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what is meditation?

THE WORD MEDITATION is derived from two Latin words: *meditari* (to think, to dwell upon, to exercise the mind) and *mederi* (to heal). Its Sanskrit derivation 'medha' means wisdom.

Meditation is a process for resolving conflicts. It is the simple and exact process of becoming aware of who you are. It is learning to know yourself as you really are. Meditation is a practice of gently freeing yourself from the troubles that gnaw at you so that you can free yourself and experience the joy of being in the present moment. Meditation is not a ritual belonging to any particular religion, culture, or group. Learning how to be still is the method of meditation. And if you meditate regularly you will find that you have become more calm and alert to what is needed in the present moment.

The intention is not to remove stimulation but rather to direct your concentration to one healing element - one sound, one word, one image, or one's breath. When the mind is "filled" with the feeling of calm and peace, it cannot take off on its own, create unwanted stress, or get depressed.

Today I will give you an example of three types of meditation and the benefits of practising meditation.

Yoga Nidra is a structured relaxation practice which can lead to deeper meditative states. The teacher will bring your awareness to certain parts of the body, you don't have to move the part or relax it, all you have to do is simply become aware of it. One of the advantages of yoga nidra is the comfort of lying down. During the practice of yoga nidra, one appears to be asleep, but the consciousness is functioning at a deeper level of awareness. For this reason, yoga nidra is often referred to as psychic sleep or deep relaxation with the inner awareness. In this threshold state between sleep and wakefulness, contact with the subconscious and unconscious dimensions occurs spontaneously.

Concentrative Meditation focuses the attention on the breath, an image, or a sound (mantra), in order to still the mind and allow a greater awareness and clarity to emerge. This is like a zoom lens in a camera; we narrow our focus to a selected field.

The simplest form of concentrative meditation is to sit quietly and focus the attention on the breath. Yoga and meditation practitioners believe that there is a direct correlation between one's breath and one's state of the mind. For example, when a person is anxious, frightened, agitated, or distracted, the breath will tend to be shallow,

rapid, and uneven. On the other hand, when the mind is calm, focussed, and composed, the breath will tend to be slow, deep, and regular. Focusing the mind on the continuous rhythm of inhalation and exhalation provides a natural object of meditation. As you focus your awareness on the breath, your mind becomes absorbed in the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. As a result, your breathing will become slower and deeper, and the mind becomes more tranquil and aware. Mindfulness Meditation involves opening the attention to become aware of the continuous passing parade of sensations and feelings, images, thoughts, sounds, smells, and so forth without becoming involved in thinking about them. The person sits quietly and simply witnesses whatever goes through the mind, not reacting or becoming involved with thoughts, memories, worries, or images. This helps to gain a more calm, clear, and non-reactive state of mind. Mindfulness meditation can be likened to a wide-angle lens. Instead of narrowing your sight to a selected field as in concentrative meditation, here you will be aware of the entire field.

Benefits from regular meditation –

- o Deep rest, as measured by decreased metabolic rate, lower heart rate and reduced work load of the heart
- o Decreased high blood pressure
- o Improved flow of air to the lungs resulting in deeper, easier breathing, particularly helpful for asthma sufferers
- o Decreased anxiety
- o Decreased depression
- o Decreased irritability and moodiness
- o Improved learning ability and memory
- o Increased feelings of vitality and rejuvenation
- o Increased happiness
- o Increased emotional stability

The longer an individual practises meditation, the greater the likelihood that his or her goals and efforts will shift toward personal and spiritual growth. Many individuals who initially learn meditation for its self-regulatory aspects find that as their practice deepens they are drawn more and more into the realm of the "spiritual."

Wishing you wellness & happiness, namaste.



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