

The Benefits Of Meditation

It is a fact that stress is something that is felt by both the young and the old. Experts believe that one of the best ways to overcome the emotional, mental and sometimes even physical strain is by practicing the ancient activity of meditation.

"I think of meditation as a life skill," says Elesa Commerse, president and lead instructor of The Deep Calm, an Evanston, IL-based firm that specializes in teaching meditation. "It's something that children and adults need to know how to do to get the stress off. That's what meditation does. It systematically shows you how to relax your body to work with your muscles, to breathe in a healthy way, and to quiet your mind and body so that you can experience a deep peace and calm that is available to all of us."

According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), a component of the National Institutes of Health, when a person meditates, he or she learns to focus his or her attention and to suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind. The practice of meditation, which Commerse says may last any-



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where from 5 minutes to a half an hour, is believed to result in a state of greater mental calmness, psychological balance and physical relaxation, which makes for a healthier you.

While there are many different types of meditation, the NCCAM cites four of the most common elements:

A PEACEFUL LOCATION

A quiet place with few distractions as possible is best for focusing your thoughts.

A COMFORTABLE POSTURE

Meditation can be done while sitting, lying down or standing.

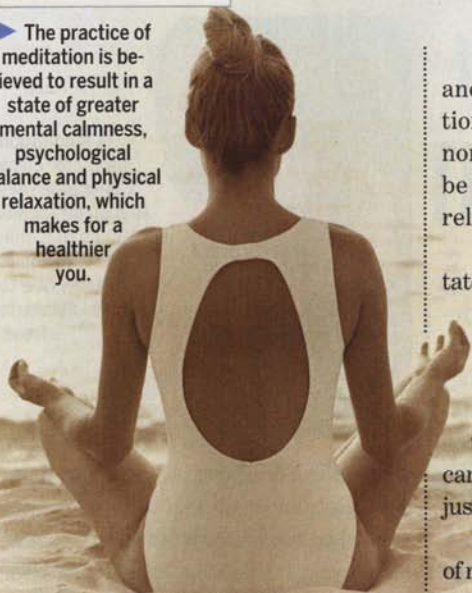
A FOCUS OF ATTENTION

Offentimes the meditator may focus attention on a mantr a (a repeated word, sound or phrase), an object or deep breathing.

AN OPEN ATTITUDE

Having an open attitude during meditation means letting distractions come and go naturally without stopping to think about them.

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Though meditation originated in ancient religious and spiritual traditions, Commerse points out that it is a non-denominational activity that can be practiced by all, no matter your religious preference.

"There is a confusion that, 'if I meditate it will conflict with my religion,'" she says. "That is absolutely not true. Hold on to your beliefs because that helps with healing as well."

Commerse adds, "The body and the mind are connected. Meditation can help people in so many ways if they just embrace it."

For more information on the benefits of meditation visit www.nccam.nih.gov. □

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"You want to make sure it's surgical steel because there's a lot of jewelry that has a little bit of nickel in it," explains Jackson. "I call those patients, 'Patients who have expensive skin,'" she laughs. "They need to make sure they're using the really good stuff."

HASTE MAKES WASTE

Whether you're getting your eyebrow, nose or belly button pierced, when it comes to your body, you want to make sure the piercing technician doesn't cut corners. No matter how excited you are, make certain that the technician is following safe practices. Several states have criteria that must be adhered

to. You want to make sure that the shop you're going to is abiding by those standards. Some of the principles may include not piercing a minor without the consent of a parent, having up-to-date licensures posted on the walls, and following sterile practices to avoid blood-borne disease contamination. If you're not sure what the standards are, check with your local health department or state legislation.

If you or someone you know is thinking about being part of that "in crowd" and has decided to get a piercing in the mouth or any other body part, both Cooper and Jackson have the same opinion:

"Think twice before you do it." □

—Dana Slagle