is to decide which form of meditation you wish to practice, and then learn how to do it. If you'd like a little guidance on how to start, please consider joining the [Know Yourself membership](#) where you will gain support and many resources to support your journey of self-discovery!

The benefits of a consistent meditation practice can develop in a few weeks with continued practice preserving your brain's youthful dynamics for years to come.

The Health Advantages of and Medical Conditions Helped by

Meditation

You may have heard about the health benefits of yoga in improving mental and physical health and improving flexibility, and you might assume that meditation is the same thing. Although meditation can certainly be incorporated into yoga, on its own, it is an entirely different practice.

How Meditation Works

Meditation involves *stopping your mind* while maintaining a state of awareness. It is much more than sitting and concentrating in a quiet area for a designated amount of time; it involves clearing your mind of thoughts, achieving a deep inward peace, and maintaining alertness in the process.

People often use certain postures, breathing techniques, and even chants to help facilitate the process, but these are not required, and they are not the act of meditation itself, just support tools.

As a beginner, you might consider taking a meditation class (or a yoga class that heavily emphasizes meditation) or invest in a video that introduces you to the concept of meditation and teaches you various techniques for facilitating the process. It does not come as easily for some as it does for others. Achieving a profound, deep sense of self, a “thoughtless alertness,” requires some guidance at first.

Specific Ways That Meditation Improves Health

Not only is meditation one of the very best ways to reduce stress, which is linked to a whole host of health issues and according to the Benson-Henry Institute, 60 to 90% of doctor visits are for conditions that are caused by stress, but Harvard University researchers conducted a study that connects deep relaxation to genetic changes in the body.

They found that “disease fighting genes” are more active in people who regularly practice meditation, compared with people in the control group.

These genes protect the body against a number of health issues, including:

- Heart Disease
- Asthma
- Infertility
- Arthritis
- Various skin conditions
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Meditation even helps to boost immunity, and studies show that cancer patients have recovered more effectively due to meditation and are less at risk for developing another tumor.
- The benefits of stress reduction cannot be overstated.

Meditation makes the body less responsive to stress hormones, which lowers blood pressure, improves blood circulation, improves digestion and immunity, and establishes emotional and neurological “balance.”

How does this work exactly?

It largely comes down to hormones. Stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenalin increase blood pressure and heart rate, while “feel good” chemicals such as serotonin, which are released in a state of relaxation, work to repair cells.

More Health Boosting Benefits Of Meditation

- According to the Benson-Henry Institute, chronic pain patients reduce their physician visits by 36% when they practice regular meditation.
- Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes, a journal of the American Heart Association, reported in their 2012 issue that a 5 year study on patients who had coronary heart

disease found a 48% reduction in deaths, heart attacks, and strokes in those subjects who regularly practiced Transcendental Meditation versus those who did not.

- An analysis of a controlled trial, published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine on October 2013 reported significantly greater effect of Transcendental Meditation in reducing anxiety over conventional medical treatments and other forms of meditation and relaxation practices.
- According to Behavioral Medicine, Volume 16, a 50% reduction in visits to HMO doctors was found when a relaxation-response based practice, like meditation is used.

How To Incorporate Meditation Into Your Life

Here are ideas for incorporating meditation into your own life. Beginners could focus on numbers 1 and 2, and over time experiment with the other ideas.

1. **Participate In A Group Class.** You may be able to find a class in your community specifically dedicated to meditation, but due to popular culture, it may be easier to find a yoga class that heavily focuses on meditation, such as Kundalini Yoga or Ananda Yoga. Many people prefer taking these classes long-term as opposed to meditating by themselves because the group setting helps them to better focus or because they enjoy the sense of community.
2. **Use A Video or Audio To Guide Your Meditation.** Some meditation videos can be found for free online, such as through YouTube, or you can order a professional DVD or online subscription. If you prefer a mix of yoga and meditation, the best types of yoga to focus on include Kundalini, Ananda, Jivamukti, and Integral. Be sure to check out the free guided meditation file – available at the right of this page.
3. **Devote 20+ Minutes In The Morning Or Evening.** Research

shows that just 20 minutes of consistent meditation sessions can have tremendous health benefits. Make time before your day starts or before you go to bed to meditate. Some people find that their minds are clearer at these times.

4. **Use Free Time To Meditate In Nature.** Many people find that sitting in nature – under a tree, on top of a mountain, or in a quiet place in the sunshine – helps them to facilitate the meditation process. It's also a great way to get outside for Vitamin D.
5. **Meditate While At Work.** This is certainly the most difficult way to meditate because distractions at work can interrupt the process, but many people have been able to achieve a state of meditation *while* performing job duties. Talk about being dedicated to the cause!

Everyone is different. Experiment with different ways of meditating too see what you like and what comes easiest for you. Also try experimenting at different times of the day and for different periods of time, but aim for at least 20 minutes to reap the most benefit. The health effects on your body are well worth the effort!

Science Shows Meditation Slows Aging in the Brain

As the life expectancy continues to rise as it has for the last century, the percentage of the population that we are seeing with problems that we associate with an aging brain such as dementia or Alzheimer's continues to grow. By 2050, the percentage of the population that is age 60 and older is expected to triple, and, as a result, there is an expectation

that dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases will also increase (World Health Organization).

Finding the path to slowing the cognitive effects of aging on the brain will be critical to the sustainment and quality of life for our aging population.

Science and Meditation

Science shows that meditation can decrease the rate at which our brain is aging. Age triggers a natural aging process of our mind. The cortex of our brain coats the surface of the cerebrum and cerebellum. Think of the cortex is commonly referred to as “gray matter” and it has the responsibility of processing information. The gray matter in our brain shrinks over time and leads to memory loss, verbal changes, and a decrease in the ability to process some forms of information.

Recent research shows that there is a correlation between age and brain gray matter in those who consistently practice meditation long-term. In fact, meditation can help us to preserve cognition, maintain the health of our brain tissue while also reducing the risk for conditions like dementia or Alzheimers.

Meditation and the Aging Brain

Meditation is useful in helping you to manage depression, stress, anxiety or pain. Studies show that mindful meditation is particularly helpful in supporting brain health through telomere elongation, hemodynamics, and cerebral blood flow.

In one study, 33 individuals who regularly practice meditation were asked to participate in a study looking to examine the effects of regular meditation habits on the brain. The study demonstrated that individuals who regularly engaged in the continued practice of mindful meditation experienced multiple benefits including increased sensory perception and

sensitivity, and emotional awareness (Laner, Schuster, Dietsche, Jansen, Ott, and Sommer, [Effects of Long-Term Mindfulness Meditation on Brain's White Matter Microstructure and its Aging](#)).

Another study analyzed the link between age and cortical thickness. That study demonstrates that meditators have a thicker cortical layer than those who do not indulge in meditation, and was even similar to that of a 20-to-30-year-old (by Lazar et al. Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness).

A third study evaluated the link between age and total gray matter volume as well as local gray matter volume. Those individuals who did not participate in meditation experienced a loss of gray matter over a period, while those who did engage in meditation had a gain of total gray matter (by Pagnoni, Age effects on gray matter volume and attentional performance in Zen meditation. Neurobiol. Aging).

This research demonstrates that meditation ignites a biological response in brain aging and neurodegeneration. It may slow, stall, or even reverse age-related brain degeneration. (by Luders et al., Forever younger: potential age-defying effects of long-term meditation on gray matter atrophy).

In Summary

We are all growing older each day. Although we cannot stop it from happening, we may be able to take action based on the scientific evidence to slow its impact on our brain. There is still a great deal of research to be done to examine further the positive effects that meditation may have on the health of minds. It is a cost-effective approach that has the opportunity for integration into our everyday health routines.

Meanwhile, you can take the first step to add routine

meditation practice into your daily regimen to begin reaping the benefits of reducing age-related brain deficits.



If you find yourself struggling to find peace and understanding in your daily life, it might be time to adapt a meditation practice. This short ebook covers aspects of meditation and self-discovery, introduces the “Rainbow Meditation Technique” and reviews the benefits of meditation.

[Buy Now](#)

3 Easy Meditation Techniques

Look all around you, distractions abound everywhere.

Never mind what’s going on in our heads.... let alone feelings, emotions, reactions. Or influences like competition, jealousy, and other negative thoughts. For these reasons alone, a meditation practice is practically essential.

Doing more, being more, achieving more, leads to a stress-filled lifestyle, with ever increasing stress levels which can result in heart problems, hypertension, among other ailments. Relaxation is exactly what the doctor should be ordering!

Relaxation can be achieved through meditation. What? Something so simple?

Yes! BUT! To be most effective, meditation is best performed on a regular basis and with an intentional mind.

Meditation practice has been around for thousands of years. Over time and through science, it has been shown to be an effective way to balance one's physical, emotional, and mental well being. Different forms of meditation have well-known physical, psychological, and spiritual health advantages. Among these advantages are enhanced focus, relaxation, and a more profound understanding of yourself and others.

If you aren't sure which type of meditation technique to try first, read these brief descriptions so you can find the method that most resonates with you, and begin with closing your eyes for just a few minutes.

Traditional Meditation

A study of the different types of meditation techniques has to start with traditional types of meditation. This type has been around for many decades. Traditional meditation is what a lot of people think about when they think of meditation. In this type, the meditator focuses on a mantra, an object, a scripture, image, or a bodily function such as their breathing or heartbeat or movement. When the mind wanders, the meditator brings their attention back to the focus of the meditation. This form of meditation requires a long time to master the deeper levels.

Binaural Meditation

The idea behind binaural meditation is that you listen to sounds being offered to your ears in stereo. In most cases, this technique is done with a set of headphones so that each ear can receive different signals. The two signals resolve to a frequency that induces a meditative state in the listener. This method can trigger a meditative state that usually only comes with many years of practice using traditional

meditation, even for a beginner. Binaural audio recordings can be found online.

Guided Visualization

A lot of people have heard of this form of meditation technique. With guided visualization, the focus is on the sound of a voice as it guides you through the meditation. When listening to a recorded guided visualization, this is usually paired with a soundtrack of some kind, often music, rain or waterfalls, ocean waves, or a combination. The soundtrack adds to the relaxation and the guide assists you get through to more profound levels easier than if you were meditating alone.

There are many other types of meditation techniques, and it is possible to combine different types of meditation, such as doing a guided visualization might while also concentrating on breathing. Don't overthink getting started with meditation... very basically, you can just close your eyes for a few minutes and try to think of nothing. If you mind wanders, just come back to nothing, again, and again.