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Meditation: How it Benefits You Medically, Socially, and Academically

Meditation benefits many different people in many different ways. There is a plethora of different types of meditation. Many forms of meditation have transformed over the years from transcendental to modern-day meditation. Meditation for many people has a lot to do with religion. Buddhism and Hinduism for example, use daily meditation as a way to connect to their god. Others may use it to deal with anxieties, stress relief, or to just calm themselves. Meditation has a long history of stress relief. As a result meditation is useful for many other things including academics, and social life. Many debates and studies have formed over whether meditation helps develop the brain and improve life medically, and most outcomes of these studies have concluded with positive effects.

Many studies over the years have been trying to prove that meditation has medical benefits.

Often these studies show that meditation helps solve stress and anxiety problems. "Meditation can lower your oxygen consumption and it can even assist in decreasing your respiratory rate, which can help with many different types of lung conditions as well as relaxation"

(Fitzsimons). Dealing with stress and anxiety these days usually involves medication. Taking medication for problems like stress and anxiety can often lead to nausea and other side effects.

Taking medications to deal with medical issues will sometimes result in needing to take other medications to deal with those side effects. Meditation is a great alternative to medication

and is also free. Meditation is a fantastic way to deal with stress and anxiety. Most find it

more effective than medication and feel much better with the end result. Another incentive is

meditation, unlike medication, is free. Instead of paying hundreds of dollars for medication

that only makes people feel sicker than before, try meditating for an hour everyday with no

costs or side effects. "More than 30 years of research, as well as the experiences of a large and

growing numbers of individuals and healthcare providers, suggests that meditation can lead to

better health, higher quality of life and lowered healthcare costs.”(Jonas; Levin). Paying medical bills are so expensive these days, and people are constantly struggling to make the payments.

Meditation will cost absolutely nothing and will more than likely solve the problems.

Meditation not only helps deal with stress and anxiety problems, but also benefits the body, including the immune system. “Using mediation daily can help you to build your immune system as it increases the activity of the natural-killer cells that kills the bacteria and cancer cells and it can also reduce your chances of catching viruses as it lowers your emotional distress.”(Fitzsimons) Positive results in studies have come close to proving that meditation can help improve the immune system.

Depending on what is being specifically studied at the time, medical studies for meditation sometimes involve a group of doctors studying a group of perfectly healthy normal people that practice meditation daily and compare their results to a group of non-meditators. “UCLA neuroscientist Eileen Luders and her colleagues compared the brains of 22 people who had practiced various forms of meditation.....They found that two brain regions were bigger in the meditators than in the non-meditators, while non-meditators showed no advantage in any brain region.”(Goodkind) Meditation is becoming a solution to dealing with many other illnesses and pain that many people often have to deal with on a daily basis.

People that are dealing with chronic pains are perfect candidates for trying out meditation as a new solution to problems. “Subjects in this study did not suffer from chronic pain, but the findings suggest that in pain sufferers who meditate, the beneficial effects may come from an ability to essentially turn down the volume on pain signals.” (Trafton). Results from recent studies insist that meditation does help develop the total brain. With these findings, many doctors are persistent in trying to find an underlying solution involving meditating to help reverse mental

illnesses. “Many doctors today are implementing meditation into the treatment plans of life threatening diseases as well as reversing mental illnesses.” (Fitzsimons)

Not only does meditation provide solutions for medical reasons but it helps increase academic performance as well. Many students suffer from attention deficient disorders as well as stress related problems when being pressured to exceed well in school. Meditation would solve this problem very effectively if tried. Stress becomes a major problem in many students’ lives after reaching the high school level. Like mentioned earlier, meditation can solve stress complications in no time. “A transcendental meditation program to reduce stress at American University resulted in significant decreases in blood pressure among students at risk for hypertension. It also significantly improved psychological distress and coping.” (Uzoma). When school work starts to pile up and students struggle to keep themselves in a calm state, meditating relaxes the body and brings it to a restful point. “A recent study suggests that even brief exposure to compassion meditation training may affect activity in stress-relevant brain areas.” (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12883106).

Many children suffer from ADHD starting at young ages. No mother wants their child ingesting medications to help calm them down and focus. Meditation does not have an age limit. You can start meditating at any age whether it is 10 years old or 50 years old. Meditating will help the child focus on what needs to be focused on and will hopefully calm them down to the point where they can sit still in their chair. “Transcendental meditation can be a safe, effective drug-free way to treat ADHD, according to a study published in "Current Issues in Education" in 2008. After three months of transcendental meditation, children ages 11 to 14 with ADHD - -- one-half of them on medication --- experienced a 50 percent drop in stress, anxiety and improvements in their symptoms.” (Uzoma). Meditation seems to prove to be very convenient

when dealing with all sorts of psychological disorders including ADHD.

“Focusing your attention is generally one of the most important elements of meditation. Focusing your attention is what helps free your mind from the many distractions that cause stress and worry.” (www.mayoclinic.com/health/meditation/HQ01070). School is all about focus. If a person cannot focus during class there is no point in being there because focusing is how people acquire all of the information presented. Using meditation will increase focusing skills.

Meditation increases the size of the alpha waves in the brain; this will result in inflating the brain’s focus abilities. “Our data indicate that meditation training makes you better at focusing, in part by allowing you to better regulate how things that arise will impact you.” -Christopher Moore (Trafton). A major part of meditation is focusing. In some forms of meditation, focusing most of the brain’s attention on breathing can help clear the mind. Focusing on something calming, like the body’s breathing pattern, will bring a person to that calming point. Meditation helps the focus on one thing at a time. When in class listening to a teacher lecture, it definitely helps to be able to focus on one thing at a time giving the mind more room to ingest as much information as possible.

A person’s life in general will improve once the process of meditation is started. One person can hold so many emotions and thoughts that sometimes it is hard to control what emotions and thoughts are there. Meditating gives a person the time and space to be able to sort through the emotions and feelings one at a time. Doing this can help the person find the emotions, feelings, and answers that are being sought after. Daily meditation is the way to find these deeper states. Especially important is a practice of meditating every morning and evening. In the morning it prepares you to face the day from a state of inner calmness and joy. At night it helps you to release everything and offer all your attachments back into the divine light.” (Novak). The

after effect of meditation kicks in instantly. Immediately after meditating a sense of serenity is felt throughout the body. Imagine meditating in the morning right after waking up and having a sensation of calmness throughout the entire day. Imagine having that same feeling while asleep because meditation was done before lying down. When a habit is formed of meditating twice a day, a person can see the benefits that meditation has had on the body and mind.

Everyone has those days where nothing goes as it should, and everything that others do is horrible. Meditation helps control these emotions and produces healthier emotions. "Meditation may be able to help you become kinder and more compassionate because it affects areas in your brain that increase empathy to other people's mental states, according to a study published in 2008 by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the "Public Library of Science One."

(Uzoma). Meditation, to put it simply, can help improve the way a person feels entirely. A lot of people in today's society feel as if fitting in and acting a certain way is the only way to feel accomplished and accepted. Feeling of rejection and not being able to act outside the box can affect a person negatively. Having these visions and thoughts can lead to other problems in a person's life, including depression. Meditation helps improve self-compassion and gives a person a sense of acceptance. "Have been shown to increase self-compassion. Self-compassion, in turn, has been associated with a variety of desirable endpoints, including reductions in perceived stress, burnout, depression, and anxiety as well as increases in life satisfaction." (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12883106>)

Having a bad day every once in a while is inevitable. Everyone goes through one of these days, some more than others. Even the happiest person on earth there is still going to be that day where everything just goes wrong. Meditation does not always have to involve sitting down for an hour in silence. Before getting out of the car to head to class there is always the option of

meditating for just a minute or two. After doing so, the rest of the day can be handled with a new confidence that meditating produced. Meditating everyday has proven to give people a new sense of confidence and control in their lives. “People who meditate regularly report that they feel more confident and more control in their lives. They say that their relationships with others are improved and that they experience more enjoyment and appreciation of life.”(Jonas; Levin).

A person’s mood affects everybody’s mood. If someone is in a room full of people and is just in a bad mood and being a grouch, everybody is going to pick up on that mood and will reflect it throughout the day. Using meditation can help a person provide positive emotions and mindful-behavior. “They argue that if effects of meditation are linked to the particular brain changes they observed, then meditators are strengthening the brain regions necessary for the "singular abilities" and habits to cultivate positive emotions, retain emotional stability, and engage in mindful- behavior.” (Goodkind).

“Everything that has happened to you happened in the best possible way that it could.”(Book of Zen) This is one example of Zen. Zen is a root word that is translated as “meditation” or “meditative state.” Once an understanding of the phrase “zen” is accomplished a person will be able to see the good in everything that happens. Meditation helps discover an essential joy in everyday life. “If we contract our hearts, we experience pain, not because conditions have made us unhappy, but because pain is the inevitable result of excessive self-focus. Have no doubt about it; a contractive attitude will produce stress. On the other hand, when we relax and release unnecessary attachments we automatically experience happiness and fulfillment. Eventually, through meditation, we can discover an underlying joy that does not change under any circumstance. And expansion of consciousness is the essence of spiritual growth.” (Novak). Life in general brings everyone unnecessary stress, especially when a person is just becoming

a young adult. Stress will more than likely cause bad emotions and aggressive behavior. When beginning to meditate constantly those bad emotions and behavior will slowly fade away and be replaced with positive emotions and non-aggressive behavior. “The emotional benefits of meditation include; gaining a new perspective on stressful situations, building skills to manage your stress, increasing self-awareness, focusing on the present, and reducing negative emotions.”(www.mayoclinic.com/health/meditation/HQ01070).

Meditation brings many different changes in your life once a daily practice has been established. Many start to realize when negative emotions start to interrupt the flow of peacefulness. “As general mindfulness becomes established, we notice for instance, that if all of a sudden anger comes up we are immediately aware of it. It is acknowledged before it is expressed in words or deeds becomes out of control. We notice ourselves automatically investigating strong interruptions in the flow.” (Levine). Many people have trouble controlling emotions and the actions that follow them. Meditation has proven to assist in resolving these problems.

One-third of the world’s population smoke cigarettes. When trying to quit people often refer to gum, exercise, therapy, and other medications to help them stop smoking. Using meditation is a fantastic way to help quite smoking. “TM practitioners tend to smoke less; their weight normalizes, after without conscious dieting; they become less anxious and more outgoing; tension headaches tend to disappear; fears melt away; loving feelings grow; and happiness becomes a day-to-day experience of living.” (Bloomfield; Kory). Meditation makes a person more aware of the body and life. Meditation helps people see the beauty in all surroundings. After meditating a person wants to feel a sense of good health coursing through the body. Good health is very hard to come across when smoking cigarettes. Hopefully wanting that feeling of good health will drive people to smoke less and less every day.

Meditation has proven itself useful for many things. Medically it helps resolve stress and anxiety problems. Just as well it improves the immune system and helps develop the total brain. Meditation also gives a person the option to solve medical problems without using multiple medications. Using meditation to improve academic performances is a great choice. Many students feel stressed and rushed when work starts to pile up. Meditation brings a calming sensation and a restful point where students will be able to get the work done without causing anxiety. Students that suffer from ADHD have the option of using meditation as well to help calm them down enough to focus on their school work.

Meditation brings out the best emotions in a person. When someone is having a bad day and just feels like snapping, meditation can bring out positive emotions, and a person becomes aware of when negative emotions start to rise. Using meditation as a daily practice will improve a person's social life by becoming a more self-aware and overall a more compassionate person. Meditation makes a person more aware of the body, surroundings, and the beauty of it all. Meditation gives a sense of more control over life, and improves decision making skills as well. After meditating, even for a short amount of time, a person starts to acquire a sense of good health radiating throughout the body. The feeling of being on top of the world and not being able to be brought down is sensational. At first meditation seems silly to some people, wondering what it can do and how it benefits anything. With a little research and personal experience a person will come to realize the numerous positive effects that meditation can bring and how it is life altering.