

Meditation

This is a brief introduction to the practice of meditation, and how it can be used to improve overall health and wellbeing.

Meditation can be an effective treatment for many ailments, but in Western medicine is largely overlooked. MRI scans show that as little as five minutes per day can help lower stress levels, and ten minutes per day can help break long-term habits.

Practice is the name of the game

How it works

Meditation works to train the brain to pause and consciously consider an internal emotion before externally expressing that emotion. By strengthening areas of the brain responsible for emotional control, and shrinking areas of the brain responsible for fear and stress, meditation interrupts the cycle of depression and anxiety that so many individuals struggle with. The awareness of unhelpful thoughts or behaviours is what gives us the ability to change them.

The practice

To begin practicing meditation, you do not need anything but yourself, and your breath. Find a comfortable position, inhale slowly for four counts, and then exhale slowly for six counts. You can let your mind wander, keep your eyes open or have them

closed, just practice bringing your focus back to your breath. This practice of keeping your thoughts on the present helps prevent automatic thoughts from entering your conscious mind. It can be tempting to walk, or even do yoga while meditating to relax your mind, but this can keep your thoughts stuck in their repetitive pattern. Sitting still, and the practice of stillness, is the core of meditation. However, engaging in a yoga sequence, or other repetitive movement, prior to meditation can help prepare the mind and body to practice meditation.

Setting aside a few minutes every day to meditate can help focus your mind, ground you to the present, and minimize the experience of automatic thoughts. Guided meditations on YouTube and Spotify are great resources to help begin practicing, or deepen an existing practice.