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Chapter 1 - Introduction

What is meditation? When you hear this word you often think about someone sitting cross legged and chanting. You probably associate meditation with Eastern religions such as Buddhism and the reason for this practice to achieve "higher consciousness."

Meditation is rooted in basically all religions. It is used in a variety of different ways, has many techniques and is practiced for a variety of different purposes. Today, even medical doctors will advocate this relaxation technique for those who are suffering from anxiety or depression.

Physical exercise is almost like a physical cure all. Exercise can help your heart, stave off certain cancers, prevent diseases that attack the obese like diabetes and stroke, can raise your energy level as well as your spirits. Most doctors today advocate physical exercise to any patient who is able to participate. No one will say that exercise is harmful.

Think about meditation as an exercise for your brain. It can be used the same way, especially when it comes to alleviating stress, anxiety and mild depression. Meditation is to the mind what physical exercise is to the body. At catch all to prevent or cure some mental conditions.

It is estimated that one in four Americans suffer from a mental disorder of some kind. One in 17 Americans suffer from a mental disorder that

is so severe that it renders them disabled. The number one culprit is depression, which is almost the father of all neurosis. Depression is the second most common reason why people are on disability in America (the first being back pain which is sometimes related to stress).

The one in four Americans who suffer from mental disorders is an estimate based upon those who go to the doctor for treatment. Many more people suffer from these disorders without seeking medical attention because they fear the stigma of being labeled as "crazy." They self medicate themselves in bars and taverns with alcohol, drugs or other destructive methods.

Meditation can help with depression. It can help with anxiety and other minor mental disorders from which so many people seem to be suffering. In addition, meditation can give you spiritual relief, help lower blood pressure and even give you more energy. Meditation will not do you any harm but has everything to offer.

This is not a guide on using meditation as a substitute for medical treatment. Rather, it should be used along with medical treatment so that you can achieve better results. In the case of minor anxiety (as in the case you are worrying about a test at school) you can use meditation to calm yourself instead of using tranquilizers or alcohol both of which are addictive and self destructive.

Meditation can be practiced anywhere. You do not have to trek up to the Himalayan Mountains in order to meditate. You do not need to sit cross legged on the floor. You do not even need to sit on the floor.

You just have to find a quiet place where you can cleanse your mind. If you do this for about 10 minutes every day, you will start to notice a difference in your mind. This works the same way as an exercise regime.

Many people reject the idea of meditation because they think it is quackery and "too much trouble." After all, when you're upset, you can easily find relief from popping a tranquilizer or taking a stiff drink. It can be difficult for someone to change their habits. But once you begin a regime of meditation, you will no longer look at this time as something that you "have to do" but as a time when you can truly relax.

Meditation has been practiced for over 5,000 years. It is a tried and true form of relaxation and a way to achieve inner peace. Always a popular remedy in Eastern religions, meditation is becoming more of a common practice in the West.

Once you learn a little something about this Eastern healing art and form of spiritual self awareness, you can begin to practice on your own. As is the case with physical exercise, once you get into the routine, you will begin to feel results right away and look forward to your time when you can practice this ancient way of seeking inner peace.

When you begin to meditate, give it a fair shot. This is not something that works overnight. In today's society, we are always looking for immediate gratification. The instant pill that cures all. The instant diet. The instant bit of help. Meditation is not immediate gratification. You will feel better after you have practiced it, even after the first time. But

it takes a while before you begin to start feeling the full benefits.

Start out slowly with meditation and then work your way up. You should start out with five minutes at a time. Gradually, you can work yourself up to about 30 minutes. You do not have to meditate for hours or days on end to achieve results. You can do it on your lunch hour and get results right away, once you have learned the basic techniques.

This book will detail some ways you can use meditation to help yourself through difficulties as well as become a better person. We are all striving for improvement. Meditation is one way that we can help ourselves achieve not only spiritual well being, but emotional, physical and psychological well being as well. It costs nothing to begin this practice and can be done anywhere. This book will teach you techniques on how to get started in your amazing journey through the world of meditation.

Chapter 2 - Meditation In Religion

Before we begin with actual meditation techniques for healing and enlightenment, it is essential that you learn a bit about the history of meditation. Although most people associate this with the Eastern philosophies and arts, meditation has a root in virtually all of the major religions in the world. While not all of them practice chanting and crossing their legs, the concept of meditation is evidenced in most religious practices, even today.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions and where meditation first developed more than 5,000 years ago. Millions of people practice meditation techniques as taught in Hinduism. In the Hindi religion, Yoga is considered to be the main philosophy. Those practicing meditation in accordance with Hinduism learn the six schools of Yoga that teach both inner and outer well being.

In Hinduism, meditation is used to reach a calm state of mind. It is used to diminish erratic thoughts and focus on one thought so that you can pay attention. According to Hindu philosophy, there are five different states of mind, four of which block focus. Ksipta is the first state of mind which describes a mind that is filled with agitation. The second state of mind is Mudha where a person has a problem getting information to reach their brain - they may be considered absentminded because their thoughts are in a jumble.

In Viksipta the mind is able to receive information, but has trouble processing it into thought. A person who experiences Ekagra, which is the fourth state of mind, is calm and able to focus. This moves to the

last state of mind which is Nirodha where the person is able to focus and able to concentrate on what they are doing.

Meditation is used in prayer rituals in Hinduism as well as Hatha Yoga, which is a state of physical postures that are used to raise spiritual awareness. The positions that you will often see described in yoga are called chakras. The most common is the lotus position in which a person sits cross legged with their ankles on their legs.

A mantra is also used in meditation as part of the Hindu faith. The mantra can be repeated out loud as a chant or can be repeated in your head. In Hinduism, meditation is the key to finding not only spiritual awareness, but also higher knowledge.

In the Bahai religion, meditation is also used along with prayer. It is used primarily as a form of discovering the spirituality within yourself.

Buddhists also practice meditation and it figures heavily in their religion. Lord Buddha was said to have found spiritual enlightenment when meditating. There are two different types of meditation practices in Buddhism and they are both used for spiritual enlightenment. The two types of meditation are called shamatha and vispassana. They are used to focus attention and develop wisdom respectively.

In Buddhism, the objective of the traditions is enlightenment and self awareness. This is achieved in a number of ways, most often through meditation.

While Eastern religions use meditation as a way to gain enlightenment and tend to focus on one object during their practice, Western religions tend to focus on prayer when meditating. Christianity has three main facets - Catholicism, Orthodox and Protestant. In the Catholic faith, saying the rosary is a form of meditation as a person is deeply engrossed in prayer and is supposed to be putting their full concentration in the prayer. Orthodox Christians also rely heavily upon prayer. In many protestant faiths, remembering verses from the bible are used as a way to achieve focus on prayer.

Christianity will not outwardly embrace meditation in the form of words. Unlike Eastern religions, Western religions are not as open to other faiths. Meditation and the practice of any other philosophy is usually considered wrong in most Christian faiths. However, the practice is still somewhat the same.

Islam was one of the first religions to use meditation as a form of healing. The prophet Muhammad spent hours meditating and there are two different schools of meditation taught in Islam. Tadabbur is the first school of meditation that is accepted by all Muslim scholars and is used to achieve a higher level from God. This is used to submit to the will of Allah. The second school is called Sufi meditation and is not accepted by all Muslim scholars. From noon to sunset, Muslims will meditate during the second stage of Hajj.

In Judaism, meditation goes back thousands of years to Isaac who is said to meditate. In both Kabbalah and Hassidic philosophies, meditation is practiced as "boded" through the book of understanding. Kabbalah has gained popularity over the recent years and relies

heavily upon meditation.

Other religions that also practice meditation include Jainism, Sikhism and Taoism, both Eastern religions. While meditation is a form of achieving inner peaces in the Eastern religions, it is mostly used as a form of prayer in the Western religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In the west today, meditation is practiced in some newer religions such as spiritualism and new age philosophies. In secular societies, meditation is also used for a variety of purposes, including as a healing art. In secular meditation, there is no mysticism involved nor any directive to achieve spiritual enlightenment. It is used mostly for healing and well being.

In addition to using meditation for different purposes, each religion that practices meditation also has a distinct way of practicing meditation. In many cultures, beads are used in meditation. This is true of Catholics who use rosary beads as well as Muslims who use prayer beads. Both Hindu and Buddhists religions also implement the use of rosary beads. Beads are often used to allow the person to concentrate on a fixed object. Although the fixed object is the beads in the Eastern religions, the fixed object in Christianity and Islam is God or Allah.

For over 5,000, meditation has been used for a variety of purposes. Despite the differences, the similarities remain the same and that is that meditation can be used to achieve a calmer and clearer state of mind.

Chapter 3 - Meditation to Relieve Stress

One of the primary purposes for which meditation is used today in the West is to relieve stress. As Americans become more stressed out all of the time, they seek ways to achieve relief. Many people are looking for something to help them instead of taking pills or alcohol.

Stress is the biggest medical crisis that we face today. With so many people looking for a cure to relieve themselves of stress, doctors are handing out tranquilizers like they were candy. Yet people continue to be stressed.

Continued stress plays havoc on your central nervous system as well as your immune system. It can lower your immune system so that all diseases are virtually invited into your body. Why mess with stress when you can use meditation to help you?

Even the medical community will admit that meditation is good for stress. While most medical professionals will scoff at the idea of any type of alternative healing method, meditation is one that most of them can see benefits. It certainly cannot cause any harm and has actually been proven to help you relax.

Meditation can relieve stress. It does work, but it takes practice. In order to use meditation to relieve stress and anxiety, do the following:

1. Find a quiet place where you can sit and relax that is peaceful. This can be anywhere in your house. Once you get used to meditating, you will be able to do this anywhere, even at your office desk. To start,

look for a tranquil place in the home.

- 2. Sit in a comfortable position. If you can sit cross legged on the ground, fine. If not, sit in another comfortable position. You want to be relaxed, but not to the point that you fall asleep. Make sure that you are sitting up so that you do not fall asleep. You want to clear your head, not fall asleep.
- 3. Clear your head of thoughts. One of the things that stresses people out is intrusive thoughts. This is what causes mental stress. You are worried about money, your job, the laundry, what to cook for dinner, if you have a dress for a party, is the vacuum cleaner broken, etc. In order for meditation to be effective, you have to clear your head of these intrusive thoughts.

It is not always easy to clear your head. This is why so many people use a mantra when meditating. A trick to clearing your head is to concentrate solely on a particular object. You can also find a word that you like to use and make it your own "mantra." Clearing your head takes practice, but once you are able to achieve this, the world of meditation is truly open to you.

- 4. Each time an intrusive thought comes into your mind, let it go. Imagine yourself tossing it into the garbage can. Concentrate on the object instead. Continue to do this until the object has your total concentration.
- 5. While you are practicing this form of total concentration, also practice breathing techniques. Take a deep breath in through your

mouth, hold it for five seconds and then breathe out through your nose. You can also concentrate on the breathing technique as your "object."

- 6. Do not expect miracles the first time you try this. Meditation takes practice. Does it work to relax you? Yes. It's been working for 5,000 years to relax people so chances are that it will work on you as well. Start with a small session and then gradually work your way up.
- 7. Incense can also be combined with meditation. Using incense is pleasant and will make the experience more pleasant as well. You can also use soothing music during your meditation practice as well.
- 8. Schedule a time to meditate each and every day. This will be difficult at first as you will have to endure a change in your daily routine. It will be worth it in the long run as the meditation starts to work. Once you find the meditation actually working, it is like a light going on in a dark room. You will not only want to make time for mediation, but you will look forward to this daily ritual.

Even medical doctors will acknowledge that meditation, especially when combined with breathing techniques, is good for you and can relieve stress. There are indications that it lowers the blood pressure as well as boosts the immune system. The breathing exercises stimulate oxygen to your brain and clearing your head allows the intrusive thoughts that plague and worry you to be eliminated.

There are a variety of different reasons why people suffer from stress. The world today is not the world of 50 years ago where things moved at a much slower pace. Everything moves fast and most of us bite

off more than we can chew in the never ending search for getting "the world and everything in it."

Stress can be a precursor to a variety of different illnesses, even cancer. It lowers the immune system and allows disease to traipse into your body. Yet the cures for stress can be even more detrimental to your health than the stress itself. Tranquilizers, which are often prescribed for stress, are highly addictive and have serious side effects. On top of that, there is always a danger of an accidental overdose. Many people take tranquilizers with alcohol to achieve results that constantly seem to require more medication. We constantly hear of people who die due to this lethal combination.

To date, no one has meditated themselves to death. Although, this ancient art is addictive, but in a positive way. You may find that you prefer to meditate over watching television and want to continue with this practice. You may also find that you wish to learn more about this ancient art and begin studying the practice of meditation through the ages and try to achieve enlightenment or a purpose in life. Although this can be addictive and time consuming, it is far from harmful and can really change your life for the better.

If you are suffering from stress or anxiety, you may be tempted to take tranquilizers or even a drink. After all, they are the fastest and most convenient cure for the condition. Try meditation first and be sure to give it a full shot before you resort to harmful pills or alcohol. Meditation can relieve stress and anxiety.

Chapter 4 - Meditation to Relieve Depression

The medical community is up in the air when it comes to meditation to relieve depression. Most doctors will quickly prescribe anti-depressants to anyone who suffers from depression, whether it is mild or severe.

There are some doctors who believe that those with mental illness should not meditate because it can lead to schizophrenia. There is no medical evidence that anything leads to this disease that has proven to be a biological condition that is often inherited. This idea stems from a story of someone who meditated for a long period of time and then went on to develop schizophrenia. This is totally misleading information and much more likely to be an urban legend. Schizophrenia is a biological disorder and all the mediation in the world is not going to make you develop this disease.

Depression is usually the root of anxiety. There are many theories as to why depression seems to be at an all time high, particularly in the United States. There are literally millions of people in the United States who are on medication for depression.

Severe depression is a serious condition and should be treated by a medical doctor. There are a variety of ways to treat severe depression, including therapy and medication. However, using meditation in addition to these methods can give one a sense of control. In cases of mild depression, using meditation can also alleviate some of the symptoms of this disease.

Many mental illnesses and conditions stem from a loss of control felt on behalf of the patient. People who suffer from depression often resort to self medicating with illegal drugs or alcohol to numb themselves to the symptoms. Meditation can give someone a sense of control in their life, which many people with depression so desperately need.

In the medical community, anything other than medicine for depression is usually frowned upon. Medical doctors will prescribe pills such as Zoloft in an effort to "cure" depression. They will also advise that you seek counseling. If the pills do not work, they will continue to prescribe pills until they get the right combination. Many people end up not ever getting out of the depressive state.

Medical doctors will stress the dangers of treating depression with anything other than medication. They stress that depression is a chemical imbalance in the brain. If this is the case, there can be no harm at all in trying meditation to treat this common disorder. Depression often goes hand in hand with anxiety, so at the very least, you can expect it to relax you.

To practice meditation to treat depression, find a quiet room and sit down, closing your eyes. Follow the simple instructions in the prior chapter for meditating. By concentrating on this every day for about 20 minutes, you can alleviate some of the symptoms of depression.

In addition to practicing meditation to alleviate depression, you should also exercise. Some doctors will advise exercise to those who suffer from depression. Exercise will raise your endorphins and increase

serotonin levels, which is what medication basically does.

Unlike medications that are used to combat depression, meditation does not have any side effects and will not, after a long period of use, harm your liver. If you suffer from serious depression and have been prescribed medication for the condition, do not stop taking your medication without consulting your doctor. But you can try meditation and exercise in addition to the medication to see if you can help yourself. You may be able to gradually reduce your medication in this matter.

If you suffer from mild depression, try meditation first before racing to the doctor's office for anti depressants. As always, if you have thoughts of suicide or harming others, seek medical attention immediately.

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