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Meditation for Stress Management

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Meditation for Stress Management

True relaxation requires more than simply doing nothing or sitting in front of the television. In order to really relax you need to react to the body's physical responses to stress and learn to counteract them.

One way to do this is through meditation. Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years. It helps you balance yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. It has been proven to help people quit smoking, drinking, and reverse depression. It can be a powerful tool in reducing acute and chronic stress.

Meditation Techniques

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing meditation focuses on deep, cleansing breaths. It seems simple but is a powerful way to reduce stress. Deep breathing alone is an excellent way to prevent and reduce the effects of stress, but it's also an integral component to many other meditation techniques, including the ones we'll mention in this article.

- The key to deep breath meditation is getting as much air as possible into your body. Sit up as straight as possible and breathe deeply from your abdomen.
- Place one hand on your abdomen and one on your chest and focus on the breaths as you take them.
- Exhale from your mouth and try to expel as much air as possible before taking another deep breath.
- While doing this try to clear your mind of anything other than the breathing. Do this by counting while breathing in and out.

Body Scanning

The body scanning meditation consists of scanning the parts of your body one at a time, and mentally releasing the stress and tension from each as you slowly scan the body. While you are scanning the body you will practice deep breathing as well, as this will increase the body awareness and relaxation.

- Lie down on your back, with your legs straight out and hands flat on the floor. Whatever feels comfortable.
- For about 2-3 minutes, practice deep breathing. Once you begin to feel a sense of relaxation, begin focusing on your body.
- Start with your toes, and then move slowly up the body focusing on each part at a time. While focused on each body part, imagine the tension being released from that part and it being physically relaxed. Spend no less than 30 seconds -1 minute on each body part. End with your facial muscles, including your mouth, forehead and cheeks.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is possibly the most difficult meditation technique. It focuses on how you feel in the moment, both internally and externally. The key to this is to not think about or dwell on the past, including experiences that cause stress. The idea is that if you focus on how you feel in the moment it will help you let go of the guilt or stressful feelings you feel about past stress events.

If you worry by nature, this technique will be the most difficult to master but could possibly be the most beneficial to your overall and long term stress management.

- Mindfulness meditation can be practiced in a variety of ways, including, walking, exercising, running, or general meditation. Find the way that works best for you.
- Find a quiet environment that will reduce distractions and prevent interruptions. Be sure to maintain a comfortable position.
- Find a point of focus that you can focus on instead of your negative thoughts. The focus point along with deep breathing will help you focus on the present and not dwell on past events or feelings.
- Don't criticize yourself if your thoughts wander to the negative. Simply realign them back to the present and your focal point.

Yoga

Yoga is a form of exercise that involves deep breathing, mindfulness, and body scanning. While it can be an excellent way to get or stay in shape, it is also a great way to practice and learn meditation. To achieve true relaxation from yoga, you will need to find a class that focuses on stress reduction rather than exercise or try to practice yoga at your own home or a peaceful place.

- Start each session off with a deep breathing meditation session. Practice mindfulness while going through the poses.
- End each session with a body scan and another deep breathing session.
- It's important not be intimidated by yoga, go at your own pace and skill/flexibility level.

Routine Relaxation

Quite possibly, the best way to use meditation as a stress reduction exercise is to learn to incorporate it into your daily life. Each of the techniques mentioned here can be practiced daily to prevent or maintain your stress level.

- Set aside time at the same time each day to practice mindfulness, deep breathing, and even yoga.
- Learn how to identify when your stress level has reached a point of negativity rather than a normal motivation-kind-of-stress and react accordingly.
- Don't let slip ups or failures set you back. Just get yourself back on track or start over. It's not a competition.



- Practice mini-meditation or relaxation techniques while you are doing other tasks, such as responding to emails, washing dishes, or even watching television.

Conclusion

Using these meditation techniques will help with your stress management goals. Find the one that works best for your lifestyle and make a commitment to practice them.