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Introduction

Meditation is an ancient practice that is known to improve the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being of a person. Today it is also considered the highest form of relaxation. In fact tens of millions of people are known to practice this said activity worldwide. Meditation is also known to have numerous health benefits. It is being used to treat mental issues and other problems related to the body. In this guide we dive into the world of meditation and demystify the sometimes shrouded information and illuminate it for the inquisitive mind. Now, Have you ever wondered how did it start?

The Vedas of the Hindu traditions have the earliest records of meditation. Nevertheless, Hinduism does not have monopoly over meditation as a practice, since early records have also been found linking meditative practices to Taoism in China and Buddhism in India.

For many centuries, meditation has served practitioners well. In fact, it has become an accepted approach in dealing with various

psychological and physiological conditions that assail modern man. Today, meditation is generally recommended for people who need respite from suffering and stress.

The Purpose Of Meditation

In reference to its religious origins, meditation is originally intended as the means to an end, which is enlightenment or salvation. Through meditation, the end goal can be achieved because it is a practice that increases a person's awareness of the moment as well as spiritual understanding. Meditation is essentially a spiritual practice; however, its benefits go beyond that of the spiritual. Patanjali, an Indian sage referred to meditation as "self-realization" or absolute awareness of oneself.

In the early days of meditation, the practice could only be bequeathed by a teacher or guru to his student or disciple. Nowadays, anyone can enter into the meditative state and there are no religious sanctions, since the different religions of the world support its practice for as long as their basic tenets are followed.

From The Ancients To Modern Times

Historians believe that meditation was already widely practiced even before recorded history, particularly amongst the first Indian civilizations that emerged at the banks of the Indus and the Ganges. The best guess is that meditation has been in existence for as long as 5,000 years.

Religions were formed and all of these belief systems incorporated meditative practice based on their tenets and philosophies. The major religions that are known to promote the practice of meditation are Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism. Since then meditation has evolved into the structured practice that it is today.

Development Of Meditation

The Buddhists were the first to formalize the **practice of meditation** in India about 2,500 years ago. Gautama Buddha,

the founder of this world religion was the first to establish an organized approach to enlightenment that was founded on formal meditation. Buddhist scriptures clearly demonstrated the importance of meditative practice in the attainment of “Nirvana.” This form of meditation spread from India into Tibet, reaching China in the Second Century.

Historical records show that the very first translations of Buddhist writings into Chinese appeared in the 6th century. The Chinese played an important role in the increase in the variations of the forms of meditation, which are practiced today. Buddhism eventually became as important to the Chinese as Taoism and Confucianism. Buddhist principals and teachers were assimilated into Chinese culture and soon enough it crossed the sea to be taken in and embraced in Japan.

In turn, the Japanese were instrumental in developing the practice known today as Zen meditation. On the whole, meditation has many faces and it varies no matter where you are situated. One thing is for sure, Meditation can **benefit the body and the mind**. Now, Let us start this journey into the ancient

practice that can promote not just physical but also spiritual and mental health as well.

Chapter 1 – The Development & Origins Of Meditation

Meditation is now a systemized practice that dates back centuries. In fact, this practice started as early as the ancient time. One of the pervasive arguments that continues to rage about the subject concerns questions of when, where, and how meditation originated.

We may never know for sure, but as we have just seen in the introduction, looking at historical evidence points the location (Where?) as the Indus Valley and the time (When?) at around 4,000 to 5,000 years ago.

“How”- is a question that the experts are still at a loss for an answer, though there is an agreement among experts that informal practice of meditation could date back more than five millennia. It is simply hard to trace back how the practice was actually developed.

Today, meditation is an important activity in all the major world religions. Buddhists spend hours in the lotus position, aspiring to achieve what The Buddha realized after 49 days in the meditative state. Meanwhile, Catholic monks meditate by spending hours on end contemplating and meditating on the Word of God.

Meditation is dependent on the religion on where it is being practice.

Diverse Cultures And Civilizations

Early civilizations that thrived in China and Japan studied and developed meditation as well as the Indians. Historians often present the argument that meditation is an important element that helped define the spiritual practices of Eastern philosophies. This common element unites the need of humankind to understand himself, the Universe, and the interplay between the two, no matter what culture or religion he belongs to.

When a civilization starts seeking to improve spiritually and socially, then it is very likely that meditation is practiced not only by the religious leaders but by common folk as well.

Aboriginal cultures that existed in Australia at around the same time are believed to practice meditation. However, there is no definitive evidence on record that they did engage in meditative practices. In the meantime, Native Americans who lived centuries ago have passed on numerous cultural practices to their modern counterparts, one of which is meditation.

Some experts argue that the trance-like states entered by members of indigenous tribes during certain rituals qualify as a form of meditation. In this case, it is reasonable to assume that their ancestors, who occupied the same land centuries ago, were practicing the same method to achieve self-awareness and focused introspection, which is part of the current definition of “meditation.”

Siddhartha Gautama

One of the biggest influences on the development of meditation was Siddhartha Gautama who lived in India at around 500 B.C. Siddhartha Gautama would eventually bear the title, “Buddha”

after attaining enlightenment while seated under a sacred tree in the lotus position, which is an attitude of meditation.

The Buddha's teachings form the tenets of Buddhism, which is one of the major religions of the world today. The Buddha espouses meditation as a means to achieve Enlightenment, in the same way that he did.

Gautama Buddha was one of the first to establish and formalize meditation in the context of a religious tradition. Buddhist meditation as we know it today comprises four main components. These are **mindfulness, concentration, insight, and tranquility**. These foundations are inculcated in Buddhist meditation, which is one of the most popular forms of meditation being practiced even by non-Buddhists.

The history of meditation is very rich. It is interesting to discover where it actually originated. The most common questions about it are yet to be answered. No matter where it started, one thing is for sure Meditation has many benefits which we will uncover next.

Chapter 2 – Benefits Of Meditating Daily

There is so much to be gained from meditating every day, the health and vitality benefits are available to anyone who makes the time to practice this ancient and powerful practice. A way of life for many serious individuals, meditation is widely known and appreciated by people from all walks of life, however, not all practitioners are aware of the many benefits to meditating regularly.

Some people only choose to sit in stillness and silence because they are told or instructed to do so, like at a martial arts class, depending on the art being studied, it is common for many eastern masters to promote meditation before and after sessions for clarity and energy conservation before training, and after to calm the mind, allow energy to flow back to its internal bank and to revitalise the spirit. There is a reason why masters use meditation, and this alone should get your attention.

Same with other art forms like Chi Gong and Yoga, or healing arts like Shamanism or Reiki, these all rely on meditation to affect a variety of health and wellness aspects. The benefits of meditation when coupled with other similar practices are astonishing, seeing many people having fixed or improved many areas of their personal everyday lives, thanks to their smart choice to make an addition like meditation in their lives.

Used for enhancing concentration and information retention, great for studying, especially for people who have difficulty remembering details, just try 15-20 minutes of meditation before you begin with your study and you'll notice the difference that it makes.

Quite often people leave their studying until a time when they know there will be peace and quiet, but meditation can help you to filter out noise from the neighbours, the streets or classmates, whichever your situation is, consistent meditation will configure your mind to be able to cope diligently even in situations when you are under pressure, you'll find that you're able to keep your focus.

People who suffer from high levels of anxiety are in danger of developing high blood pressure, due to being anxious, constantly worrying and never really seeing things for what they really are. A change in their natural perception will emerge, wiping out the cause of such stress and apprehension. The thoughts become clearer because the mind is finally able to relax and with the mind relaxed, the body relaxes also.

When the body is allowed to chill it can receive things like vitamins and minerals more readily because the body is functioning correctly. The same is true for information; the mind retains and processes the information that it receives more quickly and easily when the brain is not overloaded with tonnes of thoughts that do nothing but swirl around upstairs causing mental fatigue and burn out.

The more pressure that a person puts on themselves to perform the less favourable their performance will be. You “get out what you put in” and if the mind is receptive to the input that you feed it with you’ll have a great balance going on between mind and body.

Businesses around the globe are now introducing well-being sessions to their workforce in order to maximise full potential among employers and employees. It is a new fad which is being used in more organisations than ever before.

Executives and managers are recognising the benefits of having staff who are mentally refreshed and free from fatigue every day. Such aspects are obviously an asset to any business or organisation, with performance being increased due to employer/employee well-being there is a general atmosphere of productivity and professionalism that attracts a similar attitude from other employees – the feel-good-factor is contagious.

People who suffer from nervousness have much to gain from meditation, for example; attending an interview for a much sought after career is not an easy task even for people who are naturally confident, but meditating beforehand can ease apprehension and remove much panic, cooling your internal system to the point of feeling completely relaxed and able to focus on the task at hand.

There is a great deal to learn from meditation, the main lesson learned is about yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses, why you are who you are and who you can become. It allows people to face the experiences that they've tried to bury, as the past tense is always a heavy burden to carry, the journey of your life will not get any easier if you are holding onto harsh memories. Such burdens cause serious damage and if carried for long enough then the damage could become permanent in some cases.

It takes courage and discipline to face the things that you'd rather hide from or totally forget about, meaning that you will be running and hiding for the rest of your life and that is no way to be living a life that is full of so many golden and unique opportunities.

Take a look at certain celebrities or famous people, not all of them had sweet upbringings and not all successful people were confident and error-free before they found their successes, many had to fight to get to where they are now, some of these stars had traumatic childhoods, others had different struggles, the point is that they did what they had to do to change things. This

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