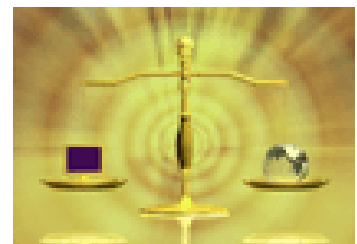


# PASCAS CARE

## COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

### Volume 2



“Peace And Spirit Creating Alternative Solutions”

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We offer all contents in love and with the fullness of grace, which is intended to flow to readers who join us upon this fascinating journey throughout this incredible changing era we are all experiencing.

Living Feelings First, *John.*

***“Never can one man do more for another man than by making it known of the availability of the Feeling Healing process and Divine Love.” JD***

# MEDITATION

Holistic-online.com

[http://1stholistic.com/Meditation/hol\\_meditation.htm](http://1stholistic.com/Meditation/hol_meditation.htm)

Meditation is one of the proven alternative therapies. It can be broadly classified under the mind-body medicine.

More and more doctors are prescribing meditation as a way to lower blood pressure, improve exercise performance in people with angina, help people with asthma breathe easier, relieve insomnia and generally relax the everyday stresses of life. Meditation is a safe and simple way to balance a person's physical, emotional, and mental states. It is simple; but can benefit everybody.

The use of Meditation for healing is not new. Meditative techniques are the product of diverse cultures and peoples around the world. It has been rooted in the traditions of the world's great religions. In fact, practically all religious groups practice meditation in one form or another. The value of Meditation to alleviate suffering and promote healing has been known and practiced for thousands of years.

It has been scientifically shown that meditation works. We, at HolisticOnline, take great pride in providing this in-depth treatment of Meditation.

## **Guest Articles:**

### **Balance: Are you moving towards or away from it?**

The Chinese word for 'busy' consists of two symbols: one is the human heart – the other, death. I take this to mean that when one is excessively busy, the heart is insensible, frozen. In a world where busyness is held up almost as a virtue, especially in business, I'd like to take a look at coming back into balance.

### **A Nature Meditation**

Meditation is the sinking dance into our sea of consciousness, releasing the submerged stresses and coming to the point of inner stillness where there is no object of consciousness – but consciousness itself. Done regularly, this inward dance leaves us fresh, more alert, relaxed, creative, healthy, and more in tune with ourselves and our environment.

### **Keeping Our Energy High and Harmonious**

The quantity and quality of our energy flow deeply affect our emotions, thoughts and reactions. The quality of our relationships, productivity, creativity and health all depend upon creating a high level of harmoniously flowing energy. The following techniques and ways of life will aid us in building a freer and more positive energy flow.

### **The Easy Chair method for Prayer and Meditation**

If done on a regular basis, the inevitable result of prayer and meditation is a new thought or feeling that helps you improve your life. At the very least, it is a simple relaxation technique that opens your mind to new and better solutions. Multiply these results times 7 days a week, 12 months a year and you can see how daily prayer meditation works.

### **Zen and the Art of Looking at Brick Walls**

If you were to look at a brick wall in a dingy tenement, if you wanted, you could create a different experience of it by realizing that that brick wall, shares the same light, air, warmth, cold as everything else in the physical universe.

### **Experience The Fruit of Gayatri Meditation**

The Gayatri Mantra is a treasure and heritage that belongs to the whole of humanity without exclusion. Gayatri mantra is meant for realization of god and is regarded as representing the Supreme Lord. It is meant for spiritually advanced people. Success in chanting it enables one to enter the transcendental position of the Lord.

### **Meditation, Transcendental Meditation – Mind Body Therapy and Alternative Therapy**

More and more doctors are prescribing meditation as a way to lower blood pressure, improve exercise performance in people with angina, help people with asthma breathe easier, relieve insomnia and generally relax the everyday stresses of life. Meditation is a safe and simple way to balance a person's physical, emotional, and mental states. It is simple; but can benefit everybody.

Meditation is not just for yoga masters sitting cross-legged on mountaintops in the Himalayas. It's a flexible approach to coping with stress, anxiety, many medical conditions and the day-to-day "static" that robs us of inner peace. Today, the Pittsburgh International Airport boasts a large meditation room featuring a quiet ambiance, comfortable furniture and paintings of clouds. What better place than one of the nation's largest, busiest airports for a refuge from all the hustle and bustle?

The Taoist sage Chuang-tzu referred to meditation, which the Chinese simply call 'sitting still, doing nothing', as 'mental fasting'. Just as physical fasting purifies the essences of the body by withdrawing all external input of food, so the 'mental fasting' of meditation purifies the mind and restores the spirit's primal powers by withdrawing all distracting thoughts and disturbing emotions from the mind. In both physical and mental fasting, the cleansing and purifying processes are natural and automatic, but the precondition for triggering this process of self-rejuvenation is emptying body and mind of all input for a fixed number of minutes or days. Taoists believe that only by 'sitting still, doing nothing' can we muster sufficient mental clarity to focus fully on the difficult task of taming and training the two aspects of temporal mind that govern our lives – the mind of emotion and the mind of intent.

## **Introduction:**

The use of Meditation for healing is not new. Meditative techniques are the product of diverse cultures and peoples around the world. It has been rooted in the traditions of the world's great religions. In fact, practically all religious groups practice meditation in one form or another. The value of Meditation to alleviate suffering and promote healing has been known and practiced for thousands of years.

Of the religions that use meditation, perhaps Buddhism, practiced widely in eastern and central Asia, is the best known. To Buddhists, the practice of meditation is essential for the cultivation of wisdom and compassion and for understanding reality. Buddhists believe that our ordinary consciousness is both limited and limiting. Meditation makes it possible to live life to the full spectrum of our conscious and unconscious possibilities.

In spite of its rich history and traditions, it is only during the past three decades that scientific study has focused on the clinical effects of meditation on health. During the 1960s, reports reached the West of yogis and meditation masters in India who could perform extraordinary feats of bodily control and altered states of consciousness. These reports captured the interest of Western researchers studying self-regulation and the possibility of voluntary control over the autonomic nervous system. At the same time, new refinements in scientific instrumentation made it possible to duplicate and substantiate some of these reports at medical research institutes. Health care professionals who were often dissatisfied with the side effects of drug treatments for stress-related disorders embraced meditation as a valuable tool for stress reduction, and today both patients and physicians enjoy the health benefits of regular meditation practice.

Herbert Benson, M.D., a professor at Harvard Medical School, describes the meditation experience as the "relaxation response". He discovered by studying various yogis and longtime meditators that the meditation process counteracted the effects of the sympathetic nervous system—the one that wants to fight or flee. Whereas the sympathetic system dilates the pupils and gets the heart rate, respiration, and blood pressure up, the parasympathetic system, activated when we meditate, does just the opposite. Muscle tension decreases, blood pressure drops, and for some extraordinary practitioners, even temperature and basal metabolism rates drop during a prolonged meditation. Oxygen needs of the body are reduced when you are in a highly relaxed state, and brain waves change from the busy beta-waves to the blissful alpha waves.

## **What Is Meditation?**

There are various types of meditation – prayer is probably the best known, but there is also TM (Transcendental Meditation), mindfulness meditation, and from the Eastern tradition, Zen meditation, Buddhist meditation, and Taoist meditation.

The meditation encompasses such diverse methods as:

- Formal sitting in which the body is held immobile and the attention controlled. e.g., Zazen, Vipassana.
- Expressive practices, in which the body is let free and anything can happen. e.g., Siddha Yoga, the Latihan, the chaotic meditation of Rajneesh.
- The practice of going about one's daily round of activities mindfully. e.g., Mahamudra, Shikan Taza, Gurdjieff's "self-remembering".

All these practices have one thing in common – they all focus on quietening the busy mind. The intention is not to remove stimulation but rather to direct your concentration to one healing element – one sound, one word, one image, or one's breath. When the mind is "filled" with the feeling of calm and peace, it cannot take off on its own and worry, stress out, or get depressed.

According to Joan Borysenko, Ph.D., a pioneer in the field of mind/body medicine, meditation can be broadly defined as any activity that keeps the attention pleasantly anchored in the present moment. When the mind is calm and focused in the present, it is neither reacting to memories from the past nor being preoccupied with plans for the future, two major sources of chronic stress known to impact health. "Meditation," says Dr. Borysenko, "helps to keep us from identifying with the 'movies of the mind.'"

### **Types of Meditation – Classification**

All the meditation techniques can be grouped into two basic approaches:

- Concentrative meditation and
- Mindfulness meditation.

**Concentrative meditation** focuses the attention on the breath, an image, or a sound (mantra), in order to still the mind and allow a greater awareness and clarity to emerge. This is like a zoom lens in a camera; we narrow our focus to a selected field.

The simplest form of concentrative meditation is to sit quietly and focus the attention on the breath. Yoga and meditation practitioners believe that there is a direct correlation between one's breath and one's state of the mind. For example, when a person is anxious, frightened, agitated, or distracted, the breath will tend to be shallow, rapid, and uneven. On the other hand, when the mind is calm, focused, and composed, the breath will tend to be slow, deep, and regular. Focusing the mind on the continuous rhythm of inhalation and exhalation provides a natural object of meditation. As you focus your awareness on the breath, your mind becomes absorbed in the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. As a result, your breathing will become slower and deeper, and the mind becomes more tranquil and aware.

**Mindfulness meditation**, according to Dr. Borysenko, "involves opening the attention to become aware of the continuously passing parade of sensations and feelings, images, thoughts, sounds, smells, and so forth without becoming involved in thinking about them". The person sits quietly and simply witnesses whatever goes through the mind, not reacting or becoming involved with thoughts, memories, worries, or images. This helps to gain a more calm, clear, and non-reactive state of mind. Mindfulness meditation can be likened to a wide-angle lens. Instead of narrowing your sight to a selected field as in concentrative meditation, here you will be aware of the entire field.

### **How Meditation Works**

Studies have shown that meditation (in particular, research on Transcendental Meditation, a popular form of meditation practiced in the West for the past thirty years), can bring about a healthy state of relaxation by causing a generalized reduction in multiple physiological and biochemical markers, such as decreased heart rate, decreased respiration rate, decreased plasma cortisol (a major stress hormone), decreased pulse rate, and increased EEG (electroencephalogram) alpha, a brain wave associated with relaxation. Research conducted by R. Keith Wallace at U.C.L.A. on Transcendental Meditation,

revealed that during meditation, the body gains a state of profound rest. At the same time, the brain and mind become more alert, indicating a state of restful alertness. Studies show that after TM, reactions are faster, creativity greater, and comprehension broader.

A laboratory study of practitioners of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's transcendental meditation (TM), carried out by Benson and Wallace at Harvard Medical School towards the end of the 1960s, provided the first detailed knowledge of the many physiological changes that go with meditation.

Some of the meditators, whose ages ranged from seventeen to forty-one, had been meditating only a few weeks, others for several years. All recorded changes associated with deep relaxation.

The fall in metabolic rate was the most striking discovery. This was indicated by a dramatic drop in oxygen consumption within a few minutes of starting meditation. Consumption fell by up to twenty per cent below the normal level; below that experienced even in deep sleep. Meditators took on average two breaths less and one litre less air per minute. The meditators' heart rate was several beats less per minute.

During meditation, blood pressure stayed at 'low levels', but fell markedly in persons starting meditation with abnormally high levels.

The meditators' skin resistance to an electrical current was measured. A fall in skin resistance is characteristic of anxiety and tension states; a rise indicates increased muscle relaxation. The finding was that though meditation is primarily a mental technique, it soon brings significantly improved muscle relaxation.

Meditation reduces activity in the nervous system. The parasympathetic branch of the autonomic or involuntary nervous system predominates. This is the branch responsible for calming us.

During anxiety and tension states there is a rise in the level of lactate in the blood. Lactate is a substance produced by metabolism in the skeletal muscles. During meditation blood lactate levels decreased at a rate four times faster than the rate of decrease in non-meditators resting lying on their backs or in the meditators themselves in pre-meditation resting.

The likely reason for the dramatic reduction in lactate production by meditators was indicated when further studies of meditators showed an increased blood flow during. Benson and Wallace found that there was a thirty-two per cent increase in forearm blood flow. Lactate production in the body is mainly in skeletal muscle tissue; during meditation the faster circulation brings a faster delivery of oxygen to the muscles and less lactate is produced.

The two investigators summed up the state produced by their meditating subjects as wakeful and hypometabolic. The physiological changes were different in many ways from those found in sleeping people or those in hypnotic trance states. Meditation, they said, produces 'a complex of responses that marks a highly relaxed state'. Moreover, the pattern of changes they observed in meditators suggested an integrated response, mediated by the central nervous system.

"Through meditation we can learn to access the relaxation response (the physiological response elicited by meditation) and to be aware of the mind and the way our attitudes produce stress," says Dr. Borysenko, author of 'Minding the Body, Mending the Mind'. "In addition, by quieting the mind,

meditation can also put one in touch with the inner physician, allowing the body's own inner wisdom to be heard."

Taoists believe that the mind of emotions is governed by the Fire energy of the heart. When your emotions are not controlled, the fire energy of the heart flares upwards, wastefully burning up energy and clouding the mind. The mind of intent, or willpower, is controlled by the Water energy of the kidneys. When unattended, the water energy flows down and out through the sexual organs, depleting essence and energy and weakening the spirit. Taoists believe that when you are 'sitting still, doing nothing', as in meditation, the flow of Fire and Water are reversed: Water energy from the kidneys and sacrum is drawn up to the head via the Central and Governing channels, while emotional Fire energy from the heart is drawn down into the Lower Elixir Field in the abdomen, where it is refined and transformed and enters general circulation through the energy channels. On the spiritual / mental level, this internal energy alchemy enables the mind of intent (Water) to exert a calming, cooling, controlling influence over the mind of emotion (Fire).

### **Healing Power of Meditation**

Research has shown that Meditation can contribute to an individual's psychological and physiological well-being. This is accomplished as Meditation brings the brainwave pattern into an alpha state, which is a level of consciousness that promotes the healing state.

As discussed in the section "How Meditation Work?", there is scientific evidence that Meditation can reduce blood pressure and relieve pain and stress. When used in combination with biofeedback, Meditation enhances the effectiveness of biofeedback.

Patricia Norris, Ph.D., Director of the Biofeedback and Psychophysiology Clinic at the Menninger Foundation, reports: "In our practice at Menninger we use meditative techniques to enhance immune functioning in cancer, AIDS, and autoimmune patients. We also use meditation in conjunction with neuro-feedback to normalize brain rhythms and chemistry in alcohol and drug addiction, as well as other addictive conditions. Almost all of our patients use meditative techniques in learning self-regulation for disorders such as anxiety and hypertension, and for stress management. We consider meditation a recommended practice for anyone seeking high-level wellness."

In addition to the growing body of research literature on meditation, physicians, psychotherapists, and other professionals are increasingly adding meditative techniques to their practice. Over six thousand physicians have begun the practice of Transcendental Meditation and regularly recommend the TM technique to their patients. Dean Ornish, M.D has demonstrated that heart disease can be reversed with a comprehensive program that includes meditations. Many physicians consider meditation a key element of an integrated health program.

### Physical Benefits of Meditation

### Psychological Benefits of Meditation

The benefits of an ongoing meditation practice as it impacts our health can be classified further into three categories: physiological, psychological, and spiritual. Most people who practice meditation do so to reduce stress, anxiety, anger and other negative emotions. Increasingly, physicians prescribe meditation as part of the treatment for a large and growing number of medical conditions.



## **Benefits of Meditation**

### **Physical Benefits:**

- Deep rest-as measured by decreased metabolic rate, lower heart rate, and reduced work load of the heart.
- Lowered levels of cortisol and lactate-two chemicals associated with stress.
- Reduction of free radicals- unstable oxygen molecules that can cause tissue damage. They are now thought to be a major factor in aging and in many diseases.
- Decreased high blood pressure.
- Higher skin resistance. Low skin resistance is correlated with higher stress and anxiety levels.
- Drop in cholesterol levels. High cholesterol is associated with cardiovascular disease.
- Improved flow of air to the lungs resulting in easier breathing. This has been very helpful to asthma patients.
- Younger biological age. On standard measures of aging, long-term Transcendental Meditation (TM) practitioners (more than five years) measured 12 years younger than their chronological age.
- Higher levels of DHEAS in the elderly. An additional sign of youthfulness through Transcendental Meditation (TM); lower levels of DHEAS are associated with aging.

## **Benefits of Meditation**

### **Psychological Benefits**

- Increased brain wave coherence. Harmony of brain wave activity in different parts of the brain is associated with greater creativity, improved moral reasoning, and higher IQ.
- Decreased anxiety.
- Decreased depression.
- Decreased irritability and moodiness.
- Improved learning ability and memory.
- Increased self-actualization.
- Increased feelings of vitality and rejuvenation.
- Increased happiness.
- Increased emotional stability.

## **Health Conditions That Are Benefited By Meditation**

### **Drug Addiction**

The Transcendental Meditation technique has proven to be a successful coping strategy in helping to deal with drug addiction, a useful tool in psycho-neuro-immunology (PNI) by helping to control the immune system, and an effective manager of stress and pain.

### **Prolonging Life Expectancy**

A strong link has also been established between the practice of TM and longevity. Only two factors have been scientifically determined to actually extend life: caloric restriction and lowering of the body's core temperature. Meditation has been shown to lower core body temperature.

### **Stress Control**

Most of the people who get on meditation do so because of its beneficial effects on stress. Stress refers to any or all the various pressures experienced in life. These can stem from work, family, illness, or environment and can contribute to such conditions as anxiety, hypertension, and heart disease. How an individual sees things and how he or she handles them makes a big difference in terms of how much stress he or she experiences.

Research has shown that hormones and other biochemical compounds in the blood indicative of stress tend to decrease during TM practice. These changes also stabilize over time, so that a person is actually less stressed biochemically during daily activity.

This reduction of stress translates directly into a reduction of anxiety and tension. Literally dozens of studies have shown this.

### **Pain Management:**

Chronic pain can systematically erode the quality of life. Although great strides are being made in traditional medicine to treat recurring pain, treatment is rarely as simple as prescribing medication or surgery.

Anxiety decreases the threshold for pain and pain causes anxiety. The result is a vicious cycle. Compared with people who feel relaxed, those under stress experience pain more intensely and become even more stressed, which aggravates their pain. Meditation breaks this cycle.

Childbirth preparation classes routinely teach pregnant women deep breathing exercises to minimize the pain and anxiety of labour. Few call it breath meditation, but that's what it is.

Meditative techniques are also a key element in the Arthritis self-help Course at Stanford University. More than 100,000 people with arthritis have taken the 12-hour course and learned meditation-style relaxation exercises as part of a comprehensive self-care program. Graduates report a 15% to 20% reduction in pain.

In one study overseen by Dr. Kabat-Zinn, 72% of the patients with chronic pain conditions achieved at least a 33% reduction after participating in an eight-week period of mindful meditation, while 61% of the pain patients achieved at least a 50% reduction. Additionally, these people perceived their bodies as being 30% less problematic, suggesting an overall improvement in self-esteem and positive views regarding their bodies.

Meditation may not eliminate pain, but it helps people cope more effectively.

### **Cancer and Other Chronic Illness**

Meditation and other approaches to deep relaxation help centre people so they can figure out how they'd like to handle the illness and proceed with life. Dr. Ainslie Meares, an Australian psychiatrist who uses meditation with cancer patients, studied seventy-three patients who had attended at least twenty - sessions of intensive meditation, and wrote: "Nearly all such patients can expect significant reduction of anxiety and depression, together with much less discomfort and pain. There is reason to expect a 10% chance of quite remarkable slowing of the rate of growth of the tumour, and a 50% chance of greatly improved quality of life."

### **Heart disease.**

Meditation is a key component of Ornish therapy, the only treatment scientifically proven to reverse heart disease.

### **High blood pressure.**

As soon as Dr. Benson learned that TM reliably reduced blood pressure in meditators, he taught the relaxation response to 36 people with moderately elevated blood pressure. After several weeks of practice, their average blood pressure declined significantly, reducing their risk of stroke and heart attack.

### **Infertility**

Couples dealing with infertility may become depressed, anxious and angry. To help them cope, Alice D. Domar, Ph.D., a psychologist at the Mind / Body Medical Institute, taught the relaxation response to one group of infertile couples. Compared with a similar group of infertile couples who did not learn deep relaxation, the meditators experienced less distress-and were more likely to get pregnant.

### **Psoriasis:**

This disease causes scaly red patches on the skin. A pilot study at Dr. Kabat-Zinn's clinic suggests that compared with the skin patches of people with psoriasis who receive only standard medical therapy, the skin patches of those who also meditate clear up more quickly.

### **Respiratory crises**

Asthma, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) all restrict breathing and raise fears of suffocation, which in turn makes breathing even more difficult. Studies at Dr. Kabat-Zinn's clinic show that when people with these respiratory conditions learn breath meditation, they have fewer respiratory crises.

### **Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), Tension Headaches**

Meditation can ease physical complaints such as premenstrual syndrome (PMS), tension headaches and other common health problems.

Meditation gives people a psychological buffer so that life's hectic pace doesn't knock them out. Practicing meditation is like taking a vacation once or twice a day. When you nurture yourself, you accrue tremendous spin-off benefits.

For example, when you are under high stress, it can worsen symptoms of PMS because stress can cause the muscle tension associated with PMS complaints such as fatigue, soreness and aching. On the other hand, when you meditate regularly, you dramatically reduce your body's response to stress, and that can ease the discomfort associated with PMS. The results may not be apparent for several months. You will probably need to meditate regularly for several months before your body responds positively.

### **Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Ulcers, and Insomnia**

Meditation can also improve irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, and insomnia, among other stress-related conditions. Eighty percent of the people who use meditation to relieve insomnia are successful.

Meditation can help prevent or treat stress-related complaints such as anxiety, headaches and bone, muscle and joint problems. Meditation also provides an inner sense of clarity and calm, and that, in itself, may help ward off certain illnesses.

### **Fibromyalgia**

According to one study, meditation may relieve the discomfort of fibromyalgia, a condition that causes fatigue and intensely painful "trigger points". When 77 men and women with fibromyalgia followed a ten-week stress-reduction program using meditation, all reported that their symptoms improved. And half described their improvements as "moderate to marked".

### **Psychological Benefits of Meditation:**

Meditation can help most people feel less anxious and more in control. The awareness that meditation brings can also be a source of personal insight and self-understanding.

### **Handling Repressed Memories and Enjoying Life:**

Dr. Borysenko notes that "meditation may lead to a breakdown of screen memories so that early childhood abuse episodes and other traumas suddenly flood the mind, making the patient temporarily more anxious until these traumas are healed. Many so-called meditation exercises are actually forms of imagery and visualization that are extraordinarily useful in healing old traumas, confronting death anxieties, finishing 'old business', learning to forgive, and enhancing self-esteem."

"Meditation frees persons from tenacious preoccupation with the past and future and allows them to fully experience life's precious moments", says Daeja Napier, founder of the Insight Meditation Center and lay dharma teacher of insight meditation in suburban Boston.

"Many men and women tend to live in a state of perpetual motion and expectation that prevents them from appreciating the gifts that each moment gives us," says Napier. "We live life in a state of insufficiency, waiting for a mother to love us, for a father to be kind to us, for the perfect job or home, for Prince Charming to come along or to become a perfect person. It's a mythology that keeps us from being whole.

"Meditation is a humble process that gently returns us to the now of our lives and allows us to wake up and re-evaluate the way that we live our lives," says Napier. "We realize that the only thing missing is mindfulness, and that's what we practice."

**Depression:**

Feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and isolation are hallmarks of depression-the nation's most prevalent mental health problem. Meditation increases self-confidence and feelings of connection to others. Many studies have shown that depressed people feel much better after eliciting the relaxation response.

**Panic attacks:**

Sometimes anxiety becomes paralyzing and people feel (wrongly) that they are about to suffer some horrible fate. Panic attacks are often treated with drugs, but studies by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., associate professor of medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester and director of the medical centre's Stress Reduction Clinic, show that if people who are prone to panic attacks begin focused, meditative breathing the instant they feel the first signs of an episode, they are less likely to have a full-blown panic attack.

**Spiritual Benefits of Meditation:**

The longer an individual practices meditation, the greater the likelihood that his or her goals and efforts will shift toward personal and spiritual growth. Many individuals who initially learn meditation for its self-regulatory aspects find that as their practice deepens they are drawn more and more into the realm of the "spiritual".

In her work with many cancer and AIDS patients, Dr. Borysenko has observed that many are most interested in meditation as a way of becoming more attuned to the spiritual dimension of life. She reports that many die "healed," in a state of compassionate self-awareness and self-acceptance.

**Illness in general:**

"It doesn't seem to matter what type of medical condition brings people to the Stress Reduction Clinic," Dr. Kabat-Zinn observes. "Over the eight-week program, they usually report a reduction in symptoms."

Many of Nature's cures – **acupressure, aromatherapy, biofeedback, exercise, heat and cold therapies, massage therapy, music therapy, tai chi and chi gong, visualization, guided imagery and self-hypnosis** and **yoga** incorporate elements of **meditation**.

**Meditation****Diagnosis, Prescription, Warnings and Precautions**

Each aspect of meditation has its powers of healing; many have specific uses and, unquestionably, particular dangers and drawbacks for certain individuals. The diagnosis and prescription of meditative practices for the many varieties of ailments is an art that has received far less attention than it deserves.

In general, concentrative practices should be avoided by individuals whose reality-testing function is poor, who are strongly paranoid, or who are likely to develop delusions of grandeur from the altered states of consciousness that these practices tend to produce. People with overwhelming anxiety should probably avoid insight meditations, in which the anxiety level can reach intolerable proportions. Long

periods of meditative practice (as in contemplative meditation) may precipitate psychotic episodes in susceptible individuals.

Probably the safest course for those in the healing professions is to experiment with meditation practices for themselves, and then to share with clients and friends only those which they thoroughly understand. Also, in monitoring the meditation practices, the professional should bring to bear all the available tools available in evaluating the gain or the danger, regardless of the exotic or "sacred" origin of the techniques being studied. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna gives Arjuna some timeless advice that is relevant here: "Fear not, Arjuna, for what is Real always was and always will be, and what is not Real never was and never will be."

## **MEDITATION TECHNIQUES**

There are many meditation techniques. Some of the techniques are quite simple and can be picked up with a little practice. Others require training by an experienced instructor. We will cover some of the simple techniques to get started. Please note that because of the effects of meditation on repressed memories and the psychological impact, you may go through some discomfort initially; hence it is always a good idea to be under the care of a qualified practitioner as you start your meditation. (See the section on Warnings and Precautions).

In Christian spiritual training, meditation means thinking with concentration about some topic. In the Eastern sense, meditation may be viewed as the opposite of thinking about a topic. Here the objective is to become detached from thoughts and images and opening up silent gaps between them. The result is a quietening of our mind and is sometimes called relaxation response. In Christian mystical practice, this practice is called 'contemplation'.

When we look at the basic psychological procedure at the heart of **Eastern meditation** and **Christian contemplation**, we can understand why the following activities are relaxing:

- Prayer.
- Lying back and listening to music on radio or record player.
- Focusing attention, while sitting still, on a fishing rod float; rapt gazing at a loved person, object, or scene.
- Fireside contemplation.

All these activities, and many more, involve staying still and passive attention to something.

### **Four Elements Basic To Traditional Meditation**

There are four elements basic to most traditional meditation. These elements are:

- A quiet place to meditate,
- A comfortable or poised posture,
- An object for attention-awareness to dwell upon,
- A passive attitude.

#### **A quiet place**

The best environment for the practice of meditation is similar to that most conducive to lying down or sitting to progressively relax the body muscles. Sit in a quiet place with minimum distractions. Later, you may be able to meditate well in places where more is going on: laundrettes, railway stations, doctors' or dentists' waiting rooms, on trains and buses, and so on.

### **A comfortable or poised posture**

Assuming a certain posture has been central to many meditation techniques. Classic postures, integral to Hatha Yoga, are given in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, which codify ancient yogic healing practices. Other postures appear in the Kum Nye holistic healing system of Tibet, in Islamic prayer, and in Gurdjieff movements. Posture is considered very important in Zen Buddhist practice.

A major characteristic of prescribed meditation postures in many traditions is that the spine is kept straight. This is true in Hindu and Buddhist yogas, in the Christian attitude of kneeling prayer, in the Egyptian sitting position, and in the Taoist standing meditation, "embracing the pillar." People with misalignments may feel uncomfortable in the beginning when assuming these postures. The spine is put back into a structurally sound line, and the weight of the body distributed around it in a balanced pattern in which gravity, not muscular tension, is the primary influence. It is possible, although it has not been conclusively proven, that this postural realignment affects the state of mind.

A sitting posture is better for meditation than lying down. This is because lying down is the normal sleep position and meditation lying down could easily lead to sleep. If you are not a person who easily goes to sleep during the day, you may like to meditate in a semi-reclining position on a sofa or large armchair with the back of your head supported. In traditional meditation postures, however, the back is normally kept erect, though not rigidly upright. This is called poised posture. *The right attitude for meditation may itself be described as poised: alert yet also relaxed.* Poised posture promotes the right state of attention-awareness for successful meditation.

In the East, the cross-legged postures, with head and back in vertical line, are considered ideal for meditation. In classic **Lotus posture**, the legs are crossed with feet on thighs, and imparts the right feeling of poised sitting for meditation. These postures are difficult and even painful at first for those who are not familiar with them. We will describe two traditional oriental postures, viz., half lotus and lotus posture and an easier posture called Burmese posture. For those who prefer to do the meditation sitting on a chair, we will describe a posture called Egyptian posture.

See Also:

- [Half Lotus Posture](#)
- [Full Lotus Posture](#)
- [Burmese Posture](#)
- [Egyptian Posture](#)

### **An object to dwell upon**

In Hindu Yoga the object the attention dwells on is often a mantra, usually a Sanskrit word or syllable. In Buddhism the focus for bare attention is often the meditator's own breathing. Both mantra meditation and awareness of breathing fulfill all the elements required for meditating for relaxation.

Some meditation methods involve looking at objects with open eyes, but in others, the subjects close their eyes which makes relaxation easier to induce.

Instructors in transcendental meditation make much of each person being given a mantra that suits his or her nervous system, but there does not appear to be any scientific support for this. Any technique used with any sound or phrase or prayer or mantra has been found to bring forth the same physiologic changes noted during Transcendental Meditation.

There is much to be said for choosing either a neutral word or a meaningless sound for mantra meditation. Some people, however, like to use a word like 'peace' which has relaxing associations. This is all right provided the word does not set off trains of associative thought. In this type of meditation the single thought-sound has the effect of quietening the mind; Maharishi Mahesh Yogi says that the thought-sound takes the meditator to the source of thought. Studies of the brain wave patterns of meditators indicate that the deepest relaxation results when thoughts are absent, or few and of no importance.

If you make awareness of breathing your single meditation method, let your attention dwell on the gentle rise of your abdomen in diaphragmatic-abdominal breathing. Your breathing becomes very quiet and even after several minutes of meditation and the gentle movement and rhythm of abdominal breathing promotes relaxation.

### **A passive attitude or poised awareness**

This last element of meditation for relaxation is said to be the most essential. It is sometimes called poised awareness or attention-awareness because in it relaxation and alertness are in perfect balance. There is nothing exotic about it: you were passively aware when you let go from tension in the muscles of your arms, legs, trunk, and face.

A passive attitude means that distractions from environmental sounds, skin tingles etc., and the inevitable intrusion into the mind of thoughts and images are viewed casually and detachedly. Let them come and go, of no more consequence than small clouds passing across an expanse of sky. But each time you become aware that your attention has slipped away from the mantra or the sensation of abdominal breathing, and you are engaging in a chain of logical thinking or developing interest in some sounds or other sensations, bring your attention and awareness back to the meditation object.

It is really very simple, as long as you keep a relaxed attitude going. Don't force, and don't cling. With practice, moments of great calm and deep restfulness during meditation will become more frequent.

### **SIMPLE MEDITATION:**

This meditation process is good to induce relaxation response. Plan to make meditation a regular part of your daily routine. Set aside 10 to 20 minutes each day at the same time, if possible. Before breakfast is a good time.

- Choose a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed by other people or by the telephone.
- Sit quietly in a comfortable position. Refer to the section on postures for recommendations on sitting positions.



- Eliminate distractions and interruptions during the period you'll be meditating.
- Commit yourself to a specific length of time and try to stick to it.
- Pick a focus word or short phrase that's firmly rooted in your personal belief system. A non-religious person might choose a neutral word like one, peace, or love. Others might use the opening words of a favourite prayer from their religion such as 'Hail Mary full of Grace', 'I surrender all to you', 'Hallelujah', 'Om', etc.
- Close your eyes. This makes it easy to concentrate.
- Relax your muscles sequentially from head to feet. This helps to break the connection between stressful thoughts and a tense body. Starting with your forehead, become aware of tension as you breathe in. Let go of any obvious tension as you breathe out. Go through the rest of your body in this way, proceeding down through your eyes, jaws, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, chest, upper back, middle back and midriff, lower back, belly, pelvis, buttocks, thighs, calves, and feet.
- Breathe slowly and naturally, repeating your focus word or phrase silently as you exhale.
- Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say, "Oh, well," and gently return to the repetition.
- Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. After you finish: Sit quietly for a minute or so, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes open. Do not stand for one or two minutes.
- Plan for a session once or twice a day.

## **WALKING MEDITATION**

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn Director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, one simple way to bring awareness into your life is through walking meditation. "This brings your attention to the actual experience of walking as you are doing it, focusing on the sensations in your feet and legs, feeling your whole body moving", Dr. Kabat-Zinn explains. "You can also integrate awareness of your breathing with the experience."

To do this exercise, focus the attention on each foot as it contacts the ground. When the mind wanders away from the feet or legs, or the feeling of the body walking, refocus your attention. To deepen your concentration, don't look around, but keep your gaze in front of you.

"One thing that you find out when you have been practicing mindfulness for a while is that nothing is quite as simple as it appears", says Dr. Kabat-Zinn. "This is as true for walking as it is for anything else. For one thing, we carry our mind around with us when we walk, so we are usually absorbed in our own thoughts to one extent or another. We are hardly ever just walking, even when we are just going out for a walk". Walking meditation involves intentionally attending to the experience of walking itself.

## **TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION**

Transcendental Meditation is by far the most thoroughly researched in terms of its benefits for mental, physical, and social health. TM is a simple mental technique, easy to learn and practice. Anyone can learn it within a few days and can begin to experience beneficial results almost immediately. Since 1958, 4 million people have learned TM and over five hundred scientific studies have been conducted on it at over two hundred universities worldwide.

TM is one of the easiest meditation techniques to learn. When you learn TM, an instructor gives you a word or phrase—your personal mantra—which you promise not to divulge. You are told to sit quietly with your eyes closed and repeat the mantra over and over again for 20 minutes at a time once or twice a day.

The mantra functions to focus your mind on a single idea, representing the "oneness" of the universe. You're instructed to assume a passive, accepting attitude while repeating your mantra. When distracting thoughts intrude, you're instructed to simply observe them, accept them and gently return your mental focus to repeating your mantra.

Physiological research shows that during TM, the body gains a deeper state of relaxation than during ordinary rest. EEG (electroencephalogram) changes indicate a state of heightened awareness and coherence. Regular practice of TM has been found to produce a state of increased stability, adaptability, and integration during all phases of activity. Also, TM has been found to increase intelligence, creativity, and perceptual ability and to reduce high blood pressure and illness rates by more than 50%. Analysis of large numbers of research studies on TM have found that it is one of the most effective techniques known for reducing drug and alcohol abuse, decreasing anxiety and increasing self-actualization.

## **MINDFULNESS (VIPASSANA)**

In mantra and breath meditation, you focus on a word or your breath and try to empty your mind of everything else. This mental clearing is what most people mean when they refer to meditation.

But there's another kind of meditation, a practice Buddhists call **vipassana** or sometimes called **mindfulness**, or insight meditation. It is the art of becoming deeply aware of the present instant. Mindfulness means fully experiencing what happens in the here and now. It is the art of focusing our minds on what's happening in and around us at this very moment. Mindfulness helps you turn down all the noise in your head— the guilt, anger, doubts, and uncertainties that upset us moment to moment. It is a technique that encourages you to stop and smell the roses.

The key is not so much what you focus on but how you do it. What is more important is the quality of the awareness you bring to each moment. That awareness should be meditative in the sense of being a silent witness, accepting and nonjudgmental. It, however, does not imply resignation to abuse or injustice. It teaches acknowledgment of the moment-to-moment reality and prepares those who use the technique to respond to that reality less impulsively and more effectively.

There are two kinds of mindful meditation – formal and informal. Yoga is a good example of the formal type. In a yoga class, participants focus intently on their breathing and the postures, moving slowly from one position to the next, exquisitely aware of their feelings during the process. Practitioners are taught to concentrate on their breathing and its passage through the body as they dismiss any distracting thoughts. Though it sounds simple, mindfulness takes practice, and the longer you practice, the easier the process becomes. Breathing is the vehicle of transition from our conventional, anxiety-ridden, goal-

oriented experience of stressful living into a natural state of functional calm and tranquility. Tai chi offers a similar dimension of mindfulness. Informal mindfulness involves turning the headlong rush of daily living into a collection of discrete moments of experience, each savored fully. For example, Dr. Kabat-Zinn hands each of his students a single raisin and asks them to eat it. Ordinarily people would simply pop the raisin in their mouths, chew a few times and swallow, largely unconsciously. But mindful, meditative raisin eating is much different. It begins with looking intently at the raisin, considering its shape, weight, colour and texture. Next comes placing the raisin in the mouth, focusing on how it feels on the tongue as the mouth welcomes it with salivation. Then the mindful raisin-eater chews the raisin slowly and thoroughly, focusing on its taste and texture. Finally, swallowing the raisin involves following it all the way down to the stomach.

Once you commit to a mindfulness trigger-such as hanging up the phone, sipping a cup of tea or eating fruit snacks, starting the car or petting your dog-it's not difficult to work a dozen mindful moments into each day.

## **JOURNEY MEDITATION**

Journey meditation combines imagery and visualization to achieve a meditative state. This form of meditation appeals to those who find peace by picturing themselves in a peaceful place.

Here's how to do it.

- Sit up straight. Get into a comfortable position. Either sit on the floor with your back against a wall, or sit in a chair with your feet on the ground and your hands resting on your knees or thighs. Have a pad and pencil nearby. Write down the worries, concerns or problems that you're afraid will distract you from meditation, and promise yourself that you'll deal with them when you're done.
- Take a few cleansing breaths. Breathe in slowly and deeply for five counts, then exhale slowly for five counts.
- Find a peaceful place. Close your eyes and concentrate on a soothing, tranquil place where you feel safe and calm. As distractions flutter through your mind, remind yourself that you'll deal with them when you are finished meditating.

A quiet beach is an ideal mental destination for most people. Picture yourself resting on the sand. Feel the sun on your skin, hear the water lapping the shore, listen for the sounds of seagulls or see the ships gliding out to sea. You can use the same routine for any beautiful, serene place that calms you.

Do it twice a day. Most persons will benefit from a 5- to 15-minute meditation practiced several days a week. A good rule of thumb for practicing journey meditation is to do it in the morning and then again later in the day. A peaceful meditative journey as you wake up can improve the whole tone of your day.

Journey meditation is also an excellent antidote for afternoon slump. Most people find that at about 3.00 PM, they are at their lowest energy level for the day. This is a good time to take a short nap or to take a short journey break. In as little as ten minutes, you'll find that you've refreshed yourself.

## **VIBRATIONAL MEDITATION:**

Also called sounding meditation, this technique uses the repetition of a word or sound as its focal point. Vibrational meditation has appeal to those who find that making noise is a path to inner quiet.

We're taught to be nice and quiet as little children. Releasing sound and noise helps us release stress.

Here's how to begin.

**Get on your feet.** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, your knees slightly bent and your hips centred, as though you're about to squat. Or, if you wish, sit or lie down. Keep your body loose and comfortable with your arms at your sides or on your hips. Begin by taking a few cleansing breaths.

**Pick a word, any word.** Choose a word that alternates vowels and consonants-like "serenity". The word that you select doesn't necessarily have to be a spiritual one. It just has to feel good when you say it.

**Repeat after yourself.** Repeat the word, chant the word, focus on nothing but saying the word over and over again. Let the sound of the word vibrate through your body. Let the word resonate up from your abdomen and let it go to your hands, your feet. Let your muscles move as you chant the word.

Some people have a tendency to clench their muscles when they're tense. It's important to roll the sound through your body so that you can clear out the tightness in your muscles. Doing so promotes the meditative state of relaxation that feels like a natural high.

### **MOVEMENT MEDITATION:**

Like the Eastern discipline of yoga, movement meditation combines breathing and gentle, flowing movements to create a meditative state. It appeals especially to those who tend to achieve a meditative state of mind by moving their bodies.

Movement meditation allows a person to draw in qi energy from the Earth, which many healers-such as acupuncturists, acupressurists and some massage therapists-regard as the essential life force.

Movement meditation is excellent to do first thing in the morning and can also be a prelude to prayer or another form of meditation.

Here's how to practice movement meditation:

**Centre and concentrate.** Take several deep, cleansing breaths. Then, move into a relaxed, squatting stance with your knees slightly bent and your hips and pelvis loose. Centre yourself by visualizing your feet connected to the soil. Visualize the centre of the Earth, from which we draw energy. Concentrate upon and honour the Earth.

**Focus your awareness.** Gently move your body in an undulating, snakelike swaying motion. See yourself as a flower opening up or as an animal moving through the brush. Dance, if you like.

If it pleases you, use sound or music to focus your attention on the movement and on the vibration. Allow yourself to get lost in the sense of movement and the beauty of your body as it moves. Feel the areas of your body that are tight and let the movement loosen them up.

## BODY SCAN MEDITATION

Body Scan Meditation is often used by people who want to try a more formal type of mindfulness without attending a yoga or tai chi class.

1. Lie on your back with your legs uncrossed, your arms at your sides, palms up, and your eyes open or closed, as you wish.
2. Focus on your breathing, how the air moves in and out of your body.
3. After several deep breaths, as you begin to feel comfortable and relaxed, direct your attention to the toes of your left foot. Tune into any sensations in that part of your body while remaining aware of your breathing. It often helps to imagine each breath flowing to the spot where you're directing your attention. Focus on your left toes for one to two minutes.
4. Then move your focus to the sole of your left foot and hold it there for a minute or two while continuing to pay attention to your breathing.
5. Follow the same procedure as you move to your left ankle, calf, knee, thigh, hip and so on all around the body.
6. Pay particular attention to any areas that cause pain or are the focus of any medical condition (for asthma, the lungs; for diabetes, the pancreas).
7. Pay particular attention to the head: the jaw, chin, lips, tongue, roof of the mouth, nostrils, throat, cheeks, eyelids, eyes, eyebrows, forehead, temples and scalp.
8. Finally, focus on the very top of your hair, the uppermost part of your body. Then let go of the body altogether, and in your mind, hover above yourself as your breath reaches beyond you and touches the universe.

## THE INSTANT CALMING SEQUENCE

Meditation and mindfulness are great when you have enough control over your time to enjoy them. But what happens when a crisis requires immediate action?

Using scientific findings in the physiology of relaxation, Dr. Robert Cooper has developed a six-step program that minimizes the negative effects of stress the moment the body begins to feel stressed. He calls it the Instant Calming Sequence.

**Step 1:** Practice uninterrupted breathing. When stress strikes, immediately focus on your breath and continue breathing smoothly, deeply and evenly.

**Step 2:** Put on a positive face. Smile a grin that you can feel in the corners of your eyes. "The conventional wisdom is that happiness triggers smiling," Dr. Cooper explains. "But recent studies suggest that this process is a two-way street. Smiling can contribute to feelings of happiness, and in a stressful situation, it can help keep you calm." Try this simple test: Smile a broad grin right now. Don't you feel better?

**Step 3:** Balance your posture. People under stress often look hunched-over, hence the oft-repeated phrase "They have the weight of the world on their shoulders."

"Maintaining good posture works like smiling," Dr. Cooper says. "Physical balance contributes to emotional balance." Keep your head up, chin in, chest high, pelvis and hips level, back comfortably

straight and abdomen free of tension. Imagine a skyhook lifting your body from a point at the centre of the top of your head.

**Step 4:** Bathe in a wave of relaxation. Consciously sweep a wave of relaxation through your body. "Imagine you're standing under a waterfall that washes away all your tension," Dr. Cooper says.

**Step 5:** Acknowledge reality. Face your causes of stresses head-on. Don't try to deny it or wish that it hadn't happened. Think: "This is real. I can handle it. I'm finding the best possible way to cope right now."

**Step 6:** Reassert control. Instead of fretting about how the stressor has robbed you of control, focus on what you can control and take appropriate action. Also, think clear-headed, honest thoughts instead of distorted ones.

## **FIVE MEDITATION STEPS**

Sitting comfortably but upright, feel your weight on the chair or cushion and relax into it. Imagine breathing in and out through your navel, taking a few deep breaths to settle in. Let your attention gather at a point at the base of your spine, imagine it as a point of energy. Notice what sensations you feel there.

1. Move your attention to the crown of the head, imagine a point of energy there. Notice what sensations you feel. Feel these two points align, connected by a line of light, inside the body near the spine. Allow energy to move freely between these two points.
2. Let your attention come to rest at a point of balance along this line, deep within you, at the centre of your being.
3. From this centre of your being, imagine the line of light extending downward through your legs and feet, relaxing the toes and sinking into the earth. Breathing out, let all tension and fatigue run down this line into the earth.
4. Breathing in, imagine drawing up, through the soles of your feet, fresh, transformed earth energy. Allow it to fill your whole body from the feet up to the crown of your head, bringing a feeling of being supported and cradled by the solidity of the earth. Return your attention and your breathing to the centre of your being. Imagine the line of light rising to the crown of your head and above, out into the clear blue sky, to the heavens. Breathe in fresh air.
5. Allow light and clearness from the heavens to radiate down the line of light to fill the whole body. Breathe into the centre of your being and feel the two energies, from the earth and the sky, mingling. From this centre let your attention be on your breath moving in and out (using one of the focuses suggested above).

## **TAOIST MEDITATION METHODS**

Taoist meditation methods have many points in common with Hindu and Buddhist systems, but the Taoist way is less abstract and far more down-to-earth than the contemplative traditions which evolved in India. The primary hallmark of Taoist meditation is the generation, transformation, and circulation of internal energy. Once the meditator has 'achieved energy' (deh-chee), it can be applied to promoting health and longevity, nurturing the 'spiritual embryo' of immortality, martial arts, healing, painting and poetry, sensual self-indulgence, or whatever else the adept wishes to do with it.

The two primary guidelines in Taoist meditation are jing ('quiet, stillness, calm') and ding ('concentration, focus'). The purpose of stillness, both mental and physical, is to turn attention inwards and cut off external sensory input, thereby muzzling the "Five Thieves". Within that silent stillness, one concentrates the mind and focuses attention, usually on the breath, in order to develop what is called 'one-pointed awareness', a totally undistracted, undisturbed, undifferentiated state of mind which permits intuitive insights to arise spontaneously.

Taoist masters suggest that when you first begin to practice meditation, you will find that your mind is very uncooperative. That's your ego, or 'emotional mind', fighting against its own extinction by the higher forces of spiritual awareness. The last thing your ego and emotions want is to be harnessed: they revel in the day-to-day circus of sensory entertainment and emotional turmoil, even though this game depletes your energy, degenerates your body, and exhausts your spirit. When you catch your mind drifting into fantasy or drawing attention away from internal alchemy to external phenomena, here are **six ways you can use to 'catch the monkey', clarify the mind, and re-establish the internal focus:**

1. Shift attention back to the inflow and outflow of air streaming through the nostrils, or energy streaming in and out of a vital point, such as between the brows.
2. Focus attention on the rising and falling of the navel, the expansion and contraction of the abdomen, as you breathe.
3. With eyes half-closed, focus vision on a candle flame or a mandala (geometric meditation picture). Focus on the centre of the flame or picture, but also take in the edges with peripheral vision. The concentration required to do this usually clears all other distractions from the mind.
4. Practice a few minutes of mantra, the 'sacred syllables' which harmonize energy and focus the mind. Though mantras are usually associated with Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist practices, Taoists have also employed them for many millennia. The three most effective syllables are 'Om', which stabilizes the body, 'ah', which harmonizes energy, and 'hum', which concentrates the spirit. 'Om' vibrates between the brows, 'ah' in the throat, and 'hum' in the heart, and their associated colours are white, red, and blue respectively. Chant the syllables in a deep, low-pitched tone and use long, complete exhalations for each one. Other mantras are equally effective.
5. Beat the 'Heavenly Drum' as a cool-down energy-collection technique. The vibrations tend to clear discursive thoughts and sensory distractions from the mind.
6. Visualize a deity or a sacred symbol of personal significance to you shining above the crown of your head or suspended in space before you. When your mind is once again still, stable, and undistracted, let the vision fade away and refocus your mind on whatever meditative technique you were practicing.

Taoist meditation works on all three levels of the 'Three Treasures': essence (body), energy (breath), and spirit (mind).

1. The first step is to adopt a comfortable posture for the body, balance your weight evenly, straighten the spine, and pay attention to physical sensations such as heat, cold, tingling, trembling, or whatever else arises.
2. When your body is comfortable and balanced, shift attention to the second level, which is breath and energy. You may focus on the breath itself as it flows in and out of the lungs through the nostrils, or on energy streaming in and out of a particular point in tune with the breath.
3. The third level is spirit: when the breath is regulated and energy is flowing smoothly through the channels, focus attention on thoughts and feelings forming and dissolving in your mind,

awareness expanding and contracting with each breath, insights and inspirations arising spontaneously, visions and images appearing and disappearing. Eventually you may even be rewarded with intuitive flashes of insight regarding the ultimate nature of the mind: open and empty as space; clear and luminous as a cloudless sky at sunrise; infinite and unimpeded.

Just as all the rules of chee-gung practice can be boiled down to the three Ss – slow, soft, smooth – so the main points of meditation practice may be summed up in the three Cs: calm, cool, clear. As for proper postures for practice, the two positions most frequently used in Taoist meditation are:

- Sitting cross-legged on the floor in 'half-lotus' position, with the buttocks elevated on a cushion or pad. The advantages of this method are that this position is more stable and encourages energy to flow upwards towards the brain.
- Sitting erect on a low stool or chair, feet parallel and shoulder width apart, knees bent at a 90-degree angle, spine erect. The advantages of sitting on a stool are that the legs do not cramp, the soles of the feet are in direct contact with the energy of the Earth, and internal energy tends to flow more freely throughout the lower as well as the upper torso.

Most meditators who follow Taoist Meditation use both methods, depending on conditions. When sitting cross-legged, Western practitioners, whose legs tend to cramp more easily than Asians', are advised to sit on thick firm cushions, perhaps with a phone book or two underneath, in order to elevate the pelvis and take pressure off the legs and knees. This also helps keep the spine straight without straining the lower back.

The way the hands are placed is also important. The most natural and comfortable position is to rest the palms lightly on the thighs, just above the knees. However, some meditators find it more effective to use one of the traditional 'mudras', or hand gestures. Experiment with different combinations of posture and mudra until you find the style that suits you best.

Taoist meditation masters teach three basic ways to control the Fire mind of emotion with the Water mind of intent, so that the adept's goals in meditation may be realized.

- The first method is called '**stop and observe**'. This involves paying close attention to how thoughts arise and fade in the mind, learning to let them pass like a freight train in the night, without clinging to any particular one. This develops awareness of the basic emptiness of all thought, as well as non-attachment to the rise and fall of emotional impulses. Gradually one learns simply to ignore the intrusion of discursive thoughts, at which point they cease arising for sheer lack of attention.
- The second technique is called '**observe and imagine**', which refers to visualization. The adept employs intent to visualize an image – such as Buddha, Jesus, a sacred symbol, the moon, a star, or whatever – in order to shift mental focus away from thoughts and emotions and stabilize the mind in one-pointed awareness. You may also visualize a particular energy centre in your body, or listen to the real or imagined sound of a bell, gong, or cymbal ringing in your ears. The point of focus is not important: what counts is shifting the focus of your attention away from idle thoughts, conflicting emotions, fantasies, and other distracting antics of the 'monkey mind' and concentrating attention instead on a stable point of focus established by the mind of intent, or 'wisdom mind'.
- The third step in cultivating control over your own mind is called '**using the mind of intent to guide**



**energy'**. When the emotional mind is calm and the breath is regulated, focus attention on the internal energy. Learn how to guide it through the meridian network in order to energize vital organs, raise energy from the sacrum to the head to nourish the spirit and brain, and exchange stale energy for fresh energy from the external sources of heaven (sky) and earth (ground). Begin by focusing attention on the Lower Elixir Field below the abdomen, then moving energy from there down to the perineum, up through the coccyx, and up along the spinal centres into the head, after which attention shifts to the Upper Elixir Field between the brows. Though this sounds rather vague and esoteric to the uninitiated, a few months of practice, especially in conjunction with chee-gung and proper dietary habits, usually suffices to unveil the swirling world of energy and awareness hidden within our bodies and minds. All you have to do is sit still and shut up long enough for your mind to become aware of it.

It's always a good idea to warm up your body and open your energy channels with some chee-gung exercises before you sit down to meditate. This facilitates internal energy circulation and enables you to sit for longer periods without getting stiff or numb. After sitting, you should avoid bathing for at least twenty minutes in order to prevent loss of energy through open pores and energy points. If you live in the northern hemisphere, it's best to sit facing south or east, in the general direction of the sun; in the southern hemisphere, sit facing north or east.

Given below are three Taoist meditations that are useful for beginners.

### **Taoist Meditation: Breath and Navel Meditation**

Breath and Navel Meditation is the oldest meditation method on record in China as well as India, and it is the method usually taught to beginners. Breath and Navel Meditation works directly with the natural flow of breath in the nostrils and the expansion and contraction of the abdomen. This Taoist meditation is a good way to develop focused attention and one-pointed awareness.

#### **Method:**

1. Sit cross-legged on a cushion on the floor or upright on a low stool and adjust the body's posture until well balanced and comfortable. Press tongue to palate, close your mouth without clenching the teeth, and lower the eyelids until almost closed.
2. Breathe naturally through the nose, drawing the inhalation deep down into the abdomen and making the exhalation long and smooth. Focus your attention on two sensations, one above and the other below. Above, focus on the gentle breeze of air flowing in and out of the nostrils like a bellows, and on exhalation try to 'follow' the breath out as far as possible, from 3 to 18 inches. Below, focus on the navel rising and falling and the entire abdomen expanding and contracting like a balloon with each inhalation and exhalation. You may focus attention on the nostrils or the abdomen, or on both, or on one and then the other, whichever suits you best.

From time to time, mentally check your posture and adjust it if necessary. Whenever you catch your mind wandering off or getting cluttered with thoughts, consciously shift your attention back to your breath. Sometimes it helps to count either inhalations or exhalations, until your mind is stably focused. If you manage to achieve stability in this method after ten to twenty minutes of practice, you may wish to switch over to one of the other two methods given below. All three of these methods may be practiced in a single sitting in the order that they are presented here, or in separate sittings.

**Time:** Twenty to thirty minutes, once or twice a day.

### **TAOIST MEDITATION: MASTER HAN'S CENTRAL CHANNEL MEDITATION**

This is an ancient Taoist method modified and taught by Master Han Yu-mo at his Sung Yang Tao Centers in Taiwan and Canada. It is a simple and effective way for beginners rapidly to develop a tangible awareness of internal energy and a familiarity with the major power points through which energy is circulated and exchanged with the surrounding sources of Heaven and Earth. It relaxes the body, replenishes energy, and invigorates the spirit.

#### **Method**

1. Adopt a comfortable sitting posture.
2. First, take a deep breath and bend forward slowly, exhaling audibly through the mouth in order to expel stale breath from the lungs; repeat three times.
3. Then sit still and breathe naturally, letting the abdomen expand and contract with each breath. However, instead of focusing attention on the flow of air through the nostrils, focus on the beam of energy entering the crown of the head at a point about two inches above the hairline, called the 'Medicine Palace'. Feel the beam of energy flowing in through this point as you begin each inhalation and follow it down through the Central Channel into the Lower Elixir Field below the navel, then follow it back up the Central Channel and out through the Medicine Palace point on exhalation. The sensation at the crown point is most noticeable at the beginning of inhalation and the end of exhalation and feels somewhat like a flap or valve opening and closing as energy flows through it. There may also be feelings of warmth, tingling, or numbness in the scalp, all of which are signs of energy moving under the scrutiny of awareness.

After practicing this method for a few weeks or months and developing a conscious feel for energy as it moves through the Medicine Palace point, you may start to work with other points of exit during exhalation, always drawing energy in through the crown point on inhalation. For example, you may bring energy in through the crown and down to the abdomen on inhalation, then push it back up and out through the 'Celestial Eye' point between the brows. This point usually brings rapid results – a distinct tingling or throbbing sensation between the brows. The Celestial Eye is the point through which adepts with 'psychic vision' perceive aspects of the world that are hidden to ordinary eyesight. The mass of magnetite crystals between the forehead and the pituitary gland is sensitive to subtle fluctuations in surrounding electromagnetic fields. In other words, psychic vision perceives by virtue of its sensitivity to electromagnetic energy rather than the light or sound energy perceived by eyes and ears. So-called 'psychics' are those who have learned how to interpret the electromagnetic signals from the magnetic organ between the eyes in terms of ordinary perception and rational thought.

In addition to the brow point, you may also practice expelling energy on exhalation through the points in the centres of the palms, the centres of the soles, and the perineum point midway between genitals and anus. In each case, look for sensations of warmth or tingling at the point of exit.

After practicing this method for a while, your head may start to rock spontaneously back and forth or from side to side after fifteen or twenty minutes of sitting, or else your entire body may start trembling and shaking. This is a good sign, for it means that your channels are opening and that energy is coursing strongly through them. Try neither to suppress nor encourage these spontaneous tremors; instead just let them run their course naturally.

**Time:** Twenty to forty minutes, once or twice a day, preferably around dawn and midnight.

### **TAOIST MEDITATION: MICROCOSMIC ORBIT MEDITATION**

This is the classic Taoist meditation method for refining, raising, and circulating internal energy via the 'orbit' formed by the 'Governing Channel' from perineum up to head and the Conception Channel from head back down to perineum. Activating the Microcosmic Orbit is a key step that leads to more advanced practices. Taoists believe that microcosmic orbit meditation fills the reservoirs of the Governing and Conception channels with energy, which is then distributed to all the major organ-energy meridians, thereby energizing the internal organs. It draws abundant energy up from the sacrum into the brain, thereby enhancing cerebral circulation of blood and stimulating secretions of vital neurochemicals. It is also the first stage for cultivating the 'spiritual embryo' or 'golden elixir' of immortality, a process that begins in the lower abdomen and culminates in the mid-brain. This is probably the best of all Taoist methods for cultivating health and longevity while also 'opening the three passes' to higher spiritual awareness.

Taoists often refer things in symbolic languages. (See the section *on Human anatomy from the Taoist perspective* for a description of the symbolism used in referring to the human anatomy.) 'Opening the Three Passes' is another name for this meditation method and refers to the three critical junctions which pave the way for energy to travel up from the sacrum through the Governing Channel along the spine into the head.

#### **Method:**

1. The first step is to still the body, calm the mind, and regulate the breath. With this settled mind, sit alone in a quiet room, senses shut and eyelids lowered. Turn your attention within, and inwardly visualize a pocket of energy in the umbilical region; within it is a point of golden light, clear and bright, immaculately pure. Focus attention on the navel until you feel the 'pocket of energy' glowing in the umbilical region. The breath through your nose will naturally become light and subtle, going out and in evenly and finely, continuously and quietly, gradually becoming slighter and subtler. When the feeling is stable and the energy there is full, use your mind to guide energy down to the perineum and back up through the aperture in the coccyx.

Steadily visualize this true energy as being like a small snake gradually passing through the nine apertures of the coccyx. When you feel the energy has gone through this pass, visualize this true energy rising up to where the ribs meet the spine, then going through this pass and right on up to the Jade Pillow, the back of the brain.

Then imagine your true spirit in the Nirvana Chamber in the centre of the brain, taking in the energy. When this true energy goes through the Jade Pillow, press the tongue against the palate. The head should move forward and tilt slightly upwards to help it. When you feel this true energy penetrating the Nirvana Chamber, this may feel hot or swollen. This means the pass has been cleared and the energy has reached the Nirvana Centre.

2. Next, focus attention on the Celestial Eye between the eyebrows and draw energy forwards from the midbrain and out through the point between the brows. This may cause a tingling or throbbing sensation there. Then the centre of the brows will throb – this means the Celestial Eye is about to open. Then move the spirit into the centre of the brows and draw the true energy

through the Celestial Eye. If you see the eighteen thousand pores and three hundred and sixty joints of the whole body explode open all at once, each joint parting three-tenths of an inch, this is evidence of the opening of the Celestial Eye.

This is what is meant when it is said that when one pass opens all the passes open, and when one opening is cleared all the openings are cleared.

You may wish to stay and work with this point for a few minutes, before letting energy sink down through the palate and tongue into the throat to the heart. This may feel as though there is cool water going down the Multistoried Tower of the windpipe. Do not swallow; let it go down by itself, bathing the bronchial tubes.

Then the vital energy will bathe the internal organs and then return to the genitals. This is what is called return to the root.

From the heart, draw it down through the Middle Elixir Field in the solar plexus, past the navel, and down into the Ocean of Energy reservoir in the Lower Elixir Field, where energy gathers, mixes, and is reserved for internal circulation. Then begin another cycle up through the coccyx to the mid-spine behind the heart and up past the Jade Pillow into the brain.

3. Breathe naturally with your abdomen, and don't worry whether energy moves up or down on inhalation or exhalation; coordinate the flow of breath and energy in whatever manner suits you best. However, if you reach the stage where you can complete a full Microcosmic Orbit in a single breath, it's best to raise energy up from coccyx to head on exhalation and draw it down from Upper to Lower Elixir Field on inhalation.

If you practice this way for a long time, eventually you can complete a whole cycle of ascent and descent in one visualization. If you can quietly practice this inner work continuously, whether walking, standing still, sitting, or lying down, then the vital energy will circulate within, and there will naturally be no problem of leakage. Chronic physical ailments, Taoists believe, will naturally disappear.

Also, once the inner energy is circulating, the breath will naturally become fine, and the true positive energy of Heaven and Earth will be inhaled by way of the breath and go down to join your own generative energy. The two energies will mix together, both to be circulated by you together, descending and ascending over and over, circulating up and down to replenish the depleted true energy in your body.

This true energy harmonizes and reforms, so that the vital fluids produced by the energy of daily life again produce true vitality. When true vitality is fully developed, it naturally produces true energy, and when true energy is fully developed it naturally produces our true spirit.

If you have any physical problems or discomforts in a particular section of your body, focus your energy at the pass closest to the discomfort and let it throb there for a while. This will help heal and rejuvenate the injured tissues. For example, if you have pelvic problems, focus energy on the coccyx pass; for lower-back pain focus on the lowest lumbar vertebra just above the sacrum; for upper-back and shoulder pain focus on the fifth thoracic vertebra, and so forth.

This meditation may also cause the head to rock or the body to tremble, which, Taoists believe, are signs of progress.

**Time:** Thirty to forty-five minutes, once or twice a day.

## HUMAN ANATOMY FROM THE TAOIST PERSPECTIVE

Taoist classical texts often deal with symbolisms and abstractions. Microcosmic Orbit Meditation works by visualizing the energy channelling through different parts of the human anatomy. Hence it is of interest to find out the anatomical description of the human body from the Taoist perspective as it relates the channelling of energy or vital essence. This description is from a translation of an eleventh century manuscript written by Chang Po-tuan by Thomas Cleary.

Taoist texts speak of the 'medicinal elements' of internal alchemy, using metaphors such as 'red lead', 'black mercury', 'cinnabar', 'white snow', 'green dragon', 'white tiger', 'sun rays', and 'moon beams'. These metaphors refer to various aspects and elements of the Three Treasures – essence, energy, and spirit – which are the only real elements of internal alchemy.

The vital junctions, or 'passes', used in circulating internal energy are also given mysterious names, such as the 'Yellow Chamber', 'Red Cauldron', 'Mysterious Pass', 'Lead Furnace', 'Flower Pond', 'Dragon Lair', and 'Vermilion Palace'. These colourful names denote the invisible but highly functional points inside and along the surface of the body, where energy collects, transforms, and enters various channels for circulation. Taoist internal alchemy is actually a highly scientific method of harnessing, controlling, conserving, converting, and circulating essence and energy under the guidance of spirit in order to replace depletion with accretion, reverse disintegration with integration, and counteract degeneration with regeneration.

A term of particular importance in Taoist internal alchemy is the 'firing process', which has nothing at all to do with fire. The firing process refers to breathing, which acts as a bellows to gently fan the 'fire' of energy in the 'cauldrons' of the Elixir Fields.

Taoists believe that the human body has three posterior passes and three anterior passes. The three posterior passes are in the **coccyx**, at the **base of the spine**; in the **mid-spine**, where the ribs join the spine; and at the **back of the brain**.

The pass in the coccyx, at the bottom of the spine, connects with the channels of the genital organs. From this pass ascends the spinal cord, which is called the **Zen Valley**, or the **Yellow River**, or the Waterwheel Course, or the Mountain Range up to the Court of Heaven, or the Ladder up to Heaven.

This is the road by which positive energy ascends; it goes right up the point opposite the centre of the chest, the pass of the enclosed spine, where the ribs join in back, then it goes straight up to the back of the brain, which is called the **Pass of the Jade Pillow**.

The three anterior passes are called the **Nirvana Centre**, the **Earth Pot**, and the **Ocean of Energy**. The Nirvana Centre is the so-called upper elixir field. It is a spherical opening 1.3 inches in diameter and is the repository of the spirit. That opening is three inches behind the centre of the eyebrows, right in the middle.

The space between the eyebrows is called the **Celestial Eye**. The space one inch inward is called the **Bright Hall**. The space one inch farther in is called the **Hidden Chamber**. One inch farther in from that is the **Nirvana Centre** .

The windpipe has twelve sections and is called the **Multi-storied Tower**; it goes to the openings in the lungs, and reaches the heart. Below the heart is an opening called the **Crimson Chamber**, where the dragon and tiger mate. Another 3.6 inches directly below that is what is called the **Earth Pot**, which is the **Yellow Court**, the middle elixir field.

The umbilical opening is called the **Door of Life**. It has seven channels connecting with the genitals. The leaking of sexual energy takes place through these channels. Behind the navel and in front of the kidneys, right in the middle, is the place called the **Crescent Moon jar**, or the **Ocean of Energy**. And 1.3 inches below that is what is called the **Flower Pond**, or the lower elixir field. This is where vitality is stored, and it is the place where the medicine is gathered.

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**Live true to your feelings, and you ARE living true, not only to your own soul, but also true to God's soul. So doing your Healing by honouring all your feelings, IS living the will of God. And being fully Healed, IS living even more truly the Will of your Mother and Father.**



## Music Therapy

Listening to music does wonders to alleviate stress. Please note that everyone has different tastes in music. Listen to the music that you feel comfortable. Sitting down and forcing yourself to listen to relaxation music that you don't like may create stress, not alleviate it.

Music has always been a great healer. In the Bible, we learn about how David played the harp to help ease his severe depression of King Saul .

Music is a significant mood-changer and reliever of stress, working on many levels at once.

Many experts suggest that it is the rhythm of the music or the beat that has the calming effect on us although we may not be very conscious about it. They point out that when we were a baby in our mother's womb, we probably were influenced by the heart beat of our mother. We respond to the soothing music at later stages in life, perhaps associating it with the safe, relaxing, protective environment provided by our mother.

### Music / Singing

Play a tune on the guitar and sing along. That works even in the worst of times. By the time I'm done with the song, I've breathed deep, I've controlled myself to some degree to be able to sing on key :-), and I've come back into myself, and more into the real time moment.

Music can be one of the most soothing or nerve wracking experiences available. Choosing what will work for any individual is difficult, most will choose something they 'like' instead of what might be beneficial. In doing extensive research on what any given piece of music produces in the physiological response system many unexpected things were found. Many of the so-called Meditation and Relaxation recordings actually produced adverse EEG patterns, just as bad as Hard Rock and Heavy Metal. The surprising thing was many selections of Celtic, Native American as well as various music containing loud drums or flute were extremely soothing. The most profound finding was any music Performed Live and even at moderately loud volumes even if it was somewhat discordant had very a beneficial response. Whenever the proper sounds were experienced an amazing right / left brain hemisphere synchronization occurred. The normal voltage spiking pattern changed to a smooth sinusoidal waveform and the usual voltage differential equalized. The entire human energetic system is extremely influenced by sounds, the physical body and chakra centres respond specifically to certain tones and frequencies. Special consideration should be given to the positive effects of one actually playing or creating music themselves.

Among the first stress-fighting changes that take place when we hear a tune is an increase in deep breathing. The body's production of serotonin also accelerates.

Music was found to reduce the pain during dental procedures.

Playing music in the background while we are working, seemingly unaware of the music itself, has been found to reduce the stress.

Music was found to reduce heart rates and to promote higher body temperature – an indication of the onset of relaxation. Combining music with relaxation therapy was more effective than doing relaxation therapy alone.

### **Maximizing With Music Therapy**

As we mentioned before, there is not a single music that is good for everyone. People have different tastes. It is important that you like the music being played.

The following are general guidelines to maximize the effectiveness of the music.

- To wash away stress, try taking a 20-minute "sound bath". Put some relaxing music on your stereo, then lie in a comfortable position on a couch or on the floor near the speakers. For a deeper experience, you can wear headphones to focus your attention and to avoid distraction.
- Choose music with a slow rhythm – slower than the natural heart beat which is about 72 beats per minute. Music that has repeating or cyclical pattern is found to be effective in most people.
- As the music plays, allow it to wash over you, rinsing off the stress from the day. Focus on your breathing, letting it deepen, slow and become regular. Concentrate on the silence between the notes in the music; this keeps you from analyzing the music and makes relaxation more complete.
- If you need a stimulation after a day of work, go for a faster music rather than slow calming music.
- When going gets tough, go for a music you are familiar with – such as a childhood favourite or favourite oldies. Familiarity often breeds calmness.
- Take walks with your favourite music playing on the walkman. Inhale and exhale in tune with the music. Let the music takes you. This is a great stress reliever by combining exercise (brisk walk), imagery and music.
- Listening to the sounds of nature, such as ocean waves or the calm of a deep forest, can reduce stress. Try taking a 15- to 20-minute walk if you're near the seashore or a quiet patch of woods. If not, you can buy tapes of these sounds in many music stores.





The basic premise of NLP is that the words we use reflect an inner, subconscious perception of our problems. If these words and perceptions are inaccurate, as long as we continue to use them and to think of them, the underlying problem will persist. In other words, our attitudes are, in a sense, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **Introduction**

The word Neuro linguistic programming can be broken down to three distinct words:

neuro  
linguistic and  
programming.

Neuro refers to the brain and neural network that feeds into the brain. Neurons or nerve cells are the working units used by the nervous system to send, receive, and store signals that add up to information.

Linguistics refer to the content, both verbal and non-verbal, that moves across and through these pathways.

Programming is the way the content or signal is manipulated to convert it into useful information. The brain may direct the signal, sequence it, change it based on our prior experience, or connect it to some other experience we have stored in our brain to convert it into thinking patterns and behaviours that are the essence of our experience of life.

Our experiences and feelings affect the way we react to external stimuli. Let me illustrate. I am afraid of snakes. The impulse I get if I see a snake or even hear a sound close to resembling that of a snake is a feeling of total fright. This is because, I was born in an area infested with several deadly snakes. One day a boy from my neighbourhood came to our house. He knocked on the door. I opened the door. He had a snake in his hand. He wanted to show me the prize catch he had. He was holding it like we hold a pet cat. For him it was a pet. So, it gave him lot of joy to hold one. To me, it gave a migraine headache!

Both myself and my neighbour boy saw the same thing. The same signal was passed to our brain. It was the picture of a snake. However, our brains interpreted the implications of the snake entirely differently. In processing the information, our brains used our experiences (good and bad), our biases, our opinions, our value systems, etc. to convert it into useful information that we can use.

Neuro linguistic programming (NLP for short) was developed in the early 1970s by an information scientist and a linguist at the University of California at Santa Cruz. They had observed that people with similar education, training, background, and years of experience were achieving widely varying results ranging from wonderful to mediocre. They wanted to know the secrets of effective people. What makes them perform and accomplish things. They were especially interested in the possibility of being able to

duplicate the behaviour, and therefore the competence, of these highly effective individuals. It was the golden era of modelling and simulation. They decided to model human excellence. They looked at factors such as education, business and therapy. They have then zeroed in on the communication aspect. They started studying how the successful people communicated (verbal language, body language, eye movements, and others). By modelling their behaviour, John Grinder and Richard Bandler were able to make out patterns of thinking that assisted in the subject's success. The two theorized that the brain can learn the healthy patterns and behaviours and that this would bring about positive physical and emotional effects. What emerged from their work came to be known as Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

The basic premise of NLP is that the words we use reflect an inner, subconscious perception of our problems. If these words and perceptions are inaccurate, they will create an underlying problem as long as we continue to use and to think them. Our attitudes are, in a sense, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The neuro linguistic therapist will analyze every word and phrase you use in describing your symptoms or concerns about your health. He or she will examine your facial expressions and body movements. After determining problems in your perception, the therapist will help you understand the root cause. The therapist will help you remodel your thoughts and mental associations in order to fix your preconceived notions. These preconceived notions may be keeping you from achieving the success you deserve.

NLP will help you get out of these unhealthy traits and replace them with positive thoughts, and patterns that promote wellness.

### **How Does Neuro Linguistic Programming Work?**

NLP uses self image and attitude towards illness to effect change and to promote healing. Hope is our greatest asset. It is one of the main reason why placebos (sugar pills used in clinical studies) work. We also know how effective prayer can be when it is combined with faith and hope. When a person loses hope and feels helpless in the face of a chronic disease such as AIDS or cancer, it is very easy to lose the hope; the body may just "quit trying". If the patient is made aware of his or her unique abilities and possibilities, he or she may see things differently. Now, the body's natural healing power can be harnessed to do the job.

NLP is based on several useful presuppositions. NLP places great emphasis on concepts that work as opposed to concepts that *should* work. NLP therapists will tell you that if what you're doing isn't working, you should try something else that will work for you. Every person is different. Flexibility is the key element in a given system. The person who is most likely to do well responds to changing (or unchanging) circumstances appropriately. This is one reason why NLP has made so much progress. NLP is much more interested in getting results.

Other tools that are available to NLP therapists are meta model, sensory acuity, Milton model, system representation and submodalities.

### **Presuppositions**

NLP makes a number of presuppositions. Presuppositions or assumptions are the beliefs a person will find useful in effecting changes to themselves and/or to the world. (Some people call these as the "givens".)

Examples of presuppositions:

1. Communication is more than what you are saying.
2. No one is wrong or broken. People work perfectly to accomplish what they are currently accomplishing.
3. People already have all the resources they need.
4. Behind every behaviour is a positive intention.
5. Every behaviour is useful in some context.
6. The meaning of a communication is the response you get.
7. If you aren't getting the response you want, try something different.
8. There is no such thing as failure. There is only feedback.
9. Having choice is better than having no choice at all.
10. In any system, the element with the most flexibility exerts the most influence.
11. The map is not the territory.
12. If someone can do something, anyone can learn it.
13. You cannot fail to communicate.

## Representational Systems

Representational system in NLP consist of our five senses. These are:

- Visual (images)
- Auditory (sounds)
- Kinesthetic (touch and internal feelings)
- Gustatory (tastes)
- Olfactory (smells)

Every one of us uses one or a combination of these senses to perceive the world. The brain gets the "picture" of what we are talking about from one or from a combination of these senses and from these senses alone. For example, we see a dead dog on the road. The eyes senses the visual image and send it to the brain. The nose will sense the smell and send it to the brain. For example, if the smell is rotten, the brain may infer from what it had received so far (a picture of a dog lying still that is giving out foul smell) that the dog had been dead for some time. If the dog is crying, the ears will send this information to the brain. In addition, we might touch the dog. We probably won't taste the dog. So, these are the "inputs" to the brain.

## Submodalities

The qualities and attributes of the representations you make using your five senses are called modalities. Let me illustrate. Think about a dog. This evokes different reactions in people depending on what we perceive. One person may visualize a cute, poodle. Another person may think of a vicious bull dog chasing after him. What is the colour of the dog? Our imagery and the reaction to it can change depending on whether we see it "in vibrant colours" or "black and white". Make the colours more vibrant. What is the reaction you get as a result? Now move the picture further out and see how it "changes."

One of the great advantages of using a spreadsheet such as Excel is that once we make a model in it, we can change it by asking "what-if" questions. We examine various scenarios till we are satisfied that the

model is satisfactory for our purpose. A similar thing is happening in our mind or brain with the information that is "input" by the sensory system. The information can be represented in different ways based on our feelings, prejudices and value systems. These values are unique to each of us. It is part of our "internal" system. These are our submodalities.

The great power of this concept is that once we recognize how our submodalities may mask our perception, we can make changes to our subsystem to effect the change or to "correct" the situation.

### **Meta-Model**

Meta model in NLP is a set of questions designed to find the explicit meaning in a person's communication. It is important that the therapist makes no assumptions regarding the communication. The therapist may ask probing questions to find out what is in the mind of the person being treated.

Example:

Subject: I am so tired.  
 Analyst: What makes you tired?  
 Subject: He is always taunting me and making fun of me.  
 Analyst: Who is making fun of you?  
 Subject: Bob.  
 Analyst: Bob who?  
 Subject: Bob Sullivan, my neighbour.  
 Analyst: Why is Bob making fun of you?  
 Subject: He is such a tease!

An untrained person would have made the assumption that the person was physically tired. By asking probing questions, the analyst learned what the subject is *really saying*. The therapist will use the sound, the way the subject is talking, the pitch of the voice etc. to understand the communication.

### **Sensory Acuity**

We can take one look at a person and can infer a great deal about what they are thinking or what their thought process is at that time. For example, we will know when a person is happy or unhappy. We will know when a person is depressed. We know when to avoid our bosses – it may be his or her "bad day". Of course, some people are good at hiding their true feelings. We call it a "poker face".

In general, a person's thought process is very closely tied to his/her physiology. A dog can sense when you are afraid. How did he know? We pick up clues from the body language of the person we are communicating to: slumped shoulders, downcast eyes, drooping head, lack of animation etc. Sensory acuity takes these observations beyond the more obviously recognizable clues and uses the physical feedback in addition to someone's words to gain as much from the communication as possible.

### **Milton Model**

Milton model refers to a set of linguistic patterns derived by Milton Erickson, the father of modern hypnotherapy. These language patterns are used to help guide someone without interfering with their experience. For example, "Think of the time you saw the dog". The suggestions are made purposely

vague so that the subject will have ample opportunities to shape it in his or her mind. For example, the therapist did not suggest what kind of dog it was, what was its colour etc. It is up to you to fill in those blanks. This way, you can personalize it the way it makes most sense to you. Thus, this suggestion is very general and can be used for everyone. The Milton-model helps the therapist to maintain rapport with the patient. It is often used in hypnotic or trance state sessions.

By using these models, (many of them modelled from the behaviour and actions of successful people) NLP enables us to recognize how we and others create our own unique maps of reality. It enables us to understand our own and others' processes of decision making, communication, motivation and learning.

### **Making Changes To Our Life Style Using NLP:**

Once we understand our own map of reality, we can make changes to it in order to obtain the life experiences we want. NLP provides us "maps" used by other people. We learn how others have responded to a particular situation we are facing. We see the differences in the approaches and in the outcomes. Based on it, we may voluntarily make changes to our own behaviour. We step out of our own map and step into the other's. When this happens, the rewards are many. We experience a deep connection to the successful person. And our life will never be the same again.

NLP increases the depth and effectiveness of our relationships, beginning with our self and extending through personal and intimate relationships to our professional and work lives, and finally, to the therapeutic arena or working with others to bring about healing, change and growth. NLP provides the tools that enable this rich connection with self and others to happen.

Many of NLP's tools and applications are widely used in business, management, education, training and therapy. Many of us may have encountered and applied these principles in our life, without even realizing that it came from NLP.



<http://1stholistic.com/Nutrition/nutrition.htm>

## Basic Concepts of Nutrition

### Basic concepts of nutrition

- The Four Basic Nutrients (*Water, Carbohydrates, Protein, Fats*)
- The Micronutrients: (Vitamins and Minerals)

## Guide To Nutrition

### Basic Nutrition Guide

- Foods with The Highest And The Least Nutrition Content
- Mediterranean and Eskimo Diet

## Maintaining Good Health

Nutrients and Dosages for maintaining Good Health – A list of vitamins and minerals and their recommended dosages to maintain good health.

### What Is United States Recommended Daily Allowances (USRDA)

Table: Recommended Daily Allowances of Vitamins and Minerals

### Shortcomings of the Recommended Daily Allowances

### The Suggested Optimal Daily Nutritional Allowances (SONAS)

Table: Suggested Daily Nutrition Allowances (SONAS)

### Nutritional Deficiencies

Table: Nutritional Deficiency and Its Symptoms

Taking Too Much of a Supplement

Table: Potentially Toxic Dosages and Side Effects of Nutrients

How To Recover From Vitamin/Mineral Overdose

**Be Sure to Visit Healthy Recipes Section for Tons of Recipes from Around the World.**

**Guest Articles**Fats: For Your Health

Many people are confused about fats. They think all fats are bad and unhealthy. However, some fats are necessary for optimum health. In this article, Monique Gilbert describes the different types of fats and their function in optimum health.

Get Fabulously Fit with Fibre

Fibre is an important part of a healthy diet. Yet many people are not getting enough. In the article, "Get Fabulously Fit With Fibre," Monique discusses the importance of fibre. The article also includes a list of sources for dietary fibre, and a non-dairy Hummus recipe.

10 Easy Ways to Kick-Start a New Healthy Eating Lifestyle

There is a huge amount of sometimes conflicting, often confusing, nutrition and diet information available. Therefore, it's very understandable when people become discouraged about selecting an eating plan for themselves. Even scientific studies often contradict each other. How can we figure out how best to eat for overall health or weight loss?

5 Healthy Dinners That Will Satisfy Your 'Meat and Potatoes' Man

Healthy doesn't have to mean not tasty. Here are some tips for tasty meals.

10 Guilt-Free Ways to Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth

Many of us work very hard to eat healthy meals, but struggle with the urge for candy, cookies, cakes, ice cream and anything else full of sugar and sweetness! If you're trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight, this can be a problem.

Beyond the Casserole: Quick, Healthy and Tasty Tuna Recipes

The tuna casserole has been a favourite dinnertime standby for many years. And for good reason – canned tuna is cheap, easy to store, nutritious, quick to prepare, and appeals to kids and adults alike. As good as a tuna casserole can be, when served too often – eyes can begin to roll! Here are several ideas for using our favourite fish in new dishes.

Does Excess Protein Turn to Fat? An Anatomy Lesson

Everyone knows that overeating leads to excess weight. This concept comes in many flavours these

days, though. Some people think that carbohydrates are the culprit. Others think it's sugar. Some people think that eating lots of protein couldn't possibly make them gain weight.

#### Easy Snack Ideas for a Healthy Diet

Most experts agree that snacking is a part of a balanced and healthy diet, as long as the snacks don't pile on empty calories. Like any other part of your diet, it's important to put some thought into what kind of snacks to have on hand; otherwise it's all too easy to pick something high-calorie, high-fat, or high-sugar.

#### Creative Cooking and Shopping Techniques for the Busy Mom

I'm a person who dislikes wasting time and thrives on finding ways to increase efficiency. I found ways to simplify dinner preparation so that it became nearly painless!

#### Eating Well When You Eat Out

Most people who are trying to eat nutritiously and maintain or lose weight will tell you one of the hardest times to be 'good' is when you eat out at restaurants. It's true – restaurants and fast food joints don't usually cater to health-conscious consumers. Here are some tips for making the most of these 'dangerous' mealtimes!

#### How Your Grill Can Help Your Diet

Summer is a great time to break out the barbecue grill and lighten up your diet! Grilling season doesn't have to only mean hamburgers, bratwurst, and steaks. There are many great choices for the grill that will keep you in great shape for all those fun summer activities.

#### Identify Your Weaknesses: 21 Common Weight Loss Barriers

People have free will, as we all know, and that means that tough issues like weight loss can become very confusing. Thousands of books and videos on the subject give more advice than we could ever handle, but the real tools you need are inside of you.

#### Will Your Plan Lead To Permanent Weight Loss? How To Tell

After extensive research on how the body regulates weight and studying individuals who had succeeded in attaining long-term weight loss, I concluded that there are four characteristics that a plan must have to result in long-term weight loss.

#### Plan Ahead for Healthy Road Trip Snacks and Meals

Taking a long car trip can wreak havoc on your diet. If you don't plan ahead, it's very likely you will spend a day living on fast food, candy bars, bags of chips and soda. However, there are several smart choices that travel well and will keep you feeling good on your journey.

#### Ten Things You Can Do To Make Any Meal Healthier

When your best efforts go awry, and you order pizza or serve another meal that doesn't exactly fit into a healthy diet, you still have many options for making it healthier.



### Tips for Including More Delicious Fruits and Vegetables in Your Diet

Just about everyone knows that fruits and vegetables are a very important part of a healthy diet. Even though we know this to be true, many of us still find it hard to include the recommended 3-5 servings of vegetables and 2-4 servings of fruit per day in our diets. Once you learn a few easy tricks, soon you'll have no trouble eating a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.

### Top 10 Food Items to Keep on Hand to Add Flavour and Nutrition to Boring Meals

Having a well-stocked pantry and refrigerator can be a busy cook's best weapon in the war against resorting to fast-food, high-fat, unhealthy meals. If you know what to keep on hand, you can easily whip up quick, nutritious meals that the whole family will love!

### Weeknight Meal Help

Does it seem like you never have the time to serve healthy meals during the week? Do you rely on takeout, the pizza delivery man, macaroni and cheese? If you learn just a few new techniques and tips, you can be on the road to easily planning and preparing healthy meals for your family with very little effort and time.

### Are Weight Loss Supplements Worth It?

What do you think of the hundreds of weight loss supplements out there on the shelves today? Are they worth the money? Will they actually help you lose weight? How do you know which ones are going to work for you? Is there any proof that these products work?

### You Are What You Eat

Our general state of health is partially driven by the types of foods we consume.

### Is Nutrition The Missing Link to Your Child's Well-Being?

I heard example after example of young people becoming more focused and better students after integrating high quality nutrition into their daily routine. I then went back to my school and noticed a few things.

### Fresh Oil for Good Health

Fresh oil is one of the most beneficial foods for your health. Fresh oil is a source of essential fatty acids, which help keep the skin healthy and the hair shiny. The human brain is almost entirely composed of unsaturated fatty acids. Fats add taste to meals and give one a feeling of fullness when eaten.

### Organic Foods – FAQ

The questions you wanted to ask about organic food and the answers.

## **Nutrition/Diet Therapy for Diseases/Conditions**

### Diet / Nutrition for Conditions/Diseases

## Knowledgebases (**Nutrition Analysis of Food**)

### ■ Vitamin and Minerals Knowledgebase

- How to design a good menu? Here is the data professionals use: Nutritive Analysis of Common Foods
- Differences Among Foods: Nutritive Analysis of Common Foods – Values per 100 Grams of the food – For comparison of foods
- What is Served in The Fast Food Restaurants? Nutritive Analysis of Menus from popular fast-food restaurants in the USA.

## **The Four Basic Nutrients**

Water, carbohydrates, proteins, and fats are the basic building blocks of a good diet. By choosing the healthiest forms of each of these nutrients, and eating them in the proper balance, you enable your body to function at its optimal level.

### ***Water***

The human body is two-thirds water. Water is an essential nutrient that is involved in every function of the body.

- Water helps transport nutrients and waste products in and out of cells.
- Water is necessary for all digestive, absorption, circulatory, and excretory functions.
- Water is needed for the utilization of the water-soluble vitamins.
- It is needed for the maintenance of proper body temperature.

It is recommended that you drink at least eight 8-ounce (236 millilitres each) glasses of water each day.

### ***Carbohydrates***

Carbohydrates supply the body with the energy it needs to function. They are found almost exclusively in plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, peas, and beans. Milk and milk products are the only foods derived from animals that contain a significant amount of carbohydrates.

Carbohydrates are divided into two groups-simple carbohydrates and complex carbohydrates. *Simple carbohydrates*, sometimes called simple sugars, include fructose (fruit sugar), sucrose (table sugar), and lactose (milk sugar), as well as several other sugars. Fruits are one of the richest natural sources of simple carbohydrates. *Complex carbohydrates* are also made up of sugars, but the sugar molecules are strung together to form longer, more complex chains. Complex carbohydrates include fibre and starches. Foods rich in complex carbohydrates include vegetables, whole grains, peas, and beans.

Carbohydrates are the main source of blood glucose, which is a major fuel for all of the body's cells and the only source of energy for the brain and red blood cells. Except for fibre, which cannot be digested,

both simple and complex carbohydrates are converted into glucose. The glucose is then either used directly to provide energy for the body, or stored in the liver for future use. When a person consumes more calories than the body is using, a portion of the carbohydrates consumed may also be stored in the body as fat.

When choosing carbohydrate-rich foods for your diet, always select unrefined foods such as fruits, vegetables, peas, beans, and whole-grain products, as opposed to refined, processed foods such as soft drinks, desserts, candy, and sugar. Refined foods offer few, if any, of the vitamins and minerals that are important to your health. In addition, if eaten in excess, especially over a period of many years, the large amounts of simple carbohydrates found in refined foods can lead to a number of disorders, including diabetes and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Yet another problem is that foods high in refined simple sugars often are also high in fats, which should be limited in a healthy diet. This is why such foods-which include most cookies and cakes, as well as many snack foods-are usually loaded with calories.

Dietary fibre is the part of a plant that is resistant to the body's digestive enzymes. Only a relatively small amount of fibre is digested or metabolized in the stomach or intestines. Most of it moves through the gastrointestinal tract and ends up in the stool.

Although most fibre is not digested, it delivers several important health benefits. First, fibre retains water, resulting in softer and bulkier stools that prevent constipation and hemorrhoids. A high-fibre diet also reduces the risk of colon cancer, perhaps by speeding the rate at which stool passes through the intestine and by keeping the digestive tract clean. In addition, fibre binds with certain substances that would normally result in the production of cholesterol, and eliminates these substances from the body. In this way, a high-fibre diet helps lower blood cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of heart disease.

It is recommended that about 60% of your total daily calories come from carbohydrates. If much of your diet consists of healthy complex carbohydrates, you should easily fulfil the recommended daily minimum of 25 grams of fibre.

### ***Protein***

Protein is essential for growth and development. It provides the body with energy, and is needed for the manufacture of hormones, antibodies, enzymes, and tissues. It also helps maintain the proper acid-alkali balance in the body.

When protein is consumed, the body breaks it down into amino acids, the building blocks of all proteins. Some of the **amino acids** are designated *nonessential*. This does not mean that they are unnecessary, but rather that they do not have to come from the diet because they can be synthesized by the body from other amino acids. Other amino acids are considered *essential*, meaning that the body cannot synthesize them, and therefore must obtain them from the diet.

Whenever the body makes a protein-when it builds muscle, for instance-it needs a variety of amino acids for the protein-making process. These amino acids may come from dietary protein or from the body's own pool of amino acids. If a shortage of amino acids becomes chronic, which can occur if the diet is deficient in essential amino acids, the building of protein in the body stops, and the body suffers.

Because of the importance of consuming proteins that provide all of the necessary amino acids, dietary proteins are considered to belong to two different groups, depending on the amino acids they provide. **Complete proteins**, which constitute the first group, contain ample amounts of all of the essential amino acids. These proteins are found in meat, fish, poultry, cheese, eggs, and milk. **Incomplete proteins**, which constitute the second group, contain only some of the essential amino acids. These proteins are found in a variety of foods, including grains, legumes, and leafy green vegetables.

Although it is important to consume the full range of amino acids, both essential and nonessential, it is not necessary to get them from meat, fish, poultry, and other complete-protein foods. In fact, because of their high fat content—as well as the use of antibiotics and other chemicals in the raising of poultry and cattle—most of those foods should be eaten in moderation. Fortunately, the dietary strategy called **mutual supplementation** enables you to combine partial-protein foods to make **complementary protein**—proteins that supply adequate amounts of all the essential amino acids. For instance, although beans and brown rice are both quite rich in protein, each lacks one or more of the necessary amino acids. However, when you combine beans and brown rice with each other, or when you combine either one with any of a number of protein-rich foods, you form a complete protein that is a high-quality substitute for meat. To make a complete protein, combine *beans* with any one of the following:

- Brown rice.
- Seeds.
- Corn.
- Wheat
- Nuts.

Or combine *brown rice* with any one of the following:

- Beans.
- Seeds.
- Nuts.
- Wheat.

All soybean products, such as tofu and soymilk, are complete proteins. They contain the essential amino acids plus several other nutrients. Available in health food stores, tofu, soy oil, soy flour, soy-based meat substitutes, soy cheese, and many other soy products are healthful ways to complement the meatless diet.

Yogurt is the only animal-derived complete-protein source recommended for frequent use in the diet. Made from milk that is curdled by bacteria, yogurt contains *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and other "**friendly**" **bacteria** needed for the digestion of foods and the prevention of many disorders, including candidiasis. Yogurt also contains vitamins A and D, and many of the B-complex vitamins.

Do not buy the sweetened, flavoured yogurts that are sold in supermarkets. These products contain added sugar and, often, preservatives. Instead, either purchase fresh unsweetened yogurt from a health food store or make the yogurt yourself, and sweeten it with fruit juices and other wholesome ingredients.

### **Fats**

Although much attention has been focused on the need to reduce dietary fat, the body does need fat. During infancy and childhood, fat is necessary for normal brain development. Throughout life, it is essential to provide energy and support growth. Fat is, in fact, the most concentrated source of energy available to the body. However, after about two years of age, the body requires only small amounts of fat-much less than is provided by the average American diet. Excessive fat intake is a major causative factor in obesity, high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, and colon cancer, and has been linked to a number of other disorders as well. To understand how fat intake is related to these health problems, it is necessary to understand the different types of fats available and the ways in which these fats act within the body.

Fats are composed of building blocks called fatty acids. There are three major categories of fatty acids-saturated, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated. These classifications are based on the number of hydrogen atoms in the chemical structure of a given molecule of fatty acid.

**Saturated fatty acids** are found primarily in animal products, including dairy items, such as whole milk, cream, and cheese, and fatty meats like beef, veal, lamb, pork, and ham. The fat marbling you can see in beef and pork is composed of saturated fat. Some vegetable products including coconut oil, palm kernel oil, and vegetable shortening-are also high in saturates.

The liver uses saturated fats to manufacture cholesterol. Therefore, excessive dietary intake of saturated fats can significantly raise the blood cholesterol level, especially the level of low-density lipoproteins (LDLs), or "bad cholesterol". Guidelines issued by the National Cholesterol Education Program (NCEP), and widely supported by most experts, recommend that the daily intake of saturated fats be kept below 10% of total caloric intake. However, for people who have severe problems with high blood cholesterol, even that level may be too high.

**Polyunsaturated fatty acids** are found in greatest abundance in corn, soybean, safflower, and sunflower oils. Certain fish oils are also high in polyunsaturated fats. Unlike the saturated fats, polyunsaturated fats may actually lower your total blood cholesterol level. In doing so, however, large amounts of polyunsaturated fats also have a tendency to reduce your high-density lipoproteins (HDLs)-your good cholesterol". For this reason-and because, like all fats, polyunsaturated fats are high in calories for their weight and volume-the NCEP guidelines state that an individual's intake of polyunsaturated fats should not exceed 10% of total caloric intake.

**Monounsaturated fatty acids** are found mostly in vegetable and nut oils such as olive, peanut, and canola. These fats appear to reduce blood levels of LDLs without affecting HDLs in any way. However, this positive impact upon LDL cholesterol is relatively modest. The NCEP guidelines recommend that intake of monounsaturated fats be kept between 10% and 15% of total caloric intake.

Although most foods-including some plant-derived foods contain a combination of all three types of fatty acids, one of the types usually predominates. Thus, a fat or oil is considered "saturated" or "high in saturates" when it is composed primarily of saturated fatty acids. Such saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature. Similarly, a fat or oil composed mostly of polyunsaturated fatty acids is called "polyunsaturated," while a fat or oil composed mostly of monounsaturated fatty acids is called "monounsaturated."

One other element, **trans-fatty acids**, may also play a role in blood cholesterol levels. Also called trans fats, these substances occur when polyunsaturated oils are altered through hydrogenation, a process used

to harden liquid vegetable oils into solid foods like margarine and shortening. One recent study found that trans-monounsaturated fatty acids raise LDL cholesterol levels, behaving much like saturated fats. Simultaneously, the trans-fatty acids reduced HDL cholesterol readings. Much more research on this subject is necessary, as studies have not reached consistent and conclusive findings. For now, however, it is clear that if your goal is to lower cholesterol, polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated fats are more desirable than saturated fats or products with trans-fatty acids. Just as important, your total calories from fat should not constitute more than 20% to 25% of daily calories.

**The Micronutrients: Vitamins and Minerals**

Like water, carbohydrates, protein, and fats, vitamins and minerals are essential to life. They are therefore considered nutrients, and are often referred to as *micronutrients* simply because they are needed in relatively small amounts compared with the four basic nutrients.

Because vitamins and minerals are so necessary for health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has formulated recommended consumption levels for vitamins called recommended daily allowances (RDAs). But these allowances do not account for the amount needed to maintain maximum health rather than borderline health, only the amount needed to prevent deficiency diseases. Therefore, the average adult who is not suffering from any specific disorder should obtain more than the RDAs of vitamins and minerals from food sources and/or from supplements. A table is provided that shows the guidelines for the intake of vitamin, mineral supplements, and other supplements for healthy living. Although the amounts listed are safe (they will not cause toxicity), they should be varied according to size and weight. People who are active and exercise; those who are under great stress, on restricted diets, or mentally or physically ill; women who take oral contraceptives; those on medication; those who are recovering from surgery; and smokers and those who consume alcoholic beverages all need higher than normal amounts of nutrients.

In addition to a proper diet, exercise and a positive attitude are two important elements that are needed to prevent sickness and disease. If your lifestyle includes each of these, you will feel good and have more energy, something we all deserve.

**What Is Orthomolecular Medicine?**

Orthomolecular medicine is the field of medicine that uses high-dose vitamins to treat chronic diseases. It promotes improving health and treating disease by using the optimum concentration of substances normally present in the body. Increasing the intake of such nutrients to levels well above those usually associated with preventing overt deficiency disease may have health benefits for some people. There is at least preliminary evidence that orthomolecular remedies may be effective in treating AIDS; brochial asthma; cancer; cardiovascular disease, heart attacks, and stroke; lymphedema; and mental and neurological disorders.

**Basic Nutrition Guide**

A diet high in nutrients is the key to good health. Use the following table as a guide when deciding which types of food to include in your diet and which ones to avoid in order to maintain good health.

Types of Food	Foods to Avoid	Acceptable Foods
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Beans	Canned pork and beans, canned beans with salt or preservatives, frozen beans.	All beans cooked without animal fat or salt,
Beverages	Alcoholic drinks, coffee, cocoa, pasteurized and/or sweetened juices and fruit drinks, sodas, tea (except herbal tea).	Herbal teas, fresh vegetable and fruit juices, cereal grain beverages (often sold as coffee substitutes), mineral or distilled water.
Dairy products	All soft cheeses, all pasteurized or artificially coloured cheese products, ice cream.	Raw goat cheese, nonfat cottage cheese, kefir, unsweetened yogurt, goat's milk, raw or skim milk, buttermilk, rice milk, all soy products.
Eggs	Fried or pickled.	Boiled or poached (limit of four weekly).
Fish	All fried fish, all shellfish, salted fish, anchovies, herring, fish canned in oil.	All freshwater white fish, salmon, broiled or baked fish, water-packed tuna.
Fruits	Canned, bottled, or frozen fruits with sweeteners added; oranges.	All fresh, frozen, stewed, or dried fruits without sweeteners (except oranges, which are acidic and highly allergenic), untreated fruits, home-canned fruits.
Grains	All white flour products, white rice, pasta, crackers, cold cereals, instant types of oatmeal and other hot cereals	All whole grains and products containing whole grains: cereals, breads, muffins, whole-grain crackers, cream of wheat or rye cereal, buckwheat, millet, oats, brown rice, wild rice. (Limit yeast breads to three servings per week.)
Meats	Beef; all forms of pork; hot dogs; luncheon meats; smoked, pickled, and processed meats; corned beef; duck; goose; spare ribs; gravies; organ meats.	Skinless turkey and chicken, lamb. (Limit meat to three 3-oz servings per week.)
Nuts	Peanuts; all salted or roasted nuts.	All fresh raw nuts (except peanuts).
Oils (fats)	All saturated fats, hydrogenated margarine, refined processed oils, shortenings, hardened oils.	All cold-pressed oils: corn, safflower, sesame, olive, flaxseed, soybean, sunflower, and canola oils; margarine made from these oils; mayonnaise without eggs.
Seasonings	Black or white pepper, salt, hot red peppers, all types of vinegar except pure natural apple cider	Garlic, onions, cayenne, Spike, all herbs, dried vegetables, apple cider vinegar, tamari, miso, vinegar. seaweed, pulse.
Soups	Canned soups made with salt, preservatives, MSG, or fat stock; all creamed soups.	Homemade (salt- and fat-free) bean, lentil, pea, vegetable, barley, brown rice,

		onion.
Sprouts and seeds	All seeds cooked in oil or salt.	All slightly cooked sprouts (except alfalfa, which should be raw and washed thoroughly), wheat-grass, all raw seeds.
Sweets	White, brown, or raw cane sugar, corn syrups, chocolate, sugar candy, fructose (except that in fresh whole fruit), all syrups (except pure maple syrup), all sugar substitutes, jams and jellies made with sugar.	Barley malt or rice syrup, small amounts of raw honey, pure maple syrup, untreated blackstrap molasses.
Vegetables	All canned or frozen with salt or additives.	All raw, fresh, frozen (no additives), or home- canned without salt (undercook vegetables slightly).

Source: Prescriptions for Nutritional Healing, James Balch, MD

### **Foods with The Highest And The Least Nutrition Content**

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (Ralph Nader Group) has developed a rating scale to help people make more informed choices about the foods they eat. It is an open-ended scale that is based on a comparison of the beneficial components of a food to its harmful components. The higher the rating, the more nutritious the food.

In the **snack food** category, carrots have the highest nutritional rating, 48, because their high vitamin A and fibre content far outweigh, any detrimental components. Following carrots are green peppers, 44 (vitamin C and fibre); apples, 23 (fibre, iron, pectin); unbuttered, unsalted popcorn, 19 (fibre, eating satisfaction); celery, 17 (fibre, trace minerals); and potato chips, 15.

On the low end of the snack food scale are Twinkies, -34 (fat, sugar); jelly-beans, -38 (sugar, no nutrients); and Hershey's milk chocolate without nuts, -42 (sugar, cocoa, caffeine).

**Desserts:** Cantaloupe, 60, is rated highest, followed by strawberries, 34. Vanilla ice milk, 7, is rated higher than vanilla low-fat frozen yogurt, 3, which ranks much higher than vanilla ice cream, -22. And, then there's: Sara Lee chocolate cake, -26 and chocolate éclairs, -30.

Dannon Fruit Yogurt contains the equivalent of six teaspoons of sugar in each cup. Croissants are extremely high in fat. 59% of the 200 calories in Pepperidge Farm and Sara Lee's all-butter croissants come from fat. Compare this to the 5%-10% fat in breads, muffins and bagels.

Quiche is equally bad. More than half the calories in the crust come from fat. The basic filling of cheese, eggs, cream and bacon contains 25-27 grams of fat per serving... the equivalent of 7 teaspoons of lard. Wow!

Gourmet TV dinners are junkier than others. All of them are too high in salt. The difference lies in their fat content. Lean Cuisine and Weight Watchers dinners have a lower percentage of fat than the others, but Le Menu and Armour Dinner Classics contain as much fat as the old-line Banquet or Morton dinners.



**Snacks:** Granola bars, which used to be more nutritious than chocolate bars, are getting more and more junky as the manufacturers begin adding more candy ingredients. Per ounce, Nature Valley Granola clusters contain 3.3 teaspoons of added sugar, the same amount that's in a Snicker's bar, and more than in Nestle's Crunch, Hershey's milk chocolate with almonds or Mr. Goodbar, which contain only 2.7 teaspoons added sugar. Quaker Honey & Oats Granola Bar is the best of the lot, with only 1.5 teaspoons of added sugar... less than half the sugar of a Nature Valley bar.

**Low-calorie crackers:** Wheatsworth Wheat thins make you think they're full of whole-wheat flour ... but they contain 10 times more white flour than wheat, and 42% of their calories come from fat. Similarly, Keebler's Harvest Wheat Crackers are labeled "a blend of hearty wheat," but that's not the same as whole wheat. White flour and fat provide 51% of the calories in these crackers.

**Special Diets**

**Mediterranean and Eskimo Diet**

People living on the Greek island of Crete have very low rates of heart disease even though their diet is high in fat. Most of their dietary fat comes from olive oil, a monounsaturated fat that tends to lower levels of "bad" LDL-cholesterol and maintain levels of "good" HDL-cholesterol. The Inuit, or Eskimo, people of Alaska and Greenland also are relatively free of heart disease despite a high-fat, high-cholesterol diet. The staple food in their diet is fish rich in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids. Some research has shown that omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and mackerel as well as in soybean and canola oil, lower both LDL-cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood. Some nutrition experts recommend eating fish once or twice a week to reduce heart disease risk. However, dietary supplements containing concentrated fish oil are not recommended because there is insufficient evidence that they are beneficial and little is known about their long-term effects. Omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids have also been found in some studies to reduce both LDL- and HDL-cholesterol levels in the blood. Linoleic acid, an essential nutrient (one that the body cannot make for itself) and a component of corn, soybean and safflower oil, is an omega-6 fatty acid. At one time, many nutrition experts recommended increasing consumption of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats because of their cholesterol-lowering effects. Now, however, the advice is simply to reduce dietary intake of all types of fat. (Infants and young children, however, should not restrict dietary fat.)

**Nutrients and Dosages for maintaining Good Health**

The nutrients listed below are recommended for good health. Daily dosages are suggested; however, before using any supplements, you should consult with your health care provider. The dosages given here are for adults and children weighing 100 pounds (45 kilograms) and over. Appropriate dosages for children vary according to age and weight. A child weighing between 70 and 100 pounds should be given three-fourths the adult dose; a child weighing under 70 pounds (32 kilograms) (and *over* the age of six) should be given half the adult dose. A child under the age of six years should be given nutritional formulas designed specifically for young children. Follow the dosage directions on the product label.

Vitamins	Daily Dosages
Vitamin A	10,000 IU

Beta-carotene	15,000 IU
Vitamin B1 (thiamine)	50 mg
Vitamin B2 (riboflavin)	50 mg
Vitamin B3 (niacin) (niacinamide)	100 mg 100 mg
Pantothenic acid (vitamin B5)	100 mg
Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)	50 mg
Vitamin B12	300 mcg
Biotin	300 mcg
Choline	100 mg
Folic acid	800 mcg
Inositol	100 mg
Para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA)	50 mg
Vitamin C with mineral ascorbates	3,000 mg
Bioflavonoids (mixed)	500 mg
Hesperidin	100 mg
Rutin	25 mg
Vitamin D	400 IU
Vitamin E	600 IU
Vitamin K (use natural sources such as alfalfa, green leafy vegetables)	1 00 mcg
Essential fatty acids (EFAS) (primrose oil, flaxseed oil, salmon oil, and fish oil are good sources)	As directed on label

<b>Minerals</b>	<b>Daily Dosages</b>
Calcium	1,500 mg
Chromium (GTF)	150 mcg
Copper	3 mg
Iodine (kelp is a good source)	225 mcg
Iron	18 mg
Magnesium	750-1,000 mg
Manganese	10 mg
Molybdenum	30 mcg
Potassium	99 mg
Selenium	200 mcg
Zinc	50 mg
<b>Optional Supplements</b>	<b>Daily Dosages</b>
Coenzyme Q10	30 mg
Garlic	As directed on label.
L-Carnitine	500 mg
L-Cysteine	50 mg
L-Lysine	50 mg
L-Methionine	50 mg
L-Tyrosine	500 mg
Lecithin	200-500 mg

Pectin	50 mg
RNA-DNA	100 mg
Silicon	As directed on label.
Superoxide dismutase (SOD)	As directed on label.

(Source: Prescriptions for Nutritional Healing, James Balch, MD)

**Caution:** Iron should be taken only if a deficiency exists. Always take iron supplements separately, rather than in a multivitamin and mineral formula. Do not take iron with a supplement containing vitamin E.

### **What Is United States Recommended Daily Allowances (USRDA)**

USDAs were devised by the Food and Drug Administration for nutritional labelling. These are the lists on processed foods and vitamin products that tell what percentage of each of 19 essential nutrients you get per serving or dose. It is a rough guide because it doesn't differentiate among people of different ages and sex who have different nutrient requirements.

The USDAs, in turn, are based on the RDAs- Recommended *Dietary* Allowances derived by a prestigious group of nutritional scientists who advise the Food and Nutrition Board, a committee of the National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council. Every five years or so, the board reviews and revises its recommendations. As the board defines them, the RDAs are "the levels of intake of essential nutrients considered, in the judgment of the Food and Nutrition Board on the basis of available scientific knowledge, to be adequate to meet the known nutritional needs of practically all healthy persons."

Except for vitamins A and D, it's not harmful to consume two to three times the recommended levels of vitamins. Many people regularly do through the foods they eat and especially if they take a multivitamin supplement.

### **Shortcomings of the Recommended Daily Allowances**

There are some caveats regarding the RDAs. The board that established them admits that scientific knowledge of nutritional requirements is far from complete: that the requirements for many nutrients have not been established; that several essential nutrients have only recently been discovered; and that in all likelihood other nutrients will be found to be essential in years to come. Therefore, to be sure that as yet undefined nutritional needs are met, it's important to eat a varied diet and not depend on pills or processed foods artificially stoked with known micronutrients.

The RDAs should not be confused with nutritional requirements. Requirements differ from individual to individual because of inherent genetic differences, among other factors. Therefore, the RDAs represent estimates that exceed the requirements of most people.

The RDAs were developed for healthy people under normal circumstances (i.e., no illness, no genetic weaknesses, no environmental toxin exposure) to prevent the development of overt deficiency diseases. They were not developed to serve as a guide to determining optimal nutritional needs.

In addition, the studies that were used to determine the level of a nutrient sufficient to prevent a nutritional deficiency were typically conducted for six to nine months, only about 1% of the average human life span. Nutritional studies with animals have shown that the amounts of some nutrients sufficient to provide health and the prevention of a deficiency disease for short periods of time may be totally inadequate to maintain the health of the animal over its entire lifespan.

### The Suggested Optimal Daily Nutritional Allowances (SONA)

Nutrient	Men		Women	
	RDA	SONA	RDA	SONA
<b>Fat-soluble Vitamins</b>				
Vitamin A (RE, 1 RE = 1 micro gm = 3.33 IU)	1,000	2,000	800	2,000
Beta-carotene (mg)	N/A	100	N/A	80
Vitamin D (micro gm, 1 microgram = 40 IU)	5	24	5	24
Vitamin E (IU, 1 IU alpha tocopherol equivalent to 1 mg alpha tocopherol)	10	800	8	800
Vitamin K (mg)	80	80	65	65
<b>Water-soluble Vitamins</b>				
Vitamin C (mg)	60	800	60	1000
Vitamin B12 (mg)	2	3	2	3
Folic acid (micro gm)	200	2000	180	2000
Niacin (mg)	15	30	15	25
Pyridoxine (B6) (mg)	2	25	1.6	20
Riboflavin (B2) (mg)	1.4	2.5	1.2	2
Thiamin (B1) (mg)	1.2	9.2	1	9
<b>Minerals</b>				
Boron (mg)	N/A	2.5	N/A	3
Calcium (mg)	800	700	800	1200
Chromium (micro gm)	50-	300	50-	300

	200		200	
Copper (mg)	1.5-3	1.5-4	1.5-3	1.5-4
Iodine (micro gm)	150	150	150	150
Iron (mg)	10	20	15	20
Magnesium (mg)	350	600	280	550
Manganese (mg)	2-5	10	2-5	10
Phosphorous (mg)	800	800	800	800
Potassium (mg)	99	200-500	99	200-500
Selenium (micro gm)	70	250	55	200
Sodium (mg)	500	400	500	400
Zinc (mg)	15	20	12	17

**Note:** While these are for all adults, they are most accurate for those aged 51 and above.

RDA – Recommended Daily Allowance

SONA – Suggested Optimum Daily Allowance

Source: Total Wellness, by Joseph Pizzorno, ND



## Pet Therapy

Research has shown that heart attack victims who have pets live longer. Even watching a tank full of tropical fish may lower blood pressure, at least temporarily. A study of 92 patients hospitalized in coronary care units for angina or heart attack found that those who owned pets were more likely to be alive a year later than those who did not. The study found that only 6% of patients who owned pets died within one year compared with 28% of those who did not own pets.

The therapeutic use of pets as companions has gained increasing attention in recent years for a wide variety of patients -people with AIDS or cancer, the elderly, and the mentally ill. Unlike people, with whom our interactions may be quite complex and unpredictable, animals provide a constant source of comfort and focus for attention. Animals bring out our nurturing instinct. They also make us feel safe and unconditionally accepted. We can just be ourselves around our pets.

Research has shown that pet ownership can:

- Reduce stress-induced symptoms.

In a study people undergoing oral surgery spent a few minutes watching tropical fish in an aquarium. The relaxation level was measured by their blood pressure, muscle tension, and behaviour. It was found that the subjects who watched the fish was much more relaxed than those who did not watch the fish prior to the surgery. People who watched the fish was as calm as another group that had been hypnotized before the surgery. Other researchers have found that:

- h Petting a dog has been shown to lower blood pressure.
- h Bringing a pet into a nursing home or hospital can boost peoples' moods and enhance their social interaction.
- Requires Less Medical Care.

A study conducted at UCLA found that dog owners required much less medical care for stress-induced aches and pains than non-dog owners.

- Add years to your life

In a study conducted at City Hospital in New York, it was found that heart patients who owned the pets were significantly more likely to be alive a year after they were discharged from the hospital than those who didn't own pets. The presence of a pet was found to give higher boost to the survival rate than having a spouse or friends.

We should point out in this connection that pets can be a source of stress to some people. They may worry who will take care of their pets when they die. In most cases, however, the need to take care of the pets give a reason for living to many terminally ill patients, prolonging their life span.

### **What Type of Pet?**

It is surprising that it does not matter what the pet is to get the therapeutic benefit. It could be a dog, a cat, parakeet, a gold fish or anything else. The only thing which matters is that the animal is of interest to you.

However, it is important that the pet you have selected fit your temperament, living space and lifestyle. Otherwise it will be additional source of stress. So, look over the pet and see whether the chemistry is compatible before you decide to adopt one.

### **How?**

It is possible that people who own pets may have different personality traits than those who do not. Research has found that complex, varied, and interesting daily activity is the strongest social predictor of longevity. Pet ownership may affect people physiologically through the soothing and relaxing effect of touch. And speechless communication with a pet, or simply watching a cat or fish, may produce a relaxation response with little demand on the patient.

Pet owners often feel needed and responsible, which may stimulate the survival incentive. They feel they need to survive to take care of their pets. (Many cancer patients with pets have lived longer because they felt that their pets need them!) Stroking a dog, watching a kitten tumble, or observing the hypnotic explorations of fish can be an antidote to a foul mood or a frazzling day.

Pets such as dogs and cats provide unconditional, nonjudgmental love and affection. And pets can shift our narrow focus beyond ourselves, helping us to feel connected to a larger world.

### **Healthy Reasons to Have a Pet**

Here are the health reasons to have a pet as reported by Delta Society that performs research into the importance of animals to the lives and well being of humans.

- Seniors who own dogs go to the doctor less than those who do not.

In a study of 100 Medicare patients, even the most highly stressed dog owners in the study has 21 percent fewer physician's contacts than non-dog owners. (Siegel, 1990).

- Pet owners have lower blood pressure. (Friedman, 1983, Anderson 1992).

A recent study, from the State University of New York at Buffalo, looked at male and female stockbrokers already taking medication to control high blood pressure. Researchers say those with a pet nearby during stressful encounters experienced half the increase in blood pressure as those who did not own a pet.



Lead author, Dr. Karen Allen, calls the results "dramatic and significant." She says while medication can lower blood pressure, it cannot relieve stress and that can force blood pressure back up. The research team says it chose a dog or cat for each stockbroker at the beginning of the study and soon the study participants became very attached to their pets. Six months later, Allen says, many of the stockbrokers in the medication-only control group went out and got themselves a pet.

- Pet owners have lower triglyceride and cholesterol levels than non-owners (Anderson, 1992).
- Companionship of pets (particularly dogs) helps children in families adjust better to the serious illness and death of a parent (Raveis, 1993).
- Pet owners feel less afraid of being a victim of crime when walking with a dog or sharing a residence with a dog. (Serpel, 1990).
- Pet owners have fewer minor health problems (Friedmann, 1990, Serpel, 1990).
- Pet owners have better psychological well-being (Serpel, 1990).
- Contact with pets develops nurturing behaviour in children who may grow to be more nurturing adults (Melson, 1990).
- Pet owners have a higher on-year survival rates following coronary heart disease (Friedman, 1980).
- Medication costs dropped from an average of US\$3.80 per patient per day to just US\$1.18 per patient per day in new nursing home facilities in New York, Missouri and Texas that have animals and plants as an integral part of the environment. (Montague, 1995).
- Pet owners have better physical health due to exercise with their pets. (Serpel, 1990).
- Having a pet may decrease heart attack mortality by 3%. This translates into 30,000 lives saved annually (Friedman, 1980).
- Dogs are preventive and therapeutic measures against everyday stress (Allen, 1991).
- Pets decrease feeling of loneliness and isolation (Kidd, 1994).
- Children exposed to humane education programs display enhanced empathy for humans compared with children not exposed to such programs. (Ascione, 1992).
- Positive self-esteem of children is enhanced by owning a pet. (Bergensen, 1989).
- Children's cognitive development can be enhanced by owning a pet. (Poresky, 1988).
- 70% of families surveyed reported an increase in family happiness and fun subsequent to pet acquisition. (Cain, 1985).
- The presence of a dog during a child's physical examine decreases their stress. (Nadgengast, 1997, Baun, 1998).
- Children owning pets are more involved in activities such as sports, hobbies, clubs or chores. (Melson, 1990)

### **The Benefits We Experience When Pets (Animals) Are Beside Us**

Pet Therapy works by providing proximity to animals to those who can benefit by it. What are the benefits we accrue when animals are brought near us? Delta Society suggests the following benefits of having pets beside us or living with pets.

#### ■ **We Develop More Empathy**

Studies report that children who live in homes in which a pet is considered a member of the family are more empathetic than children in homes without pets.

This could be due to a variety of reasons:

Children see animals as peers. They can identify better with animals than human beings. Animal psychology is very simple. With animals, what you see is what you get. Humans are not as direct. We need to develop talent to read and interpret "body language." Children can read an animal's body language.

As children get older, their ability to empathize with animals will carry over into their experiences with people.

### ■ **We Develop An Outward Focus**

Individuals who have mental illness or low self-esteem focus on themselves. Animals can help them focus on their environment. Rather than thinking and talking about themselves and their problems, they watch and talk to and about the animals.

### ■ **Nurturing**

Nurturing skills are learned. Most of learn this from our parents. Those who do not learn these skills from their parents can learn by taking care of their pets. By being taught to take care of an animal, the children can develop these skills. Psychologically, when a person nurtures, his/her need to be nurtured is being fulfilled.

### ■ **Rapport**

Animals can open a channel of emotionally safe, non-threatening communication between client and therapist.

In therapy settings, animals help present an air of emotional safety. If a therapist has an animal in his/her office, s/he "can't be all bad". The animal's presence may open a path through the person's initial resistance. Children are especially likely to project their feelings and experiences onto an animal.

### ■ **Acceptance**

Animals have a way of accepting without qualification. They don't care how a person looks or what they say. (Have you ever heard of your dog deciding to go to your neighbours because he or she feels it is better out there?) An animal's acceptance is non-judgmental, forgiving, and uncomplicated by the psychological games people often play. They accept you the way you are.

### ■ **Entertainment**

The presence of an animal provides a much needed entertainment to those watching it. Even people who don't like animals often enjoy watching their antics and reactions. Especially in long-term care facilities, it seems everyone is entertained by animal visits in some way.

### ■ **Socialization**

Studies have shown that when dogs and cats come to visit a care facility, there is more laughter and interaction among residents than during any other "therapy" or entertainment time. In an inpatient

setting, the presence of animals encourages socialization. Staff members have reported that it is easier to talk to residents during and after animal visits. Family members often come during the animal visits and some have reported that it is an especially comfortable and pleasant time to come.

### ■ **Mental Stimulation**

Mental stimulation occurs because of increased communication with other people, recalled memories, and the entertainment provided by the animals. In situations that are depressing or institutional, the presence of the animals serves to brighten the atmosphere, increasing amusement, laughter, and play. These positive distractions may help to decrease people's feelings of isolation or alienation.

### ■ **Physical Contact, Touch**

It is well established that touch is very important for the nourishment of our mind and spirit. Infants who are not touched do not develop healthy relationships with other people and often fail to thrive and grow physically. For some people, touch from another person is not acceptable, but the warm, furry touch of a dog or cat is. In hospitals, where most touch is painful or invasive, the touch of an animal is safe, non-threatening, and pleasant. There are a number of programs for people who have been physically or sexually abused in which staff and volunteers are not allowed to touch the clients. In cases like these, having an animal to hold, hug, and touch can make a world of difference to people who would otherwise have no positive, appropriate physical contact.

### ■ **Physiological Benefits**

Many people are able to relax when animals are present. Tests have shown that the decrease in heart rate and blood pressure can be dramatic. Even watching fish swim in an aquarium can be very calming.

### ■ **Additional Benefits**

Some people feel spiritual fulfillment or a sense of oneness with life and nature when they are with their pets. This is hard to define or explain. Some well-known authors have described their relationships with animals and nature as part of their sustaining life energy and/or part of their communion and relationship with God.



## **Prayer and Spiritual Healing**

Spiritual Healing, Prayer Healing, Religious belief, faith – whatever we call it – is shown to have a profound effect on our health. Research has shown that spiritual healing can provide permanent relief from the worries and difficulties that plague us. It can bring us about a complete revolution in the consciousness and the body. It can effect enduring physical, mental, and emotional change.

### **Introduction**

#### **Spiritual Healing**

What is spiritual healing? New Age? Non-religious perspective.

#### **Spirituality – Confusing or What?**

For some, spirituality is considered a religion, and for some it is not. Some spiritualists will see them dealing with their spiritual belief and see them stuck between two worlds.

#### **The Road Signs of Life**

#### **What Is Prayer?**

Many people get confused about what is prayer. Different cultures have different approaches to prayer.

#### **The Scientific Side of Belief**

A casual approach to prayer may not be enough to unleash its healing potential.

#### **The Proof That Prayer Works**

The scientific evidence shows that prayer works. Many doctors advocate that prayer should be an integral part of the healing process.

#### **Benefits of Prayer**

A summary of the healing potential of prayer

#### **How Should You Pray?**

There are no specific pre-requisites or location or time to pray. However, some forms are more effective than others in unleashing its healing potential.

#### **Styles of Prayer**

#### **Teach Me to Pray By Virginia Ellis**

Please teach me, Lord ... I want to know exactly how to pray.  
I need some words which ones are right? Tell me what to say.

**How Does Prayer Work?**

It is difficult to explain how prayer works scientifically especially when it involves prayer by someone far away from the one who is being benefited and the prayed for person is not aware of the fact that he is being prayed for.

**Some useful hints on prayer****Prayer And The Great Religions of the World**

All the great religions in the world use devotional practices that invoke relaxation response.

Christianity

Judaism

Hinduism

Buddhism

Muslim (Islam)

Taoism

Shamanism

**How Spirituality Fits into Your Life**

Suggested Prayer/Meditation to Change Your Life. We give here two proven methods.

How to Tap into Your Spiritual Self

A Morning Exercise for Everyone

**The Steps In Divine Healing**

If you are new to spiritual healing, here are a few steps to get you going.

**Prayer and Healing: Future**

A sneak look at the future of Prayer and Healing

**Faith Working Through Love By Ignatius Zakka I Iwas**

Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of faith that is coupled with good works in the true Christian life. He thus makes faith that is coupled with good works a fact of faith in the lucid Christian religion.

**Is Prayer Good for Your Health?**

Studies found that healthy older adults who participate in private religious activity -- prayer, meditation or bible study -- "appear to have a survival advantage over those who do not."

**Loss of Faith 'Increases Risk of Dying' Religious Struggle, Health Linked In Study**

A study suggests that struggling with religious beliefs during an illness diminishes the chances of recovering.

**No Time To Pray: A Poem By K. J. Koshy**

When we are too busy to take time to pray, you may just want to read this poem.

**Suffering – A Christian Perspective** By Dr. Jacob Mathew, Chief Editor/Webmaster, Holisticonline.com

From the most ancient days, man has asked again and again why there is suffering in life. If God is loving and compassionate why is there so much suffering in this world? In view of the terrorism inflicted on the USA lately, this may be a very pertinent question for our times.

**Overcoming Fear and Anxiety With Prayer and Spirituality**

Fear is a reality of life. It is true for believers and anyone else. However, those who are grounded in faith and spirituality, find that they have God to lean back on when the going gets tough.

**Treatment of Anxiety Disorders by Prayer/Spirituality**

The prayer and spirituality can make a significant difference in sufferers of depressive and anxiety disorders. Fear and anxiety come from feelings of inadequacy and impotency. This is where faith comes to our aid.

**Keys to Overcoming Worry and Anxiety by Spirituality**

A key to overcoming worry is to choose to make the anxiety work for you rather than against you. Here are a number of things you can do to beat anxiety using spirituality.

**Healing Words: Bible Verses Useful in Warding off Anxiety**

**Spirituality and Depression**

Spirituality offers comfort in times of suffering and provides a message of hope that gives those who rely on it an extraordinary buffer against depression and other emotional upheavals.

**Patience In Prayer**

Contributed by: Dr. Rajan Varughese

God's delays are not God's denials. God's timing is perfect. Patience is what we need in prayer.

**Everything I Need To Know About Life, I Learned From Noah's Ark...**

**Prayer Is A Free Gift** By Bro. Paul Ciniraj Mohamed

Prayer is one of the best FREE GIFTS we receive. Prayer is the most powerful weapon to ward off evil forces.

**Make Everyday a Thanksgiving Day** By: Mark

We should never forget that we must have everyday as a Thanksgiving Day. Not a day passes without feeling the love and grace of our Savior upon us and for that we should be thankful everyday and every second.

**Principles of Prosperity As Described in the Bible** By Dr. Masaharu Taniguchi

To prosper, it is first necessary to know where the source of our wealth is. As long as we view the source of our wealth as finite, we will not be able to manifest it. First, we must know that God is our Father, a deeply loving Father who provides us with all that we need. God is omnipresent; He is wisdom, love, and life that permeates everywhere, as well as the substance of all things. [Read the full article](#)

**It All Depends on Whose Hands It's In**

By Paul Ciniraj

With God everything is possible. How you face a problem depends on who you entrust it to. Is it in God's hands or elsewhere? [Read the inspiring message.](#)

**God Always Answers Prayer** By Rev. Robert H. Schuller

**On Prayer**

By Ignatius Zakka I I was Patriarch Of Antioch

It is customary since ancient times for the Patriarch of Antioch to issue a lengthy encyclical for the Great Lent exhorting the faithful to observe the lent in its true spirit. The message for 2002 was "On Prayer."

**Importance of Tolerance – An Islamic View** By Bonifacio Badri Arribas, Jr.

According to the author, Holy Qur'an states that it is not the religion of choice which determines an individual going to Heaven or Hell, rather, it is the FAITH and BELIEF and BEING of God in His likeness and actions.

**True Prayer**

Reflections on the true meaning of prayer.

**Five Finger Prayer**

Here is an easy way to remember how to pray.

**We are Created Special** By Mar Gregorios Nyssa

**Islam And The ASIM Of Life**

What is the purpose of my life? What is the purpose of your life? What is the purpose of our lives? Such questions occur frequently to thinking people. An Islamic concept of meaning of life is presented here.

**Discover the Power of Forgiveness** by Leonard J. Roos

What do you do when somebody hurts you? Do you want to hurt him back or do you hold it against that person for the rest of your life? If you answer yes to these questions, know that you are like most people. To forgive is something that people generally have difficulty with.

**On the Wings of Prayer** By Helen Steiner Rice

You can use prayer to wash away your worries and anxiety.

**Please Listen** By Dr. Neil Chadwick

Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them. Perhaps that's why prayer works – because God seldom speaks in an audible voice, and He doesn't force His way. God listens and lets you work it out with His caring assistance.

**God is Talking -- Are You Listening? Part 1:** By W. Bradford Swift

I invite you to explore with me some of the common mental roadblocks that I've found can prevent us from getting the most from others. God talks to us in many ways, including using the voice of others, but are we listening? Let's look at some of the mental blocks that may be preventing clear reception.

**God is Talking -- Are You Listening? Part 2 By W. Bradford Swift**

Another common mental blocks that can prevent us from receiving God's wisdom that is often available through others is commonly called the Full Cup Syndrome. It's a condition males are particularly prone to but which women are not immune.

**God is Talking -- Are You Listening? Part 3 By W. Bradford Swift**

We all have unexamined notions, assumptions and beliefs, some which often masquerade as truth. Those are the ones that can act as a large boulder in our path to getting the most out of life. We bring our bias with us to any new relationship although we often don't notice we're doing this, mainly because we do it so often that our bias is simply part of the "background noise" of our lives.

**God is Talking -- Are You Listening? Part 4 By W. Bradford Swift**

When we acknowledge and become responsible for the interference that comes from our mind, our full cups and from being biased, what naturally begins to occur is a new opening for being fully present, aware and available for contribution.

**Peace of God By Valerie Garner**

A Christian perspective on obtaining lasting peace. We live a life filled with way too much. We have too many commitments, too much to do, and we live a very un-natural pace. At times it feels as if we live in slavery to our schedules. It seems as though every minute of our day is dictated to us, with very little choice. I don't believe it's supposed to be this way, and I believe there's a way out. If you can relate to this, maybe I can offer some hope.

**Everything is Possible with God By Mrs. Cicily Sunny**

Miracles happen to individuals who have sanctified their hearts through repentance and forgiveness and have surrendered completely to the will of God. Wherever people assemble and pray in the name of God with unity and purity of heart, miracles are happening.

**Communion with God Adapted from an 1896 Scottish Bible by Allan Thornton****Kyrie Eleison, Lord Have Mercy By Anthony M. Coniaris**

One of the most used phrase in Christian liturgy is "Kyrie Elaison." It comes from Greek and means Lord have mercy. This article by Anthony M. Coniaris is one of the most beautiful and inspiring one that explains the whole concept of mercy vs. justice. Although the examples drawn are from Orthodox Church liturgy, it can be enjoyed by people of all faith.

**The Lesson of Surrender, Devotion and Love from Jesus Christ's Life By Robert Elias Najemy**

I would like to share with you here some of my humble thoughts concerning these important parts of Jesus' life, birth, death and resurrection, which we celebrate yearly.

**Perceiving the Universal in All**

Here is an excellent method of moving into prayer of meditation. It can also be used as a meditation in itself.

**Truths Which Aid Forgiveness**

Some truths which will help us forgive others are given. (Some of them are based on various spiritual beliefs or Christian concepts which might not be acceptable to you or the subject.)



**Truths For Self-Forgiveness**

These truths are there to help us get free from the guilt, shame and doubt of the past, not to give license to do whatever we like in the future.

**Wisdom**

Wisdom creates a bright presence in our minds, allowing us to perceive with clarity beyond the veils of illusion. When wisdom is accompanied by Faith they create together trust in our highest truths. We are then able to pass safely through the dark and difficult corners of life feeling inner security and inner peace.

**Big God . . . Big Dreams**

Have you ever thought about just how big God's dream for your life really is? Too many times, I think we, as Christians, don't have a vision. I know that a lot has been said about Proverbs 29:18, which says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." And even some has been said on Habakkuk 2:2, where God speaks to Habakkuk and says, "Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." But I think we need to clarify where the vision comes from.

**Many Gods. Conflicting Theories. Who is Right?**

How can anyone tell you who God is? How can a church, a religion, or any teacher tell you who or what God is? They can not!. Have they seen him? Have they talked to her? Of course not! Not in the physical sense that so many seem to think that God is in. Our language is not rich enough to put into words the incredible unlimited nature of God.

**Live Each Day for God**

We are living in an era of threat, surprises, frustrations, disasters, and terrorism. The meaning of life is diminishing; it doesn't look secure any more. There doesn't seem to be any safe place in the world. But life has to proceed until it comes to an end no matter what the circumstances are.

**Virgin Mary, Mother of God**

In this ground-breaking work, Cicily Sunny presents the results from her life-long search for Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. It contains information, that was not known before or was not widely known. There are detailed visions of the end of the world and the shape of the coming Kingdom. This is a must-read for all the Christians.

**The Great Lent**

The Great Lent is a great milestone for Christians. We present aids and tools to enable us to cleanse our body, mind, and soul during the Great Lent.

### **The Great Lent- An Opportunity for Us to Cleanse Our Mind, Body and Soul**

While confessing, repenting and seeking forgiveness, we too should prepare ourselves to forgive others. In that way, let us get rid of all the ill-feelings from our mind and purify it, so that the heavenly peace can enter our hearts and stimulate us, to lead a true Christian life.

### **Synopsis for Sermons and Meditations During the Lenten Period**

A great tool to help us cleanse ourselves of our hurtfulness. Covers faith, love, forgiveness, repentance, mercy, and more.

### **A reconciliation prayer for the great lent**

### **What's Holding You Back from Abundant Blessings?**

Did you know that the blessings you seek could be right under your nose? All that is needed may be a small token sacrifice on your part.

### **Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters**

God takes what we sow and transforms it into abundance. Just as a tiny been seed yields a plant laden with beans, so the Lord takes our efforts and multiplies them in our behalf. We can never be certain when or where or what seeds we sow will yield a harvest.

### **Building Your Temple: Be Strong and Do It!**

Together, we are co-creators with God. When we have a righteous idea or plan that He is in agreement with, nothing is impossible for us. We have access to His grace – His full power to bring everything we need to accomplish our goal.

### **Building Your House of Faith**

The wealth of knowledge, light and truth that God wishes to share with us is endless, but we control the amount of it we receive by our willingness or unwillingness to lay aside our preconceived notions and absorb a little more truth.

### **Spiritual Politics: Making a Difference in an Indifferent World**

We live in troubled times where our peace and safety are often in danger. Most feel helpless and unable to affect the unfolding events in our present world. And yet many are uniting their minds, energy and actions in order to create a peaceful and safe world with dignity for all.

### **Giving Back to Spirit**

How often do you find yourself worrying or obsessing about a problem only to be reminded to give it back to Spirit/God. It's not difficult when we get caught up in everyday life, to take back what we have given to our Higher Power.

### **The Heart to Forgive**

It is one thing to “say” that we forgive someone, it is quite another to actually do it. Forgiveness is not a state of mind; it is a state of the heart. Being able to forgive someone from a heart level is not something that comes to us naturally. The challenge that we face is in getting our hearts to a point where we can accomplish this.

### **Using Prayer And Meditation With Colour And Light**

The Partners Within offers 10 prayer meditations that build partnerships between your human and

higher powers. These partnerships use prayer to guide your behaviour and thoughts and meditation to nurture your feelings and beliefs.

### **Tips For A More Effective Prayer Life**

How can we make prayer a more active part of our lives? How do we fit such an important practice into our busy schedules? Here are a few simple tips that may help.

### **The Easy Chair method for Prayer and Meditation**

If done on a regular basis, the inevitable result of prayer and meditation is a new thought or feeling that helps you improve your life. At the very least, it is a simple relaxation technique that opens your mind to new and better solutions. Multiply these results times 7 days a week, 12 months a year and you can see how daily prayer meditation works.

### **God and Your Schedule**

I don't want you to think that you don't need to be organized or have a schedule. The point is that we need God's direction. Schedules, agendas and "To Do" lists are just tools to help us be good stewards with our time. Let God decide what tasks are most important.

### **Why Should I Pray?**

We should pray to God for at least two important reasons. First of all, God has instructed us to pray. Second for a purely selfish reason, prayer causes things to happen. Another way of looking at this is "prayer gets results, or cause and effect."

### **Answers to God's Mysteries** By Cicily Sunny

Christians believe that many of God's mysteries are revealed through the Holy Bible. But many remain unanswered. Cicily Sunny, the author of this important spiritual work, says that the Holy Spirit helps us to unfold mysteries through selected spiritual people such as prophets in old testament times. These mysteries are revealed mostly through visions and dreams. The author believes that some of these mysteries were revealed to Maria Valtorta which became basis of a book "The Poem of the Man-God." Cicily has studied this book in depth for the past several years and wrote this book that unfolds some of the mysteries of God. It is an interpretation of certain important things that are not explained in detail in the Bible.

### **The Hour of God**

Only the highest spiritual wisdom and tireless sacred passion for all of life united with pragmatic, radical action on all possible fronts can now help us preserve the planet.

### **The Power of Affirmative Prayer**

When I affirm that I am healthy and whole, I am affirming that I was created by God to be whole and healthy. As I continue using this affirmative prayer, my body responds with the healing it needs.

### **Self, Soul and Parables**

We are Spiritual beings first and foremost. And our humanness is but one expression of the Divine that seeks to enlarge Itself through the human journey, to once again assert why we are here – which is simply To Grow!

### **Discover the 8 steps to a mountain moving faith.**

You can transform your life and your future if you will discover and dispatch the power of mountain

moving faith to your life or business situation.

### **A Key Leadership Quality To Help Avoid Spiritual Casualties**

Successfully stand against a threefold spiritual attack. A continuous and growing relationship with Christ is the key quality every leader must have to overcome the attacks of the enemy.

### **Believe The Word The First Time God Speaks**

There are times as leaders when circumstances and the things we see and feel are contrary to the word God spoke to our heart. In those times we can choose to accept the word of God by faith, or move based on what we see and experience.

### **Obedience and Assumptions**

What do you do when you respond in obedience to God's directions and things don't work out the way you thought they should?

### **The Available Bible**

Because access to the Bible today is so free we often forget that there were thousands of people who paid dearly for the opportunity to read it and share it with others.

### **I Know Who I am**

A look at who I am from a Christian perspective.

### **Guidelines for Pious Living**

We all want to do things that would please God. But, we often fail to do that as the worldly thoughts and passions encompass us. As a result, we lose the inner peace and tranquillity that is given to those who are in communion with God. Regular practice is needed to keep off the evil and stay in communion with God. Here are some practical suggestions that would help us to reach this goal.

### **The Face of God** (Christian)

Have you ever wondered what the face of God looks like? Have you ever thought what you would say to Him? What you would do in His presence?

### **I am Somebody**

When you feel dejected, when you suffer from low self esteem, it is good to remember that "God does not make junk; you are precious because you are God's child, made in the image of him." The following poem and prayer summarizes this sentiment very well.

### **Praying for Your Husband's Day**

One of the biggest blessings you can give your husband is to pray for his day.

### **Praying With Your Teen**

Does your teen see you pray? If they don't, how do they know about your relationship with the Lord so they can model it in their own life?

### **When Least Deserved**

God is kind and gentle and full of Grace.

### **Messiah in the 66 Books of the Bible**

The results of research into what is mentioned about Messiah in various parts of the bible.

### **Key Words of the Bible**

#### **Love, Right Out Loud!**

Being aware of my feelings opens my heart to a path of reverence, a higher path. Love connects me to myself, to others and to the Deity in ways that the ordinary senses do not.

#### **Success Tip 1- Put God First**

God's purpose and destiny for us is based upon what He spoke into our spirit before we were. His "Kingdom view" of the whole picture of our lives exceeds our finite "earthly view" of the portion we see for ourselves. True success always begins with putting God first. Putting God first includes looking to Him as our source to His resources.

#### **The Essence of Hindu Scriptures**

The author, an eminent scholar of Hindu Vedas (scriptures) captures the essence of Hindu scriptures into 51 principles.

#### **Holy Gita**

Bhagavad Gita, is the most important and cream of all scriptural texts for Sanadhana Dharma. According to the Gita, true religion is that which is inherent in the soul. It cannot be changed, and it is universally the same for all living entities. The external faiths are material reflections of the inherent spiritual quality of the soul.

#### **Bhagavad Gita And Management**

The critical question in every Manager's mind is how to be effective in his job. The answer to this fundamental question is found in the Bhagavad Gita which repeatedly proclaims that 'you try to manage yourself'. The reason is that unless the Manager reaches a level of excellence and effectiveness that sets him apart from the others whom he is managing, he will be merely a face in the crowd and not an achiever.

#### **Vedas: Different Paths to Experience the Supreme**

All the Vedas (Hindu sacred literature) provide the same knowledge to experience the Supreme through different paths. The author looks at the theme of several vedas.

#### **Ancient Power of Sanskrit Mantra and Ceremony**

The creative principle of the universe is called Brahma in Sanskrit. Brahma, who is depicted as emerging from the navel lotus of Narayana, is a metaphor for all of creation. Brahma creates, operates in the form of this universe for trillions of years, then dissolves back into Narayana. Narayana, however, is neither created nor destroyed. Later, another Brahma appears to begin the process again.

#### **Experience The Fruit of Gayatri Meditation**

The Gayatri Mantra is a treasure and heritage that belongs to the whole of humanity without exclusion. Gayatri mantra is meant for realization of god and is regarded as representing the Supreme Lord. It is meant for spiritually advanced people. Success in chanting it enables one to enter the transcendental position of the Lord.

#### **Brahmacharya ( Celibacy)**

The importance of "Brahmacharya" is clearly explained in Yejurveda. In this modern life very few

understand and practice it. All Vedas and other scriptures of Hinduism lay great emphasis regarding Brahmacharya.

**Selected Prayers**

A selected list of powerful prayers from different faiths.



## **Introduction**

Reiki is a Japanese form of healing that is becoming increasingly popular worldwide. What makes Reiki unique is that it incorporates elements of just about every other alternative healing practices such as spiritual healing, auras, crystals, chakra balancing, meditation, aromatherapy, naturopathy, and homeopathy.

Reiki involves the transfer of energy from practitioner to patient to enhance the body's natural ability to heal itself through the balancing of energy. Reiki utilizes specific techniques for restoring and balancing the natural life force energy within the body. It is a holistic, natural, hands-on energy healing system that touches on all levels: body, mind, and spirit.

Reiki (pronounced ray-key) is a Japanese word representing universal life energy, the energy which is all around us. It is derived from rei, meaning "free passage" or "transcendental spirit" and ki, meaning "vital life force energy" or "universal life energy".

## **What Is Reiki?**

Reiki practitioners channel energy in a particular pattern to heal and harmonize. Unlike other healing therapies based on the premise of a human energy field, reiki seeks to restore order to the body whose vital energy has become unbalanced.

Reiki energy has several basic effects: it brings about deep relaxation, destroys energy blockages, detoxifies the system, provides new vitality in the form of healing universal life energy, and increases the vibrational frequency of the body.

The laying of hands is used in Reiki therapy also as in spiritual healing. There is a difference though. In spiritual healing, a person with a strong energy field places his or her hands above a particular part of the recipient's body in order to release energy into it. So, here the healer is the one who is sending out the energy. In Reiki, however, the healer places the hands above the recipient; however, it is the recipient that draws the energy as needed. Thus, in this case, the individual being healed takes an active part in the healing process as opposed to having a passive part in spiritual healing. The individual takes responsibility for his or her healing. The recipient identifies the needs and cater to them by drawing energy as needed.

Although there are a few positions in which the practitioner is in contact with the patient (such as cradling the head), most reiki treatments do not involve actual touching. The practitioner holds his or her hands a few inches or farther away from the patient's body and manipulates the energy field from there.

## **History of Reiki**

Reiki is believed to have begun in Tibet several thousand years ago. Seers in the Orient studied energies and developed a system of sounds and symbols for universal healing energies. Various healing systems, which crossed many different cultures, emerged from this single root system. Unfortunately, the original source itself was forgotten.

Dr. Mikao Usui, a Japanese Christian educator in Kyoto, Japan, rediscovered the root system in the mid-to late 1800s. He began an extensive twenty-one-year study of the healing phenomena of history's greatest spiritual leaders. He also studied ancient sutras (Buddhist teachings written in Sanskrit). He discovered ancient sounds and symbols that are linked directly to the human body and nervous system which activate the universal life energy for healing.

Usui then underwent a metaphysical experience and became empowered to use these sounds and symbols to heal. He called this form of healing Reiki and taught it throughout Japan until his death around 1893.

The tradition was passed through several grandmasters of reiki such as Dr. Chujiro Hyashi, Hawayo Takata, and Phyllis Lei Furumoto.

There are many forms of reiki being practiced now. The two principal ones are: "the Usui System of Natural Healing" and "the Radiance Technique."

The Usui System of Natural Healing balances and strengthens the body's energy, promoting its ability to heal itself.

Reiki is useful in treating serious illnesses as well as others. Examples are: sports injuries, cuts, burns, internal diseases, emotional disorders, and stress-related illnesses.

Reiki was introduced to the Western world in the mid-1970s. Since then its use has spread dramatically worldwide.

### **Reiki energy**

Reiki energy is regarded as life energy at its most effective-with the maximum vibration. It is considered to have an almost divine quality and as such includes everything, in a world where problems and disorders are deemed to be due to the feeling of detachment from the world. There is no division of reiki energy into positive and negative forms but when a person undergoes a session of therapy, they allow the energy to be taken into themselves with beneficial effects. Essentially, those receiving reiki energy decide subconsciously just how much of the life energy is taken in.

Those who use reiki regularly often find they are more joyful, lively and their own in-built energy is enhanced-almost as if their batteries had been fully charged! Existing conflicts within the person are broken down and there is a greater vitality, leading to relaxation and a stimulation of the body. As this improvement develops, the natural processes of renewal and removal of toxins are enhanced and rendered more effective, ultimately opening up more of the body to the life energy.

Body organs such as the skin, and protective systems such as the immune system are improved providing the individual is prepared regularly to undertake reiki and in the first place to undergo an attunement or initiation into reiki energy. The initiation is merely a means whereby the universal life



energy is bestowed through the reiki master. The master acts as a channel and a link with God to release the healing power.

An initiation is not absolutely essential but it allows the individual access to the universal life energy, which is used rather than their own life energy. Also, an initiation conveys a greater capacity for using reiki energy, with no associated tiredness and further, it provides a protective mechanism against any negative manifestations.

### **Initiation or Becoming a Reiki Master**

Through a series of attunements, part of the initiation process for new Reiki practitioners, a Reiki master employs the ancient sounds and symbols that attune an individual's nervous system to a higher level of energy. A level is reached in which the students, neither highly trained nor especially gifted, can experience more energy flowing through their hands, giving them the power to heal themselves and others.

Reiki is taught in three levels or degrees. In Level I or First Degree, the participant receives attunement or initiation to the Reiki energy by the Reiki master. This permanently guides the person to greater healing power. The student learns how to do full body treatments on self and others.

In Level II or Second Degree, the participant receives attunements which increase the strength of the practitioner's Reiki energy. This primarily involves learning the sounds and symbols which are used in advanced Reiki bodywork and absentee healing.

In Level III or Third Degree, the participant receives third-level empowerment and the 'final symbol'. It is taught mainly for personal growth. A person who has completed the third level is able to give the Level I Reiki attunement.

### **Who Does It?**

Practitioners study with reiki masters to learn how to access ki and become a channel for its transmission. Students learn basic healing patterns and the "laying on of hands" for themselves and others. More advanced practitioners may use absentee healing-which involves practicing reiki on someone from a long distance, such as a different part of the country- or goal-oriented healing to address specific problems.

### **The Use of Whole-Body Reiki**

Since, a disease or disorder in one area will inevitably affect the whole body, the use of reiki is best applied to the whole-body, to cleanse and revitalize the complete system.

The implementation of reiki is highly ritualized and ceremonious. Many practitioners undertake a particular routine before commencing a regime of whole-body treatment. The main elements are briefly described below.

### **Preparing For Whole-Body Reiki**

#### **Remove jewellery**

Jewellery contains items such as stones (semi-precious or precious), metal rings or chains, leather thongs or a variety of other objects. Many of these will attract energies that may interfere with the life energy of reiki. Items such as watches create a closed circuit that reduce the flow of life energy. Earrings are especially a problem. The pierced ears interfere with the flow of energy. The ears are very important in many therapies such as acupuncture that utilize meridians and must be kept unencumbered.

### **Wash hands**

There are two reasons for washing hands. First, there is the physical effect of cleaning. It makes the hands pleasant to feel for the recipient of reiki. Hot, sticky hands should be avoided in reiki as they are not conducive to the state of relaxation being sought.

The second benefit relates to the aura surrounding the body. This aura may be affected by contact with objects, people, etc over the course of the day and washing removes such influences, which could, in sensitive people, have an adverse effect.

### **Say a prayer**

It is helpful at this stage to recite a short prayer asking for healing and to concentrate upon and acknowledge your aims, self-perception and those of the person upon whom your hands will be placed. The prayer makes you ready to enter into the relaxation process.

### **Even out the aura**

This is a means of gently making contact and starting the therapy. It involves a number of steps.

- Ask the person to lie down.
- Sit beside the person; put your left hand on your sacrum.
- With your right hand held about 6-9 inches (15-25 cm) above the body and palm facing down, move your hand along the length of the body from the head to the toes.
- Return the hand to the starting point using a circular motion along the side of the body.
- Repeat this three or four times

This process can be repeated after the reiki therapy when your left hand can be placed on the sacrum of the recipient.

### **Energize**

When each reiki therapy session is complete the whole body may be energized via the root chakra. The hand is held vertically above the body and then quickly moved from the pelvis to the head.

## **The Practice of Whole-Body Reiki**

### **Before the treatment**

There is great scope for variation in the number and sequence of positions used for whole-body treatment. It will depend greatly upon the practitioner and what is felt to be best for the recipient, but no one sequence can be deemed the best one for all. It is important to be certain that your client / partner is

not suffering from any illness or condition that might require the attention of another health professional. Reiki has its particular uses but it is unwise to try to address problems that clearly fall beyond its scope. The client can easily ask advice from their doctor, or other professional, as to whether they should undergo reiki therapy.

The extent of each session of reiki will vary depending upon circumstances and the individual receiving treatment. Certain positions may be better left out of the sequence or therapy may be focused on a particular area to help relieve blockages or deal with tension. If the recipient is currently on a regime of medication then a shorter session may be appropriate.

Similarly, if dealing with a small child or an elderly or infirm person, it is probably wise to limit the therapy to a session of 15 to 20 minutes. In all cases the reiki practitioner should be sensitive to and aware of the condition, needs and well being of the recipient.

### **Positions In Reiki Therapy**

The hands are clearly the 'instruments' of healing in reiki. The position in which the hands are placed on the recipient is important. However, it may be varied depending on the circumstances. Just placing the hands on the appropriate part of the body is sufficient.

Reiki can be effected through clothing, as the energy will flow through clothing. But many people prefer to have no material obstacles to the therapy.

#### **The Head**

The hands are placed either side of the nose, with the palms covering the eyes; the thumbs rest by the bridge of the nose and the fingertips cover the cheeks and reach the upper lip. This arrangement covers the sinuses, eyes, Pituitary gland, and teeth. It is useful for dealing with colds, sinusitis, eye complaints, allergies, fatigue and general discontent.

Another position is to place the hands over the ears, with the fingertips extending down the jaw-line to the neck, encompassing the ears including the semi-circular canals, responsible for balance. The effect also extends to the pharyngeal area. Diseases and problems of these organs such as colds, trouble with balance, hearing loss, etc. are dealt with in this position.

For relieving conditions such as headaches, colds, asthma and circulatory problems, place the hands on the back of the head. It also promotes relaxation.

#### **The Chest And Abdomen**

There are many variations for the chest and abdomen; we will only discuss a few here.

The arrangement for the thymus, heart and lungs is as follows: one hand is laid across the thymus and the other at 90 degrees starting just below and between the breasts. The thymus is a bi-lobed gland in the neck. It is an important part of the immune system. This arrangement therefore reinforces the immune system and helps the lymphatics, the heart, lungs and counters any general debility.

Another technique is to place the hands on either side of the navel and slightly to one side. The stomach and digestive organs are the focus of attention here and the conditions / symptoms addressed are the digestion and the metabolism. Specifically, this treatment will combat nausea, heartburn, gastrointestinal diseases and indigestion. Because the presence of such conditions often results in tension and worry, the relief of symptoms will similarly help relieve anxiety and depression.

There are two other positions that are worth exploring: Here, the hands are placed in a position similar to that used to focus on the stomach and digestive organs but further away from the body midline. Approach the body from the right side of the recipient. Place your left hand around the base of the ribcage. In this position, we are dealing with the gall bladder and liver. This position is for diseases and conditions of these important organs and associated problems of a metabolic nature. The liver is a vital organ in the process of removing toxins from the body. Hence this arrangement is very important for healing those ailments.

The position related to this one is essentially a reflection where the hands are placed on the left side of the body to encompass the area of the bowels, spleen and some of the pancreas. Here, diseases of these organs such as indigestion and healthy blood are all dealt with.

Another position involves focusing on the appendix, intestines and urinogenital organs. The hands are placed where the pelvic bones are covered and meet over the pubic area. This is used for the healing of a number of ailments associated with the appendix, intestines and urinogenital organs. It is also useful for the treatment of allergies, general debility, problems of a sexual nature and related to weight. It is believed to reinforce the immune system.

### **The Back**

Here again, there are a number of positions that are used. In one such position, the hands are placed across the shoulder blades at mid to upper point, to influence the intestines, lung, heart and various muscles in the neck and shoulder region. This will help lung and heart diseases, muscular tension, headaches and related conditions.

If the hands are placed lower down the back, around the midriff (on the lower ribs) this position will accommodate the kidneys and adrenal glands. (The adrenal glands are situated one each on the upper surface of each kidney and are important because they manufacture hormones that control a variety of body functions.)

### **Warning:**

Please consult a qualified practitioner before you start with reiki especially if you are suffering from serious conditions or diseases.

### **The Benefits Of Whole-Body Reiki**

#### **A Reinforcing Effect**

The whole body reiki is used to treat the whole body to achieve relaxation. It facilitates the removal of blockages in energy flow and the dispersal of toxins.

Long-term practice of whole-body reiki will restore the general condition of the body. The energy channels are opened to allow the body to deal properly and naturally with both stress and the build-up of toxins. It will help you to cope with anxiety and depression.

Reiki therapy is also useful when you are recovering from an illness. Reiki will provide the additional energy required to recover from the illness. It will also reinforce the effects of any other method of natural healing. It can be used as a supplementary therapy as it is a truly complementary system of treatment.

### **Reduction Of Side-Effects**

Reiki therapy can be a very useful adjunct for anyone taking a course of drugs. It can help reduce some of the side effects of drug therapy. Reiki helps the body in the recovery after drug therapy, after surgery and after chemotherapy. In all these cases, reiki therapy supplies the body with extra life energy, enabling the body to bounce back more quickly from the burdens of surgery and chemicals.

In some cases, use of reiki therapy after an operation will lessen pain. It will accelerate the natural healing processes. The key to success is that the therapy be undertaken on a regular basis. When a person is enjoying good health, the regular therapy increases the body's built-in defenses which manifests itself as a confidence and outward harmony in dealing with everyday events. It bestows a greater ability to deal with stressful situations. You will gain a positive outlook on life. Once the blockages and toxins have been removed from the system, the scope for personal advancement and growth becomes available. In general, the better metabolic functioning afforded by reiki therapy means that benefits and improvements may be experienced in many ways.

### **Combination Treatments: Reiki With Other Holistic Therapies**

Reiki therapy works very well in combination with other holistic therapies. Virtually any treatment can be used. We will examine a few such combinations to illustrate the synergy that can be accomplished.

### **Reiki And The Use Of Crystals**

Crystal therapy involves the use of precious and semi-precious stones. The stones are believed to store positive energy and they act as a conduit for healing from the practitioner to the recipient. They also believed to generate a healing vibration that acts upon the body. In some cases the stone is placed on the body where treatment is focused, in others it may be positioned on the appropriate acupuncture point. Most therapists use quartz for physical healing, amethyst for spiritual healing and rose quartz to heal emotions. Fluorite may be used to develop awareness and knowledge of a spiritual nature.

In reiki, three varieties of quartz are commonly used-amethyst, rose quartz and ordinary quartz (or rock crystal). The crystal structure of quartz is often taken to be related to the six chakras and the tip of the crystal to the seventh chakra. Practitioners recommend using rock crystal to avoid feeling overpowered by changes, mounting pressures and the stress of everyday life. Carrying the crystal or wearing it is meant to bring light into your workaday routines.

Rock crystal, held in the hand or between the hands, can also be used in conjunction with reiki meditation. The energy emanating from the crystal is thought to go into the palms and then the rest of

the body via the reflex zones. It is recommended by some in a variety of applications such as relaxation, wound-healing with other therapy and treating particular organs.

Rose quartz, with its soft pink colouration, is used for mending emotional problems. Examples are: shutting out certain desires or facing trauma and stress brought about by a separation.

The use of amethyst with reiki is varied. It is said to help promote the proper function of an organ that has been under treatment. Placed on the Third Eye (centre of the forehead), it facilitates clearer vision in one's path through life. It can also reduce tension and fear.

### **Meditation With Reiki**

Reiki is said to assist in the concentration required for meditation, with the flow of energy aiding relaxation. There are some positions that can be adopted in reiki meditation to achieve particular goals. In the first position the legs are drawn up and the soles of the feet put together with the knees falling apart. This can be done while lying down or sitting against a wall or chair. The hands adopt a praying gesture. This is meant to complete the circuit of energy, allowing a flow around the body. The reiki energy removes any blockages and performed regularly, this becomes a powerful meditation exercise. It can be done for short periods initially, just a couple of minutes, and then built up in small increases.

Group meditation is also possible with reiki, in which the participants stand in a circle with hands joined.

### **Aromatherapy Blended With Reiki**

Aromatherapy employs essential oils extracted from plants. The oils can be used in three ways: by direct application, bathing in water to which a few drops of the appropriate oil have been added, and inhalation.

When used in conjunction with reiki, some oils can be applied directly on particular areas of the body, or their aroma can be made to fill the room using an aroma lamp. Below a few oils are considered and their use compared to their therapeutic value in aromatherapy.

**Lavender:** In aromatherapy lavender is a tonic with relaxing effects. It is also an antiseptic, an antispasmodic and stimulates the appetite. It is also used for minor burns and wounds. Its soothing effects render it helpful for headaches, tension and similar conditions.

In reiki, lavender is associated primarily with recipients who are sensitive and easily hurt. In long sessions of reiki lavender helps to promote the calm and confidence necessary for a period of building and strengthening of the life force energy.

**Sandalwood:** In aromatherapy, sandalwood oil is prized for its relaxing and antiseptic effects. It forms a very effective oil for application to the skin (especially facial), particularly for dry or sensitive skin.

Sandalwood oil produces an ambience conducive to the reiki therapy because the oil is considered to elicit trust and confidence, between practitioner and recipient.

**Clary sage:** Clary sage is a tonic, antispasmodic, antidepressant, anti-inflammatory, bactericidal and more. It is also used to treat colds, menstrual problems and its very low toxicity renders it suitable for general use.

In a session of reiki therapy, clary sage is used to open blocked channels and to enhance sensitivity.

**Patchouli:** Patchouli has some aphrodisiac qualities, and is also used to treat skin disorders and minor burns because of its anti-inflammatory and antiseptic qualities.

It is also used in reiki therapy for allergies and impurities of the skin; but the fundamental use and aim is to enhance the sensual qualities and aspects of life.

### **Reiki and Prescription drugs:**

Many reiki therapists believe that reiki can readily affect the way in which drugs work in the body. Side effects of drugs can be lessened through the use of reiki, and in some cases it is reported that the process will be accelerated. In addition, reiki makes the body more receptive to drugs. Thus, it may be beneficial to undergo reiki therapy prior to the start of a course of drugs. The relaxed state rendered by reiki may also counter, to some extent, the efficacy of an anaesthetic. However, injections such as anaesthetics can more readily and easily be released from the body with the help of reiki.

Although minor pains can often be remedied through the use of reiki alone, stronger pain killers do not have their effect lessened by reiki. The interaction between reiki and drugs is neither well tested nor documented.

### **Reiki and Homeopathy**

In conjunction with Homeopathy, reiki provides a reinforcing effect by rendering the treatment more effective. Reiki can help avoid strain, improve the removal of toxins and increase the body's sensitivity. After treatment, whole-body reiki will help recovery.

### **Reiki and Bach remedies**

These are named after Edward Bach who studied plants with healing qualities. He identified 38 plants, the flowers of which he floated on clear spring water. This, he believed, transferred medicinal properties to the water which could be given to patients. His practice mimicked the drops of dew found on the plant which was used in the beginning. Stock solutions are diluted in water and a few drops taken.

Typical examples are:

- cherry plum for fear, tension, irrationality
- holly for envy, jealousy and hatred
- pine for guilt and constantly apologizing
- sweet chestnut for despair
- wild rose for apathy

As in the case of other alternative therapies, reiki improves the effectiveness of Bach remedies.

### **Is Reiki Effective?**

The vast majority of reports on the effectiveness of reiki appear in popular rather than scientific literature. Proponents of reiki cite the growing body of research in the field of Therapeutic Touch as evidence of the therapeutic transfer of energy through touch.

One California study showed that reiki can increase haemoglobin and hematocrit levels. The study compared 47 people participating in reiki training and a small control group of 9 healthy medical professionals. The study found a significant increase in haemoglobin and hematocrit levels among the reiki group and no significant change in the control group.



**Immortality with the Love.**







Shiatsu is a form of Oriental Therapy evolved from a 5,000 years old tradition of healing arts.

Shiatsu utilizes a combination of pressure and assisted-stretching techniques, some of which are common to other therapies, such as Massage, Physiotherapy, Acupressure, Osteopathy, Lymphatic Drainage, Do-in and others. The treatment stimulates the circulation and the flow of lymphatic fluid, releases toxins and deep seated tensions from the muscles, stimulates the hormonal system and the immune system, and acts on the autonomic nervous system, allowing the recipient to relax deeply and to get in touch with own healing power.

Some Benefits of Shiatsu include

- Reduced stress & fatigue (tsubo) accumulated in the body.
- Increased circulation of blood and lymph.
- Reduced blood pressure and muscle stiffness.
- Increased vitality, stamina and energy (Qi).

### **Introduction**

Shiatsu is a contemporary therapy with its roots in Oriental traditional medicine. It is sometimes described as Japanese physiotherapy. The actual treatment approach and philosophy is similar to acupuncture in its usage of the meridians (energy channels) and tsubo (pressure points) as well as diagnostic methods, but without the use of needles. Unlike most other forms of bodywork, in shiatsu the receiver remains clothed for the treatment and no oil is used for the massage.

Shiatsu is a Japanese word made up of two written characters meaning finger (shi) and pressure (atsu). The application of pressure is the underlying principle of shiatsu. Shiatsu is often called accupressure, although technically it is not correct. We can say Shiatsu is a variant of accupressure, as it involves the stimulation of the acupoints with pressure. However, this is not the only thing nor the principal technique used in Shiatsu. In Shiatsu, the pressure is sometimes applied over a wider area, not just over the acupoints; sometimes, the pressure is applied precisely over the acupoints. The practitioners use fingers and thumb for applying pressure precisely at localized points. For applying pressure over a larger area, they use palms, elbows, knees, and feet.

In addition to the pressure itself, shiatsu involves gentle stretch and manipulation techniques. These may have been borrowed from modern physiotherapy rather than from the ancient oriental massage. But shiatsu differs from Western massage in technique as well as in theory. While Swedish massage therapists use long, flowing hand movements to knead muscles, shiatsu practitioners apply rhythmic and gradual pressure to the meridians and tsubos. Sometimes, very light 'holding' techniques may be used, usually with the palm, almost like the laying on of hands as in spiritual healing. Stretching exercises and other corrective techniques creates flexibility and balance in the body, both physically and energetically.

Shiatsu works on the flow of energy or qi that circulates through our bodies in specific energy channels or meridians. Traditional Oriental Medicine suggests that we all have a "life force" or "life energy" which created our physical structure and regulates physical, emotional, mental and spiritual stability. This life force, called qi or chi in Chinese and ki in Japanese, maintains a homeostatic balance in your body.

The flow of qi can be disturbed either through external trauma, such as an injury, or internal trauma such as depression or stress. This is when symptoms like aches and pain start to occur and we start to experience a state of "disease". In shiatsu the physical touch is used to assess the distribution of qi throughout the body and to try to correct any imbalances accordingly.

Touch is the essence of shiatsu. Touch is a wonderful means of communicating our love and compassion for others in a very direct way. Touch can be of very different quality, ranging from aggressive, abusive and mechanical to more nurturing, caring and intuitive. All living things responds to touch and shiatsu helps to fulfil this need. The caring touch used in shiatsu will help to trigger the self-healing process within.

Thus, modern shiatsu incorporates a mixture of different approaches – ancient and modern. It includes pressing, hooking, sweeping, shaking, rotating, grasping, vibrating, patting, plucking, lifting, pinching, rolling, brushing, and in one variation called barefoot shiatsu, it involves walking on the person's back, legs, and feet. These all share a common theme, namely touch. Shiatsu is thus a 'hands-on' therapy.

Shiatsu has become a respected alternative therapy in the western countries and is offered in many hospital settings as a complementary therapy for the treatment and prevention of many common ailments. It is a very safe and effective treatment.

### **Origins of Shiatsu**

Shiatsu originated in China at least 2,000 years ago, when the earliest accounts gave the causes of ailments and the remedies that could be effected through a change of diet and way of life. The use of massage and acupuncture was also recommended. Thus acupuncture, massage and herbal medicine evolved side by side to treat the range of diseases encountered. The traditional massage of ancient China was known as 'anma' and found its way to Japan to be adopted and adapted by the Japanese, who also called it 'anma'. The therapy that is known today as shiatsu has gradually evolved with time from anma under influences from both East and West.

Anma (anma in Japanese) has been used for centuries to deal with many common ailments, aches and pains as well as treating more serious "diseases". New influences from traditional Eastern medicine and Western science have gradually shaped it into what is today called shiatsu. There are several main styles of shiatsu found in the West: barefoot shiatsu, macrobiotic shiatsu, Namikoshi style, Ohashiatsu, Shiatsu-Do and Zen shiatsu. These are all valid and effective therapies using the basic shiatsu principles but with differing emphasis placed on techniques or philosophy. In Japan there are more than 87,000 registered shiatsu practitioners. This fact alone goes some way towards demonstrating its effectiveness in the prevention and treatment of disease.

It is only very recently that it has gained recognition and popularity, with people becoming aware of its existence and benefits.

Although East and West have different viewpoints on health and life, these can complement one another. The Eastern belief is of a primary flow of energy throughout the body, which runs along certain channels known as meridians. It is also believed that this energy exists throughout the universe and that all living creatures are dependent upon it as much as on physical nourishment. The energy is known by three similar names, ki, chi and prana in Japan, China and India respectively. As in acupuncture, there are certain pressure points on the meridians that relate to certain organs, and these points are known as tsubos.

## **Concept of Energy or Qi in Traditional Oriental Medicine**

### **Concept of Qi, Chi or Ki**

Shiatsu acts on the subtle anatomy of the body described as qi in Chinese or ki in Japanese. Qi is a fundamental concept of the traditional oriental medicine and is considered as our "life essence" which maintains and nurtures our physical body, mind and spirit. In traditional Indian medicine it is described as prana. Qi is everywhere. It moves and changes quickly from moment to moment and can easily be replenished on a day-to-day basis. The human body is a field of continually moving energy, circulating through cells, tissues, muscles and internal organs.

The Chinese word qi translates as "breaths". A Japanese dictionary defines qi as mind, spirit, or heart. Japanese vocabulary has hundreds of expressions which use the word qi, most of them ordinary ways of talking about human moods, attitudes, or character. Qi is often characterized as energy.

Within the organ and meridian systems, energy is constantly being exchanged. The energy circulates to fill areas where it is lacking (Kyo) and drain off areas where it is excessive (jitsu). The entire system is designed to be self regulating. Most energy imbalances correct themselves without effort. Treatment is only required for stubborn and persistent blockage or lack of energy in a certain area, which is where Shiatsu and related disciplines come in.

There are a variety of exercises you can do to experience qi and feel its effect on your body. Qi is a real force, made up of electric, magnetic, infrasonic and infra-red vibrations, which can be intuitively perceived and mentally directed. It can be photographed using Kirilian photography. Like air that we depend on for our life, qi is the very source of our vitality. It is the force within us which gives us initiative, which drives and inspires us to move forward in life. When the qi leaves us, we die. According to the ancient philosophers, life and death is nothing but an aggravation and dispersal of qi.

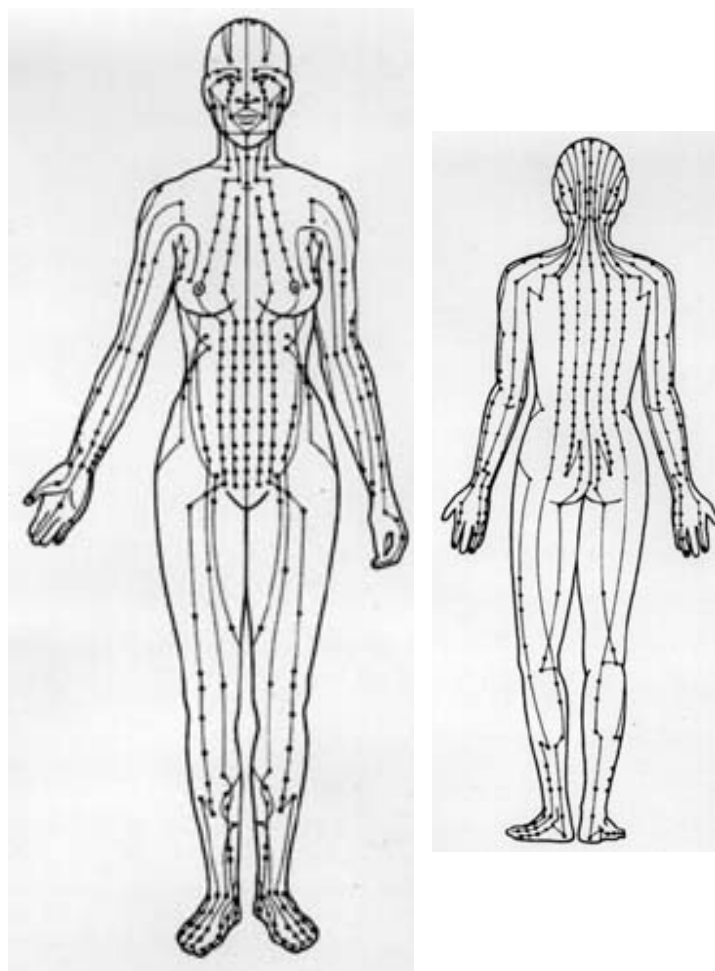
"Qi produces the human body just as water becomes ice. As water freezes into ice, so qi coagulates to form the human body. When ice melts, it becomes water. When a person dies, he or she becomes spirit (shen) again. It is called spirit, just as melted ice changes its name to water."

Wang Chong, AD 27-97

### **The Meridians**

The Orientals believed that energy circulated and nourished the whole person through specific pathways, or meridians as they are usually called. In Indian medicine, this is called a nadi or river. Meridians form a crisscross network of interconnected pathways that link the organs, skin, flesh, muscle and bones

in a unified body. (This may be compared to the Interstate highway network in the United States.) The qi that circulates within them may be more Yang in nature, defending the body on the outside, or more Yin in nature, nourishing the body on the inside. These channels run from deep in the organs out through major meridian branches to smaller and smaller ones, ending up at the outside of the body in the skin; then they go back again, just like the pattern of other major body systems such as the nervous and blood systems.



**Location of the meridians and acupoints in the body.**

Each of the twelve organs is linked with a meridian or channel of energy, named according to the internal organ it affects. The meridians, like rivers of energy, ensure proper nurturing of qi or life force throughout your whole being. When you are healthy, the flow of qi proceeds unimpeded, like the water in a free-running river, and energy is well distributed throughout the meridian pathways. When the river, or meridian, is blocked for some reason, the qi is prevented from reaching the specific area it is supposed to nurture. The result is that the cells, tissue or organs in the affected area will suffer.

### Identifying Meridians

Meridians are numbered from 1-12 according to the flow of energy through them.

All meridians start or finish in the head, chest, hands or feet.

1. Lung – Starts on chest in front of shoulder, finishes in thumb
2. Large Intestine – Starts in index finger, finishes at side of nostril
3. Stomach – Starts under eye, finishes in second toe
4. Spleen – Starts in big toe, finishes at side of chest
5. Heart – Starts under armpit, finishes in little finger
6. Small Intestine – Starts in little finger, finishes in front of ear
7. Urinary Bladder – Starts at inside corner of eye, finishes in little toe
8. Kidney – Starts on sole of foot, finishes at top of chest
9. Heart Constrictor – Starts beside nipple, finishes in middle finger
10. Triple Heater – Starts in fourth finger, finishes by outside corner of eyebrow
11. Gall Bladder – Starts at outside corner of eye, finishes in fourth toe
12. Liver – Starts in big toe, finishes on front of chest or below nipple.

### Common Abbreviations Used in Designating Meridians

Very often the meridians are abbreviated with the letter indicating the organ it corresponds to. The common such abbreviations are given below:

ABBREVIATION	MERIDIAN
B	Bladder
Lu	Lung
CV	Conception Vessel (channel)
Lv	Liver
P	Pericardium
GB	Gallbladder
Si	Small Intestine
GV	Governing Vessel (channel)
Sp	Spleen
H	Heart
St	Stomach
K	Kidney
TW	Triple warmer
LI	Large intestine

Because the meridians serve the whole body from outside in and inside out, they have a dual role. They prevent harmful energies from entering (in the form of bacteria and viruses) the body. They also indicate the presence of harmful energy already inside the body in the form of symptoms on the outside. (See the description of aura later.) These may be felt as aches, pains, heat or cold, and in Shiatsu may be located as areas of particular sensitivity or tenderness.

Any type of "disease" is a sign that the energy within the meridian system is out of balance. When a meridian is blocked, one part of the body is getting too much qi and enters a state of excess, while another part is getting too little and becomes deficient in qi. This will result in one organ becoming overactive while another organ will become under-active and may be fatigued. If you do not correct this problem when initially manifested, it can lead to the symptoms getting progressively worse and your disease gets more serious.

Finding these areas is one of the aims of Shiatsu diagnosis and treatment, since their quality and location can tell us a great deal about the origin, location and depth of an imbalance in the entire energy system, which will result in a given disease. The unique nature of the meridians is to reflect this kind of imbalance and then to act as the channel by which the imbalance can be corrected.

Along the meridians you will find more highly charged energy points, which are called pressure points in English or tsubo in Japanese. This is where the qi is most easily affected. Stimulating different tsubo will correct the energy imbalance. In the case of Shiatsu, the affected meridian or points are worked on directly until proper energy flow is restored. By using different shiatsu techniques, such as pressure, stretching, rubbing and corrective exercises, you will be able to release the blockages, "open" the meridian and recharge yourself.



## The Five Elements

According to traditional Chinese medicine, the universe is composed of five elements-Fire, Earth, Metal, Water, and Wood. The human body is considered a microcosm of the universe, and so is also composed of these Five Elements. Each element is associated with different organs, meridians, and characteristics. For example, the wood element is connected with anger, and a hostile person would be diagnosed as having an imbalance within that element. To alleviate the anger, appropriate meridians would be treated to restore balance.

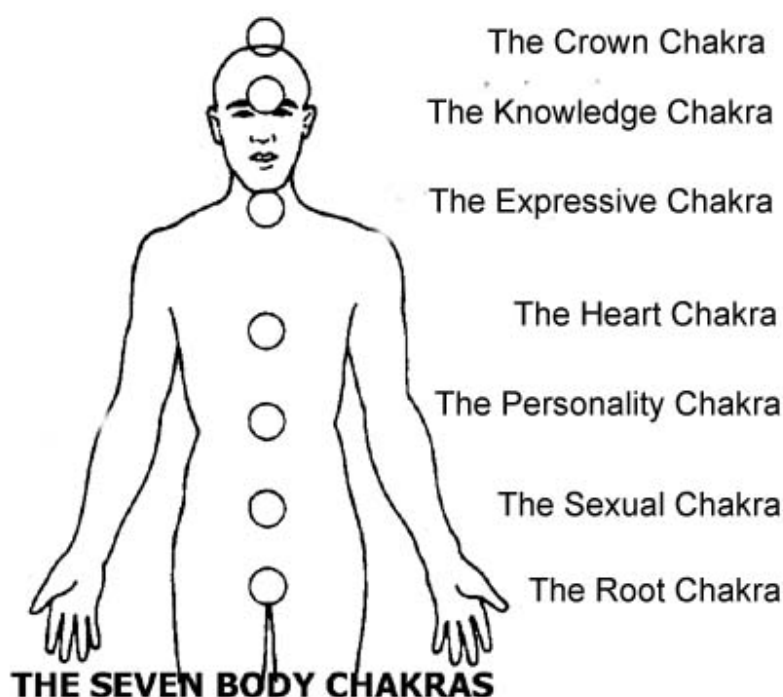
## Philosophies and Background

### Auras

A number of auras, or energy layers, surround the physical body that can be detected or appreciated. The first layer, the etheric body, is the most dense and is connected with the body and the way it works. The astral body is much wider, is affected by people's feelings and, if viewed by a clairvoyant or psychic, is said to change in colour and shape depending on the feelings being experienced. The next aura is the mental body, which is involved with the thought processes and intelligence of a person. This can be viewed by a clairvoyant and is said to contain 'pictures' of ideas emanating from the person. (The

aura can be photographed using Kirilian Photography technique.) These first three auras comprise the personality of a person. The last aura is known as the causal body, soul or higher self. This is concerned more with perceptive feelings and comprehension. People who believe in reincarnation suggest that the first three auras die with the body, but the causal body carries on in its process of development by adopting another personality. As a person grows in maturity and awareness, these different auras are used, and energy is passed from one layer to another. Thus, any alteration in the physical state will affect the other layers, and vice versa.

### Seven Centres of energy, or chakras



Another concept that is important in the practice of shiatsu is chakras. It is believed that there are seven main chakras situated along the sushumna, or spiritual channel, which runs from the crown of the head to the base of the trunk. Energy enters the channel from both ends. Since the flow is most efficient when the back is straight, this is the ideal posture for meditation or when powers of concentration are required. Each chakra has a component of each aura, and it comprises what is known as a centre of consciousness. Each aura is activated as a person develops, and the same occurs with the chakras, beginning with the lowest (the base or root chakra) and progressing to the others with time. There is also a change of energy between the auras of each chakra.

### Zang and fu organs: Energy storage and production

According to traditional oriental therapies, organs have two functions. One is the physical one. The other function is concerned with the use of energy and is sometimes called an 'energetic function'. The twelve organs mentioned in the traditional therapies are split into two groups known as zang and fu.

Zang organs store energy. The fu organs produce energy and control the removal of waste matter. The organs can be listed in pairs, each zang matched by a fu with a similar function. Although the pancreas

is not specifically mentioned, it is usually included with the spleen. The same applies to the 'triple heater' or 'triple burner', which is connected with the solar plexus, lower abdomen and the thorax.

- The lungs are a zang organ and are concerned with assimilation of energy from the air. It affects the mental alertness and positive attitude. This is paired with the fu organ of the large intestine, which takes sustenance from the small intestine, absorbs necessary liquids and excretes waste material via the feces. It is also concerned with self-confidence.
- The spleen is a zang organ and changes the food into energy that is needed by the body. It is concerned with the mental functions of concentration, thinking and analyzing. This is paired with the fu organ of the stomach, which prepares food so that nutrients can be extracted and also any energy, or ki, can be taken. It also provides 'food for thought'.
- The zang organ of the heart assists blood formation from ki and controls the flow of blood and the blood vessels. It is where the mind is housed and therefore affects awareness, belief, long-term memory and feelings. This is paired with the fu organ of the small intestine, which divides food into necessary and unnecessary parts, the latter passing to the large intestine. It is also concerned with the making of decisions.
- The kidneys are a zang organ and they produce basic energy, or ki, for the other five paired organs and also for reproduction, birth, development and maturity. They sustain the skeleton and brain and provide willpower and 'get up and go'. Kidneys are paired with the fu organ of the bladder, which stores waste fluids until they are passed as urine. Bladder also gives strength or courage.
- The zang organ of the 'heart governor' is concerned with the flow of blood throughout the body. It is a protector and help for the heart and has a bearing on relationships with others. This is paired with the 'triple heater' or 'burner', which passes ki around the body and allows an emotional exchange with others.
- The liver is a zang organ that assists with a regular flow of ki to achieve the most favourable physiological effects and emotional calmness. Positive feelings, humour, planning and creativity are also connected with it. It is paired with the fu organ the gall bladder. This keeps bile from the liver and passes it to the intestines. It concerns decision-making and forward thinking.

### **Feeling ki**

It is possible for a person to 'feel' ki. It is also possible with training for a person to experience another person's aura or ki. It is described as a feeling of tingling or warmth. To experience the aura, your mind must be clear of other thoughts. Relaxation exercise may be employed to prepare you to experience the aura.

It is also possible for a person, by concentrating his or her thoughts and by a slight change of position, to alter the flow of ki in the body. This will have the effect of either making the person feel a lot heavier or lighter, depending on which is desired.

### **Kyo and jitsu energy**

Oriental medicine proposes that energy is the basis for all life, and it is divided into two types known as kyo and jitsu. If the energy is low or deficient, it is known as kyo, and if there is an excess or the energy is high, it is known as jitsu.



These two factors will affect the type of shiatsu that is given. Experienced shiatsu practitioners can determine with touch what type a person the recipient is. The practice of shiatsu is altered depending on the energy level of the recipient.

- For kyo types (low or deficient in energy), a gentle and sensitive touch is required, and any stretched positions can be maintained for a longer time as this will bring more energy to that part of the body. Pressure, held by the thumb or palm, can also be maintained for an increased length of time, approximately 10- 15 seconds.
- For jitsu types (high or excess energy), the stretches can be done quite quickly so that the energy is dispersed, and also shaking or rocking areas of the body can have the same effect. The pressure that is exerted by the thumbs or palms should also be held for a shorter length of time, so that excess energy is dispelled.

### **Basic Rules When Practicing Shiatsu**

There are some basic rules that should be followed before the practice of shiatsu.

1. Wear comfortable, loose fitting clothes made of natural fibres. This will help with the flow of energy or ki.
2. The room should be warm, quiet, have adequate space and be neat and clean. If not, this can have an adverse effect on the flow of ki.
3. The person receiving the therapy should ideally lie on a futon (a quilted Japanese mattress) or a similar floor mat. Pillows or cushions may be used to make the person comfortable.
4. Shiatsu should not be given or received by someone who has just eaten a large meal. Wait several hours before giving or receiving shiatsu.
5. No pressure should be exerted on varicose veins or injuries such as cuts or breaks in bones.
6. Although shiatsu can be of benefit to women while pregnant, there are four areas that should be avoided and these are the stomach, any part of the legs from the knees downwards, the fleshy web of skin between the forefinger and thumb, and an area on the shoulders at each side of the neck.
7. Ensure that the person is calm and relaxed.

It is generally not advisable to practice shiatsu on people who have serious illnesses such as heart disorders, multiple sclerosis or cancer. An experienced practitioner may be able to help, but a detailed and accurate diagnosis and course of treatment is essential.

A verbal check on the person's overall health is important and also to ascertain if a woman is pregnant.

### **Effects After Shiatsu Treatment**

The immediate effect of treatments differs with each individual. A sense of well-being is common.

Because of the deep relaxation that usually occurs and the stimulus to the major body systems, you may have some healing reactions. Some people feel cold or flu-like symptoms, aches and pains, or headaches after the first treatment. These symptoms will only last for a day or so and usually subside with each subsequent treatment. If these symptoms persist, please consult a qualified physician immediately. In general, any such effects you may experience are positive signs from your body telling

you it is making an attempt to correct its own condition in a natural way. These are signs of elimination and the beginning of the healing process.

The following are some unpleasant side reactions some people get after a shiatsu treatment and the causes of the same.

- **Coughing and generation of mucus or symptoms of a cold:** The coughing and production of mucus is due to the body being encouraged to rid itself of its surplus foods (such as sugars and fats) in this form. A cold can sometimes develop when the mucus is produced, usually when the cells of the body are not healthy.
- **A feeling of tiredness:** Tiredness can occur, frequently with a person who suffers from nervous tension. After therapy has removed this stress or tension, then the body's need for sleep and rest becomes apparent.
- **A headache or other pains and aches:** There are two main reasons for these, which should only last a short time. Shiatsu redresses the balance of ki in the body. Thus, blockages in the flow of energy are released and the ki can rush around the body, causing a temporary imbalance in one part and resulting in an ache or pain. It is also possible that too much time or pressure may have been applied to a particular area. The amount needed varies considerably from one person to another. If the pain or headache persists after a few days, obtain qualified medical help.
- **Feeling emotional:** Emotional feelings can occur while the energy is being stimulated to flow and balance is regained. The feelings may be connected with something from the past that has been suppressed and so, when these emotions resurface, it is best for them to be expressed in a way that is beneficial, such as crying.

### **Why Some People Get No Beneficial Results From Shiatsu?**

Some people may not experience any benefit from shiatsu. There are a number of reasons for this.

- Some people are completely 'out of touch' with their bodies and are aware only that all is not well when pain is felt. If this is so, then any beneficial effects from shiatsu may not register.
- Many overweight persons have a deposit of fat below the skin and around the internal organs. The body is unable to burn off this fat and this layer forms a barrier to ki. The flow is stopped. Thus, in general, overweight people do not benefit as much from shiatsu because of the difficulty in stimulating the flow of ki in the body.

### **Body reading**

It is possible for practitioners of shiatsu, as they become increasingly experienced, to assess a person's physical and mental state of health by observing the body and forming accurate observations. If the traditional ways of eastern diagnosis are studied, this can assist greatly. The eastern methods were based on the senses of hearing, seeing, smelling and touching and also by questioning people to obtain information leading to an overall diagnosis. This is known as body reading.

### **Exercises and the three main centres**

The body is divided into three main centres:

- **The Head:** The head centre controls mental activities, such as imagination and intellectual thought processes, and is concerned with the brow chakra.
- **The Heart:** The heart centre is concerned with interactions among people and to the world in general, including the natural world. It is related to the chakra of the throat and heart.
- **The Abdominal Centres:** The abdominal centre is related to the base, sacral and solar plexus chakras and is concerned with the practical aspects of life and physical activity.

Ideally, energy should be divided equally among the three centres. Factors, such as activity, education, diet, culture, etc, prevents this from happening so. In shiatsu, more importance is attached to the abdominal centre, known as the hara.

Many exercises are available to help hara. We recommend that you do the deep breathing exercises described under the yoga breathing exercises. Once this technique is mastered, use a visualization to improve the effectiveness. While inhaling, imagine that ki is being inhaled down into the hara. Inhale slowly via the nose and imagine the ki descending. (It may aid concentration if the eyes are closed.) The breath should be held for about four seconds and concentration should be centred on the ki. Then exhale gradually through the mouth and repeat the process for a few minutes. Thus, while breathing, not only is oxygen inhaled but also ki (or prana) is taken into the hara where it increases a person's vitality. Once the technique is mastered, it can be practiced virtually anywhere and will restore composure and calmness.

### **Centred Movement:**

This is an exercise that helps you to control the movement of the ki. To begin the exercise, assume a position on the floor with your body supported on your hands and knees (a body width apart). You should be relaxed and comfortable with no tension. This position is the basis for other movements that are practiced on others. While the position is maintained, begin to move the body backwards and forwards so that you are conscious of the transfer of weight, either on to the hands or knees. The body should then be moved slowly in a circular way, again being aware of the shift of weight from the hands, to hands and knees, to knees, etc, returning to the original position. As the whole body is moved, the abdomen is its centre of gravity. Practice maintaining a position for about five seconds, registering the increase in weight on the hands when you move forwards and the reduction when you rock backwards. Then return to the original position. It is important that the body weight is always used at right angles to the receiver as this will have the maximum effect on the flow of ki. The reason for holding a particular position is that this has the effect of making the person's ki move.

The centred movement can be practiced on a partner in exactly the same way, following the same rules. The right hand should be placed on the sacrum, which is between the hips, and the left hand midway between the shoulder blades. As before, you should rock forwards and hold the position for about five seconds and then repeat after rocking backwards on to the knees. This basic procedure can be repeated about twelve times, and if you are not sure whether too much or too little pressure is being used, check with your partner. You will eventually acquire the skill of knowing what amount is right for a particular person.

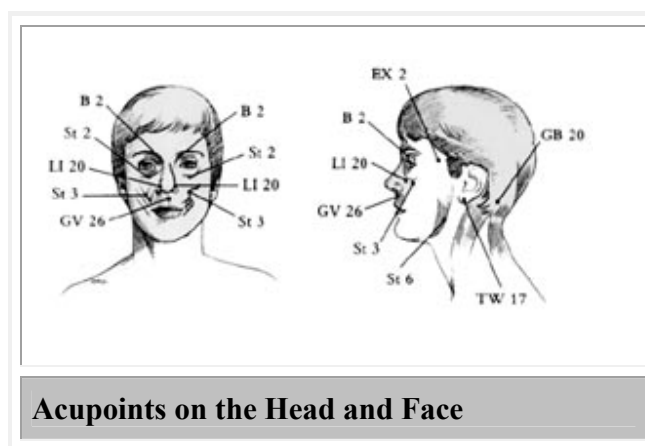
Make use of body weight and not muscular strength; without utilizing any effort. Be calm and relaxed at all times. The weight of the body should be at right angles in relation to the receiver's body. The

person's whole body should be moved when altering weight on to the receiver, maintaining the hara as the centre. Any weight or pressure held should be for a short time only and both hands should be used equally. Maintain a regular pattern of movement while giving shiatsu. Always keep in physical contact with the receiver by keeping a hand on him or her throughout the therapy.

### Shiatsu on the face and head

There are a large number of different exercises and techniques available to the practitioner. We will give one such exercise here.

1. Hold the recipient's head firmly in one hand and, using the thumb of the other hand, press upwards in a straight line between the eyebrows towards the hairline. Each movement should be quite small, about 0.5 inch (12 millimetres).
2. Place the fingers on each side of the head. Use the thumbs to press from the inner end of the eyebrows towards the hairline.
3. Holding the hands at each side of the head, the thumbs should then be used to press from the start of the eyebrows across the brow to the outside.
4. With the fingers in place at each side of the face, work the thumbs across the bone below the eyes, moving approximately 0.25 inches (6 mm) at a time.
5. Commencing with the thumbs a little to one side of each nostril, press across the face below the cheekbones.
6. Press one thumb in the area between the top lip and nose.
7. Press with both the thumbs outwards over the upper jaw.
8. Next, press one thumb in the hollow below the lower lip and then press outwards with both thumbs over the lower part of the jaw.
9. The giver then puts all fingers of the hands beneath the lower jaw and then leans backwards so that pressure is exerted.



### A Shiatsu Exercise For Beginners

This Shiatsu exercise incorporates the elements of deep breathing, meditation, sound therapy, and acupressure.

Sit quietly on the floor, on a cushion or mat. Place one hand on top of the other, over the navel. Clear your mind and concentrate on deep breathing, focusing on a starting point one-and-a-half inches below

the navel. This point is known as "ki-kai" or "ocean of energy". Breathe deeply, and slowly breathe out. You may hum a tune as you breath out. Music has a soothing effect.

After a few minutes of deep breathing, lean forward onto your hands as you exhale your humming vibrations. Now inhale slowly as you gently straighten the spine and return to your original sitting position. Repeat five times.

Now clasp both hands, so that they interlock in the V's between the index finger and thumb. You are touching a major acupoint, large intestine #4, called "go kuku" ("meeting mountains"). Press the thumb, leaning in toward the base of the index finger. Hold the pressure for five seconds, release for five seconds. Repeat for relief from headache, toothache, menstrual cramps, or gastritis.

This simple form of self-shiatsu affects the internal organs. You can increase a specific effect through your focus. For example, when you are bending forward, concentrate on the kidneys in the lumbar area-your lower back. This will strengthen your Qi.

### **Makko-Ho Exercises**

Makko-Ho, is a daily five-step routine that takes five to ten minutes and is good for beginners. When people do this on a regular basis, everything seems to function much better . It helps relieve stress, and people feels that they have more energy.

It is important to remember, when practicing the Makko-Ho exercises, that what matters is the action of beginning the stretch, not how far you can stretch. If you can only lean back onto your palms, simply hold that position and stretch, breathe and relax. The more you practice, the easier the positions will become.

There are six stretching exercises, each of which affects one pair of the meridians by stimulating its flow of energy. If the complete set of exercises is performed, all the body's meridians will have been stimulated in turn, which should result in increased vigour and an absence of tiredness. Before beginning the exercises, you should feel calm and relaxed. It may prove beneficial to perform some abdominal breathing first. If possible, use breathing with visualization of qi.

One example of Makko-ho exercise is the triple heater and heart governor meridian stretch.

- Sit on the ground with either the feet together or crossed. The right hand should grasp the left knee and the left hand the right knee, both quite firmly.
- Inhale and, as you exhale, lean forwards and downwards with the top half of the body so that the knees are pushed apart.
- Hold this position for approximately 30 seconds while breathing normally, and then, after inhaling, return to the upright position.
- After completion of all exercises, lie flat on the ground for several minutes and relax.



A recent survey showed that 70-90% of us feel stressed at work and outside. Today's fast paced lifestyle is putting a toll on us. Unless we learn to manage stress, we will get sick. But it doesn't have to be that way. There are steps we can take to manage stress.

### **Stress: It Is Deadly**

Irrespective of what you do, you have and will experience stress at some time in your life. In a recent survey 89% of respondents described experiencing "high levels of stress".

### **Impact of Stress**

Stress is very expensive. Let's look at the statistics:

- Stress is recognized as the number one killer today. The American Medical Association stated that stress was the cause of 80% to 85% of all human illness and disease or at the very least had a detrimental effect on our health.
- Every week, 95 million Americans suffer some kind of stress related symptom for which they take medication.
- American businesses lose an estimated US\$200-\$300 billion dollars per year to stress related productivity loss and other cost. To put this in perspective, this amount is higher than the total cost related to all strikes and the net profit from all Fortune 500 companies!

The American Institute of Stress in Yonkers, New York, estimates that 90% of all visits to doctors are for stress-related disorders. In women, stress has been linked to fatigue, hair loss, bad complexion, insomnia, disruption of the menstrual cycle, low libido and lack of orgasm, among others. There's even evidence that it can increase your risk of more serious problems such as high blood pressure and heart disease.

Stress speeds up your entire system and produces conditions in younger people that are more commonly associated with growing old. Virtually no part of your body can escape the ravages of stress.

Studies show that stress can reduce the power of our immune systems. A study in the U.K. exposed 266 people to a common cold virus and then tracked who became sick. 28.6% of those with few signs of stress caught the cold. However, the figure jumped to 42.4% for those who were under high stress.

Other studies show that women who have trouble coping with stress may be at risk of building up dangerous abdominal fat. A study at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, of 42 obese women found that those with abdominal fat (apple shaped) secreted more stress hormones than those who carry

extra weight on their hips (pear shaped). It is known that apple-shaped people are more at risk of heart disease.

Stress increases heart rate and blood pressure. It changes the inner lining of our blood vessels, making our blood more likely to clot. Stress may change the way cholesterol is handled by our blood vessels and, in doing so, may increase plaque formation.

A study of 5,872 pregnant women in Denmark showed that women who are under moderate to high stress in the last trimester are 1.2 to 1.75 times more likely to give birth prematurely.

### **Origins of Stress**

Stress can often originate from sources we hardly ever associate with it. Let me illustrate:

Imagine that you just bought your dream car. It is that Jaguar. You had to scrape everything you had to buy it. You wanted to take it for a spin. It is a sunny spring day. You turned the stereo on, the top down and cruise merrily on the interstate. Isn't life wonderful?

You suddenly hear screeching noises in front. On no! The drivers in front of you are all slamming on their brakes. You see that each car is coming within split seconds of rear ending the one in front.

Within seconds the stress of the situation enters your mind through your eyes and ears. Your mind or brain immediately takes over (Before you can even say Oh No! Not my new car!). The middle and lower part of your brain electrically triggers a massive fight or flight response.

Your legs slam on the brake. You grip the steering wheel and try to straighten it. Your body dumps sugars and fats into your bloodstream for quick energy and strength. Other chemicals released by the brain prepare your blood to clot more quickly, to reduce the possible blood loss in case of an anticipated accident. You feel your heart pounding in your chest and temples. Your brain is receiving more oxygen to sharpen your senses and coordination.

The loud screeches around you haven't stopped yet. In your rearview mirror, you see a car approaching your car fast. You know the driver won't be able to stop the car in time to avoid hitting your vehicle. You go through a sudden anxiety and helpless feeling. You cannot do anything about it. Your brain sends more chemicals to your bloodstream. These chemicals help you to keep alert for an extended period of time. Finally it all stopped. Thank God, you have escaped with minor injuries. But your brand new Jaguar is totalled!

What you had just undergone is how stress works and how we cope with it. This is an example of a stress that was triggered by events or stimuli from outside your body. Other examples of stress that results from outside events are job related stress (such as when your boss gives you unreasonable jobs, working with unreasonable customers), relationship induced stress (such as marital problems, death of a spouse, divorce), money problems (such as when all bills come due in January and you don't have money to pay for it), etc.

In the example cited above, when you think of the accident, you get stressed. Some people get a stress attack when they drive near the spot of the accident. This type of stress is called mind stressor. The origin of the stress, in this case, is within you.

You go home finally. You are so upset you cannot sleep. Your muscles are very tense. Now you start worrying about your inability to sleep or about your body aches and pains. This creates more stress. See how this is triggering a domino effect. If you don't do something about it soon enough you can die.

Stress can also originate from emotional and psychological causes. For example, thinking of such an accident or a pending IRS audit will make people anxious; many find it difficult to sleep. Then they worry about not getting enough sleep and how they will go to work without sleep. And so on. One stressful event leads to another and, if we don't control it, the domino effect kicks in.

Even joyous events, such as a wedding, a job promotion, buying a new home, or the birth of a child, can cause much stress. You also might get stressed out if you cannot achieve a particular goal or satisfy a certain wish. For instance, you may want very much to have a child but cannot conceive. Fertility tests can't elucidate any reasons for this, and you feel very frustrated-why is this happening to you? Certainly this is a very emotional issue-and one that you do not have much control over-that can cause much stress in your life.

Stress also exists in tandem with the pressure you feel when you perceive that negative consequences are attached to your actions. For instance, you might feel pressured to maintain a certain level of performance at work or else risk getting fired. If you find yourself thinking in this way, you should stop and consider whether the threat is real or if you are just being too hard on yourself. You might be able to control and even eliminate this kind of stress from your life.

Stress also stems from conflict, which is not always negative, for instance, a conflict could occur in having to choose between two positive goals of equal value, such as choosing between two excellent job offers. Or your conflict could involve a choice that has both a positive and negative outcome, such as you're getting married but it necessitates your moving across the country away from family and friends.

Numerous life events-such as: the death of a family member or friend, the loss of a job, buying a house or moving, and having a child, cause stress. Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe, developed a list of major life stressors. These are listed in descending order below, beginning with the most stressful event:

- Death of a spouse
- Divorce
- Marital separation
- Imprisonment
- Death of a close relative
- Personal injury or illness
- Marriage
- Fired from a job
- Marital reconciliation
- Retirement
- Illness of a relative
- Pregnancy
- Sexual problems
- Birth or adoption
- Business readjustment
- Change in financial status



- Death of a close friend
- Change to different work
- Increased arguments with spouse
- Mortgage or loan for major purchase
- Foreclosure on mortgage or loan
- Change in job responsibilities
- Child leaving home
- Problems with in-laws
- Outstanding personal achievement
- Spouse begins or stops work
- Begin or end school
- Change in living conditions
- Changing personal habits
- Problems with your boss
- Change in work hours/conditions
- Change in residence or school
- Recreation
- Church or social activities
- Mortgage or loan for smaller purchase
- Change in sleeping habits
- Change in family gatherings
- Change in eating habits
- Vacation
- Christmas
- Minor law violations

### **Our Body's Reaction to Stress (General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS))**

When a person experiences stress, the brain responds by initiating 1,400 different responses including the dumping of a variety of chemicals to our blood stream. This gives a momentary boost to do whatever needs to be done to survive. If left unchecked, however, the person can have a heart attack or stroke. Many people start drinking alcohol. They get depressed, find it difficult to sleep, experience chest pain. The body runs out of the immunity to fight diseases. So, very often, these persons die of disease such as cancer, pneumonia, etc. The stress will never be identified as the cause of the death. I call the stress the proxy killer. Some other disease always takes the blame for it.

Doctors call the body's reaction to stress as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). There are three stages to GAS.

In the first stage of GAS called **alarm reaction**, the body releases adrenaline and a variety of other psychological mechanisms to combat the stress and to stay in control. This is called *fight or flight response*. The muscles tense, the heart beats faster, the breathing and perspiration increases, the eyes dilate, the stomach may clench. Believe it or not, this is done by nature to protect you in case something bad happens. Once the cause of the stress is removed, the body will go back to normal.

If the cause for the stress is not removed, GAS goes to its second stage called **resistance or adaptation**. This is the body's response to long term protection. It secretes further hormones that increase blood sugar levels to sustain energy and raise blood pressure. The adrenal cortex (outer covering) produces

hormones called corticosteroids for this resistance reaction. Overuse by the body's defense mechanism in this phase eventually leads to disease. If this adaptation phase continues for a prolonged period of time without periods of relaxation and rest to counterbalance the stress response, sufferers become prone to fatigue, concentration lapses, irritability and lethargy as the effort to sustain arousal slides into negative stress.

The third stage of GAS is called **exhaustion**. In this stage, the body has run out of its reserve of body energy and immunity. Mental, physical and emotional resources suffer heavily. The body experiences "adrenal exhaustion". The blood sugar levels decrease as the adrenals become depleted, leading to decreased stress tolerance, progressive mental and physical exhaustion, illness and collapse.

The hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) chain of command has served humans well as a means of survival for thousands of years. However, for those suffering from chronic anxiety and depression this process malfunctions. Continual stress early in life disrupts the cycle. Instead of shutting off once the crisis is over, the process continues, with the hypothalamus continuing to signal the adrenals to produce cortisol. This increased cortisol production exhausts the stress mechanism, leading to fatigue and depression. Cortisol also interferes with serotonin activity, furthering the depressive effect.

Continually high cortisol levels lead to suppression of the immune system through increased production of interleukin-6, an immune-system messenger. This coincides with research findings indicating that stress and depression have a negative effect on the immune system. Reduced immunity makes the body more susceptible to everything from cold and flu to cancer. For example, the incidence of serious illness, including cancer, is significantly higher among people who have suffered the death of a spouse in the previous year. Fortunately, this immune-suppression process can be corrected with psychotherapy, medication, or any number of other positive influences that restore hope and a feeling of self-esteem. The ability of human beings to recover from adversity is remarkable.

Thus, very often, those under severe, prolonged stress may contract diseases related to immune deficiency and may even die of these diseases. The death does not come from stress itself. What happens is that the body loses all its resistance in its effort to ward off the stress. Thus the persons die of immune deficiency causes such as infection, cancer etc. So, it is very important that we recognize the cause for stresses and remove the causes to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Another result of stress is the clogging of the arteries by the fat and cholesterol released by the body during the attempt to fight stress. This may result in a heart attack or you may suffer a stroke by losing blood supply to the brain. Many people start drinking to combat the stress. Stress can also manifest itself into a number of diseases – depression, headaches, insomnia, ulcers, asthma, and more.

### **Early warning Signs of Stress**

- Menstrual problems
- Speech difficulties
- More impatient
- Headaches
- Infertility
- Ulcers

- Nail biting
- Grinding teeth
- Low blood sugar
- High blood sugar
- Need more sleep
- Tired but can't sleep
- Sudden weight loss
- Sudden weight gain
- Low blood pressure
- High blood pressure
- Lack of coordination
- Repeated influenza
- Repeated colds
- Muscle aches
- Hair loss
- Chest pain
- Forgetfulness
- Nervous talking
- Lower back pain
- Loss of appetite
- Increased appetite
- High cholesterol
- High triglycerides
- Excessive fatigue
- Gastric disturbance
- Withdraw from social life

### **Physical signs and symptoms of stress**

- Increased heart rate
- Pounding heart
- Elevated blood pressure
- Sweaty palms
- Tightness of the chest, neck, jaw, and back muscles
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Urinary hesitancy
- Trembling

- Twitching
- Stuttering and other speech difficulties
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sleep disturbances
- Fatigue
- Shallow breathing
- Dryness of the mouth or throat
- Susceptibility to minor illness
- Cold hands
- Itching
- Being easily startled
- Chronic pain and
- Dyspnoea.

### **Emotional signs and symptoms of stress**

- Irritability
- Angry outbursts
- Hostility
- Depression
- Jealousy
- Restlessness
- Withdrawal
- Anxiousness
- Diminished initiative
- Feelings of unreality or over-alertness
- Reduction of personal involvement with others
- Lack of interest
- Tendency to cry
- Being critical of others
- Self-deprecation
- Nightmares
- Impatience
- Decreased perception of positive
- Experience opportunities
- Narrowed focus
- Obsessive rumination
- Reduced self-esteem

- Insomnia
- Changes in eating habits and
- Weakened positive emotional response reflexes.

### **Cognitive/Perceptual Signs and Symptoms of Stress**

- Forgetfulness
- Preoccupation
- Blocking
- Blurred vision
- Errors in judging distance
- Diminished or exaggerated fantasy life
- Reduced creativity
- Lack of concentration
- Diminished productivity
- Lack of attention to detail
- Orientation to the past
- Decreased psychomotor reactivity and coordination
- Attention deficit
- Disorganization of thought
- Negative self-esteem
- Diminished sense of meaning in life
- Lack of control/need for too much control
- Negative self-statements and negative evaluation of experiences

### **Behavioural Signs and Symptoms of Stress**

- Increased smoking
- Aggressive behaviours (such as driving – road rage, etc.)
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Carelessness
- Under-eating
- Over-eating
- Withdrawal
- Listlessness
- Hostility
- Accident-proneness

- Nervous laughter
- Compulsive behaviour and
- Impatience.

## **Signs of Stress in The Workplace**

### **Stress Arousal Stage**

- Persistent irritability and anxiety
- Bruxism and/or Insomnia
- Occasional forgetfulness and/or inability to concentrate

### **Stress Resistance Stage**

- Absenteeism or tardiness for work
- Tired and fatigued for no reason
- Procrastination and indecision
- Social withdrawal with cynicism
- Resentful, indifferent, defiant
- Increased use of coffee, alcohol, tobacco, etc.

### **Severe Exhaustion Stage**

- Chronic sadness or depression
- Chronic mental and physical fatigue
- Chronic stress related illnesses (headache, stomach ache, bowel problems, etc.)
- Isolation, withdrawal, self-destructive thoughts

## **Long Term Implications of Stress**

Exposure to stress on a long-term basis can be debilitating both physically and mentally.

Under stress, the body produces an increase in the hormones adrenaline, noradrenaline and corticosteroids. In the short-term these hormones produce tense muscles, queasiness and an increase in breathing and heart rates. Long-term complaints that are stress related include:

- Allergies
- Anxiety and depression
- Digestive disorders
- Fatigue
- Headaches and migraine
- Heart disease

- High blood pressure
- Impotence and premature ejaculation in men
- Insomnia
- Irritable bladder
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Menstrual problems in women
- Mouth and peptic ulcers
- Muscular aches and pains
- Palpitations
- Panic attacks
- Eczema
- Ulcerative colitis

A number of other diseases including multiple sclerosis, diabetes and genital herpes can also be aggravated by stress.

#### **Possible Physical Disorders Caused By Or Exacerbated By Stress**

- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disorders
- Migraine and tension headaches
- Cancer
- Arthritis
- Respiratory disease
- Ulcers
- Colitis
- Muscle tension problems.

#### **Possible Emotional Disorders Caused By Or Exacerbated By Stress**

- Anxiety
- Panic attack
- Depression
- Adjustment disorders.

#### **Possible Behavioural Disorders Caused By Or Exacerbated By Stress**

- Conduct disorders
- Eating disorders
- Alcoholism
- Hyperchondricism

#### **Recent Research Findings: Stress and Aging**

Recent research results suggest that long-term exposure to adrenal stress hormones may boost brain aging in later life.

Writing in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, scientists at the University of Kentucky in Lexington looked at the results of memory tests taken by elderly patients with high levels of the stress hormone cortisol, released by adrenal glands when the body is stressed. That high-level group scored lower than others with reduced levels of the hormone, researchers say.

The level of hormone released apparently affects the total volume of the brain's hippocampus -- a major source of recall and memory function -- in later life. Those with high levels had a hippocampus volume 14% less than those with lower levels, researchers found.

The study results suggest "chronic stress may accelerate hippocampal deterioration", said the researchers.

### **Recent Research Findings: Job Satisfaction vs. Sick Leave and /or Absenteeism**

Researchers at England's Manchester University say if you feel you are underpaid and are fed up, you are a prime candidate for a pain in the back. Their study is based on interviews with 1,600 people, half of whom were employed.

Doctors say there was little difference in the risk of backache between those who had work and those who did not. But those who were unhappy about their job status, whether in work or currently unemployed, were twice as likely to suffer from the ailment.

Workers unhappy about their salaries were three times more likely to go for medical help or simply take time off work than those satisfied with the money they were getting. The researchers say the study refutes the myth that those who suffer from pain in the lower back are just work-shy.

Tolerance of stress levels differs from person to person. Some people are able to sustain a highly stressful lifestyle or adapt themselves to a series of stressful events easily. However, many others succumb more readily to a variety of stress-related illnesses and even accidental injuries.

### **The Effects of Stress on Systems in the Body**

#### **Central Nervous System**

- Anxiety, depression, and fatigue

#### **Cardiovascular System**

- Impaired heart function; can cause angina
- Constriction of the peripheral blood vessels, thereby raising blood pressure

#### **Digestive System**

- Stomach upsets, even ulcers
- Diarrhea
- Gastritis
- Peptic ulcers
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome



- Colitis
- Canker sores in the mouth

### **Respiratory System**

- Asthma

### **Musculoskeletal System**

- Tension in skeletal muscles and joints, leading to backache and muscular aches and pains
- Predisposition to arthritis; degenerative diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis

### **Immune System**

- Weakened defenses, with lowered resistance to infections
- Viral illnesses (often due to a depleted immune defense system)
- Allergies
- Malignant cell changes; cancer

### **Endocrine System**

- Menstrual disorders
- Thyroid disorders (underactive, overactive, thyroiditis)
- Adrenal hypofunction

### **Reproductive System**

- Infertility
- Premature ejaculation
- Impotence

### **Skin**

- Eczema
- Psoriasis
- Rashes

### **General**

- Tissue degeneration
- Acceleration of aging process

### **Decision Making Under Stress**

- The greater the stress, the greater the likelihood that a decision-maker will choose a risky alternative.
- During crisis, the ability of a group to handle difficult tasks requiring intensely focused attention is decreased.
- The greater the stress, the greater the tendency to make a premature choice of alternatives for a correct

response.

- The greater the stress, the less likely that individuals can tolerate "ambiguity".
- Under increasing stress, there is a decrease in productive thoughts and an increase in distracting thoughts.
- The greater the stress, the greater the distortion in perception of threat and poor judgment often occurs.
- The greater the fear, frustration and hostility aroused by a "crisis", the greater the tendency to aggression and escape behaviours.
- In a stressful situation (whether real or perceived stress), only immediate survival goals are considered. Long term considerations are sacrificed for short term goals.

### **Good Side of Stress**

Despite its bad reputation, stress is one of our bodies' best defense systems. When we sense danger-such as a car coming at us-our bodies release adrenaline and other chemicals that make us more alert, raise our blood pressure and increase our strength, speed and reaction time. This positive effect of stress can be harnessed for short term productivity goals. Procrastinators work very efficiently in the last minute to get things done. This is an example of working under stress. Similarly, if you feel that your business may have to be shut down unless something is done, you will work extra hard to meet the goal. It has similar effect as a life threatening danger. What we need to learn to do is to make sure that this behaviour does not continue for extended periods of time to affect our health.

### **Coping With Stress: Intervention Strategies And Their Applications**

- Behavioural Rehearsal
- Cognitive Restructuring/Reframing
- Stress Inoculation
- Systematic Desensitization
- Anger Management
- Thought Stopping Techniques
- Control and Perception of Control
- Self-Esteem Enhancement
- Goal Setting
- Active (Reflective) Listening
- Strategies for Coping with Deprivational Stress (Lack of Stimulation and Challenge)
- Modification of Life-style (Nutrition, Sleep, etc.)

It is very important that we learn how to control stress. I have good news and bad news about controlling stress.

The bad news is: We create our own stress.

The good news is: We create our own stress.

### **Coping With Stress: Remedial Actions**

Remedial action to control stress falls into three categories:

- Change your thinking
- Change your behaviour
- Change your lifestyle

#### **Change Your Thinking**

- Reframing
- Positive thinking

#### **Change Your Behaviour**

- Be Assertive
- Get Organized / Time Management
- Ventilation
- Humour
- Diversion and Distraction

#### **Change Your Lifestyle**

- Diet
- Exercise
- Drink Water
- Pet Therapy
- Meditation
- Deep Breathing
- Nature Walks and Imagery
- Hydrotherapy: A Warm, Hot Bath
- Music Therapy
- Sleep
- Leisure
- Pacing

#### **Reframing**

Reframing is a technique used to change the way we look at things in order to feel better about them. The key to reframing is to recognize that there are many ways to interpret the same situation (i.e. the situation such as is the glass half full or half empty). Learn to get rid of negative thoughts or feeling that can result in stresses. There are three simple things you can do.

1. Spend more time focusing on the positive things in your life – Accentuate the positive.
2. Spend less time thinking negatively – Eliminate the negative
3. Enjoy each moment – Latch on to the affirmative.

For example if you have got into an accident, you may thank God that you have escaped with only minor injuries. You could have been killed, or worse, you could have been maimed – lost eyes, feet, hands, etc. You could have been paralyzed. You could have been in a comma and become a vegetable.

Another way to rationalize is to believe in coincidences and what it can do. For example, Redfield in *Celestial Prophecies* talks about how you can learn from each event.

If you are religious or believe in spirituality, that can be a great coping mechanism. For example, religion teaches us that everything happens for a purpose and it is the will of God. You just leave the things to God to straighten out. The result is that your brain does not have to pump out adrenaline to your bloodstream constantly. You feel relaxed. There is no long term stress any more.

### **Positive Thinking**

Avoid negative thoughts of powerlessness, dejection, failure, and despair. Chronic stress make us vulnerable to negative suggestion. Learn to focus on positives.

- Focus on your strengths.
- Learn from the stress you are under.
- Look for opportunities in the stressful situation.
- Seek out the positive – make a change.

Here is one way to get out of the destructive negative thinking habits. All possible situations we face can be classified into two categories:

One: Situations where we can do something about to change the outcome. In this case, don't just sit there and worry about it. Go ahead and take care of it. You have control. Procrastination is the root cause for many stressful episodes.

Second: Situations where you have no control on the outcome. In this case sitting and worrying will not make any difference on the outcome. So, don't worry about it. Let the situation resolve by itself; you cannot do anything about this anyway.

Dean Ornish talked about how our culture teaches us to dwell on the high stress activities. He gave this example: Two Arabs took their Mercedes car out for a spin in the desert. Although there probably was not another car in the 10-mile radius, these two guys managed to have a head-on collision. Now, if this happened in the USA or many other parts of the world, the drivers will be getting out of the car and showering each other with abuses, threats and remind the other person how stupid he was to cause the

accident. What did the Arabs do after they had their cars totalled? They rush out of their cars, run to each other; hugs and says, "This is great! Allah, wanted us to meet."

### **Stress IS a choice.**

Every day, I can CHOOSE to be happy or sad, stressed or relaxed, etc.

If things are getting hectic I ask myself, "What can I do about it today, right now?"

Sometimes, the answer is "nothing." When that happens, I just try to go on about the business of taking care of what I CAN do, today, right now.

If I have to stand in line, I can choose to watch the folks around me, look at the decorations, balance my chequebook, read a little of the paperback in my pocket, talk to a little child or old person-or I can silently bitch about standing in line until my blood pressure goes up and my feet hurt. It is a CHOICE!

The key to moving on is forgiveness--of self and others. Although it is a waste of energy to worry about future events over which we have no control, it is human nature to do so. Plan and prioritize as best you can, and then be easy on yourself. The future hasn't happened, and the past is not going to happen again. In the words of Ram Dass, "Be here now". You can start by recognizing and accepting when a situation is beyond your control.

And keep on practicing. Pythagoras said, "Choose always the way that seems the best, however rough it may be. Custom will soon render it easy and agreeable". Just as patterns and habits can trap us when we let them, we can make them our well-worn path to happiness and satisfaction.

The "Serenity Prayer" of theologian Rheinhold Niebuhr, adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous, reflects this so well:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change;  
 courage to change the things I can;  
 and the wisdom to know the difference-  
 living one day at a time;  
 enjoying one moment at a time;  
 accepting hardships as the pathway to peace.

Another important sense is the sense of humour. In breathing new life into the old wisdom that "laughter is the best medicine," the late Norman Cousins transformed his own experiences into a message of healing and hope for millions.

Humour is a very important therapy for reducing stress. We will cover this in detail later.

### **Be Assertive**

Learn to be assertive. Non-assertiveness allows others to walk all over you. You surrender the control of the situation to others. Being assertive means standing up for your personal rights and expressing your thoughts, feelings and beliefs directly, honestly and spontaneously in ways that don't infringe on the rights of others. Assertive people respect themselves and others. They take responsibility for their actions and choices. In case of failure, they will get disappointed; but their self-confidence remain intact. Expressing negative feelings at the appropriate time avoids the buildup of resentment. This will help you manage your stress more successfully.

An example will illustrate this point. An elderly patient, Karen, was very frustrated because she had no time to do anything for herself. It seemed, she was looking after for others all the time. After participating in the assertiveness training, Karen started analyzing what activities gave her the most happiness. She came to the conclusion that a Tuesday morning bridge game she played with her friends was one of them. One Tuesday, Karen was preparing to host the card game, when the telephone rang. It was her daughter. The daughter had a very important meeting to go to that morning; but her babysitter called in sick. She had no one to take care of her son. She wanted to know if she could bring her son to Karen's home so that she can go to her meeting she could not miss?

Karen felt her pulse going up. She was expecting her friends at any moment. It was too late to cancel in the card game. Having the grandson around would prevent her from enjoying the game. It would also be distracting and annoying to the other members of the team. On the other hand, what kind of mom is she, if she were to refuse to help her daughter when she needed her? Then Karen thought of her assertiveness training.

Karen asked the daughter, "Why don't you take your son to the day care centre?" There is one very close to her home. The daughter replied that she was broke and did not have any money to pay for the daycare. Karen offered to loan her the money so that she could take her son to the day care centre. The situation was resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

### **Get Organized / Time Management**

One of the most common cause of stress is being disorganized at work or at home. Here are some tips to get organized:

- Keep a diary.
- Write lists of tasks to accomplish, prioritize them and schedule when you will complete them.

Writing down objectives, duties and activities helps to make them more tangible and do-able. Having a schedule also helps you provide the facts when your boss asks you to perform unreasonable tasks. They may have no idea that you are overwhelmed with work and the additional responsibilities cannot be accomplished unless something else goes. Again, prioritizing tasks helps you to minimize the stressful situations.

### **Make A List and Prioritize**

So many projects, so little time. To beat stress, you have to learn to prioritize. At the start of each day, pick the single most important task to complete, then finish it. If you're a person who makes to-do lists, never write one with more than five items. That way, you're more likely to get all the things done, and you'll feel a greater sense of accomplishment and control. Then you can go ahead and make a second

five-item list. While you're at it, make a list of things that you can delegate to co-workers and family members.

### **Learn To Say No When Appropriate**

Sometimes you have to learn to draw the line. Stressed-out people often can't assert themselves. Instead of saying 'I don't want to do this' or 'I need some help,' they do it all themselves. Then they have even more to do."

#### **Give your boss a choice.**

Say 'I'd really like to take this on, but I can't do that without giving up something else. Which of these things would you like me to do? Most bosses can take the hint. The same strategy works at home, with your spouse, children, relatives and friends. If you have trouble saying no, start small. Tell your hubby to make his own sandwich. Or tell your daughter to find another ride home from volleyball practice.

#### **Pad your schedule**

Realize that nearly everything will take longer than you anticipate. By allotting yourself enough time to accomplish a task, you cut back on anxiety. In general, if meeting deadlines is a problem, always give yourself 20% more time than you think you need to do the task.

### **Other Tips on Time Management**

- Look at the way you do things. Are you a perfectionist? If so, try to decide which tasks truly require meticulous attention to detail and which can be done casually.
- Make a realistic list of what you need to accomplish in a given day, with the most important things at the top. Tackle them one at a time, and don't start a second until you have finished the first.
- Plan your day to include work breaks which physically or mentally take you away from the office. Try not to bring office work home.
- When you have several things to accomplish, set priorities and postpone less important tasks. Learn to delegate matters that cannot be put off. Deal with concerns on a day-at-a-time basis.
- Control the timing of stressful events. Try not to make major decisions when you are overtired or anxious.

### **Ventilation**

People who keep things for themselves without sharing with their friends or loved ones carry a considerable and unnecessary burden. Share your problems and concern with others. Develop a support system of relatives, colleagues or friends to talk to when you are upset or worried. When you are frustrated write it down. After you have vent the frustration, destroy the writing so that it is forgotten. Rereading the journal will reawaken the frustration and anger. So, do not keep it.

Seek social support. Studies have shown that close, positive relationships with others facilitate good health and morale. One reason for this is that support from family and friends serves as a buffer to cushion the impact of stressful events. Talking out problems and expressing tensions can be incredibly helpful. If things really get bad, seek help from a therapist, counsellor, or clergyman.

## Transference

Hold a rock in your hand and envision all your stress and anxiety flowing through your fingers and palm into the rock. After you "feel" that the bad stuff has been transferred to the rock, throw the rock away or bury it or toss it into running water. You can also "wash" the rock and rinse away the "bad stuff" and reuse the rock.

## Humour Therapy

Humour is a wonderful stress-reducer and antidote to upsets. It is clinically proven to be effective in combating stress, although the exact mechanism is not known. Experts say a good laugh relaxes tense muscles, speeds more oxygen into your system and lowers your blood pressure. So tune into your favourite sitcom on television. Read a funny book. Call a friend and chuckle for a few minutes. It even helps to force a laugh once in a while. You'll find your stress melting away almost instantly. Americans were attracted to humour from the stories of Norman Cousins, who had successfully overcome cancer by watching comedy shows on television. These days, there are organized humour meetings even in places like India where laughing in public is not considered good manner.

Dr. Lee Berk and fellow researcher Dr. Stanley Tan at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, has produced carefully controlled studies showing that the experience of laughter lowers serum cortisol levels, increases the amount of activated T lymphocytes, increases the number and activity of natural killer cells, and increases the number of T cells that have helper/ suppresser receptors. In short, **laughter stimulates the immune system, off-setting the immunosuppressive effects of stress.**

We know that, during stress, the adrenal gland releases corticosteroids (quickly converted to cortisol in the blood stream) and that elevated levels of these have an immunosuppressive effect. Berk's research demonstrates that laughter can lower cortisol levels and thereby protect our immune system.

**The emotions and moods we experience directly effect our immune system.** A sense of humour allows us to perceive and appreciate the incongruities of life and provides moments of joy and delight. These positive emotions can create neurochemical changes that will buffer the immunosuppressive effects of stress.

In his book, 'Stress without Distress,' Selye suggested that a person's interpretation of stress is not dependent solely on an external event, but also depends upon the perception of the event and the meaning he or she gives it. So, **how you look at a situation determines if you will respond to it as threatening or challenging.**

Humour gives us a different perspective on our problems. If we can make light out of the situation, it is no longer threatening to us. We already discounted its effect. With such an attitude of detachment, we feel a sense of self-protection and control in our environment. Bill Cosby is fond of saying, "If you can laugh at it, you can survive it."

It's sometimes difficult to force a laugh in tense situations. But that's precisely when you need it most. One trick for finding humour in the worst of situations is to blow things absolutely, ridiculously out of proportion. When your scenario reaches the point of absurdity, you begin to smile. The situation is put in perspective. Now you can calm down.



I have recently attended a talk and a workshop conducted by Dr. Paul McGhee, who specializes in humour as a stress remedy. A belly laugh is really good for you. It relieves muscular tension, improves breathing, and regulates the heart beat. Watch comedy shows and laugh. Or attend comedy shows. Read comics or humour books. Share funny episodes with your spouse so that both can relieve stress as well improve communication between the two of you.

### **Hydrotherapy: A Warm, Hot Bath**

Hot baths can do more than keep you clean. It has been found that warm baths (water temperature between 100 to 102 degree F (40°C)) not only relax the muscles but help provide some quiet time as well. So when you need to escape, fill the tub, lie back, and relax.

Soak in a hot bath with Epsom salt. It is a great stress buster.

There is nothing that calms me more than a tub of hot water filled with bath oil and scented bubble bath. Turn on the radio and add soothing background music.

Generally, heat quiets and soothes the body, slowing down the activity of internal organs. Cold, in contrast, stimulates and invigorates, increasing internal activity. If you are experiencing tense muscles and anxiety from your stress, a hot shower or bath is in order. If you are feeling tired and stressed out, you might want to try taking a warm shower or bath followed by a short, invigorating cold shower to help stimulate your body and mind. Experiment with different water temperatures and durations in the bath or shower to determine what water method works best for you. Remember, the goal is to use hydrotherapy to achieve a state of comfort, relaxation, and refreshment.

Water seems to have special powers in getting rid of stress and rejuvenating our body. It affects the skin and muscles. It calms the lungs, heart, stomach, and endocrine system by stimulating nerve reflexes on the spinal cord.

When you submerge yourself in a bath, a pool, or a whirlpool, you experience a kind of weightlessness. Your body is relieved from the constant pull of gravity. Water also has a hydrostatic effect. It has a massage-like feeling as the water gently kneads your body. Water, in motion, stimulates touch receptors on the skin, boosting blood circulation and releasing tight muscles.

The more the water is in motion, higher is its stress-relieving benefits. In a study of 40 persons at University of Minnesota, 85% of the participants preferred a whirlpool bath to a still bath. Only whirlpool was effective in reducing the participants' reactivity to stress although both still and whirlpool baths were effective in reducing anxiety.

**Herbal baths** can be particularly soothing when you are experiencing a period of stress.

### **Self-Hypnosis**

Hypnosis involves entering an altered state of consciousness in which all concentration is focused on a single objective or image, with all other stimuli blocked out. Many people think that hypnosis is something that a hypnotist imposes on his or her subject, or they confuse it with a sleeplike state. Others think they cannot be hypnotized. Anyone who can lose him or herself totally in an engrossing book or

movie or become so absorbed in a task that they are oblivious to their surroundings is actually practicing a form of self-hypnosis. Once a person learns self-hypnosis, he or she can use it to relieve tension and feelings of stress or anxiety.

### **Imagery / Guided Imagery**

Imagine that you are a feather floating in the air. You become more and more relaxed as you drift downward toward the ground. You finally glide to the ground, gently and softly touching down. As you're lying there, all stress has left your body, and you feel totally and completely relaxed. Practice this imagery for two to five minutes three times a day.

If you're stressed out from work, try this imagery as you leave your job at the end of the day. Imagine that your stress is liquefying and running out of your body. With each step, you leave on the ground a coloured footprint or impression that represents your stress. As you walk farther away from your job, the footprints begin to fade, and any stress that you felt when you left work diminishes.

### **Kinesiology**

There are specific techniques for stress reduction, emotional stress release and relief from anxieties, fears and phobias. Treatment offered may include:

- Vitamin B supplements.
- Checking the endocrine and immune systems for any nutritional deficiencies.
- Providing adrenal support and nutrition for stress.
- Checking the atlas and sacrum for lesions.
- Tests for food sensitivities and the monitoring of grain consumption.
- Regular kinesiology balancing.

### **Massage**

Stress results in tense neck and shoulder muscles, leading to stiffness, headaches and even more stress. You can stop the cycle with a 15-minute Hellerwork self-massage. Do the massage every day, even if you're not feeling stressed. This is a good preventive measure.

Massage helps to relax the mind, body and spirit, providing time and space for self, and a feeling of peace, calm and well being. It allows the nervous system to normalize itself, and may reduce many stress-related conditions, such as palpitations, negative emotional feelings and raised blood pressure.

### **Meditation**

Meditation and Relaxation Response can help combat stress and revitalize the mind. First choose a word or phrase—such as, *peace or one*. Then sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes, relax your muscles, and allow yourself to breathe slowly and naturally. As you exhale, repeat the word or phrase. After doing this for 10 to 20 minutes once or twice a day, you may notice your stress drifting away along with your exhalations.

### **Deep Breathing**

Deep breathing infuses the blood with extra oxygen and also stimulates the body to release tranquilizing endorphins. It is one of the simplest yet most effective stress management techniques. You can do it anywhere, anytime, and it becomes even more effective with practice.

### **Mind/Body**

- Exhale and breathe deeply.
- Drop your shoulders, relax, and rotate shoulders in small circles. Breathe deeply and exhale.
- Pray, meditate, and surrender.
- See a comedy and laugh.
- Adopt a pet.
- Listen to calm, peaceful music.
- Take a walk.
- Do progressive relaxation routines and meditations
- Talk to a friend or counsellor.
- Do yoga.
- Tai chi chuan
- Biofeedback
- Psychotherapy
- Go fishing.

### **Naturopathy**

Naturopathy is excellent for treating stress, including psychotherapy, relaxation techniques, herbal and homeopathic support, and osteopathic soft tissue treatments where appropriate. Supplements of vitamins and minerals may be advised as these are used up more quickly when the body is under stress.

### **Nutrition**

Balanced nutrition is essential to maintaining overall good health, but it also can affect your capacity to cope with stress. When you are going through a period of stress, you need more of all nutrients, particularly the B vitamins, which affect the nervous system, and calcium, which is needed to counteract the lactic acid your tense muscles produce. Likewise, if you are lacking nutrients, your body will not be equipped to handle stress effectively.

Eat a variety of foods to ensure that you consume all of the forty to sixty nutrients you need to stay healthy. These include vitamins, minerals, amino acids (from proteins), essential fatty acids (from vegetable oil and animal fat), and energy from carbohydrates, protein, and fat. While most foods contain more than one nutrient, no single food provides adequate amounts of all nutrients.

Try to maintain a diet of mostly whole (unprocessed) foods. Stay away from caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate), which causes nervousness and inhibits sleep if too much is ingested. Caffeine causes a fight-or-flight response in your body and uses up your reserves of the B vitamins, which are important in coping with stress. Alcohol also depletes your body's B vitamins, and can disrupt sleep and impair your judgment or clarity of thought. Avoid sugar. It provides no essential nutrients and can cause an immediate "high" followed by a prolonged "low."

Studies have shown that the body depletes its stores of nutrients when under stress, mainly protein and the B vitamins as well as vitamins C and A. A deficiency of magnesium, which helps muscles relax, has been linked to "Type A" or high-stress personalities. If you are under prolonged stress or are at risk for hypertension, consume foods high in potassium, such as orange juice, squash, potatoes, apricots, limes, bananas, avocados, tomatoes, and peaches. You also should increase your intake of calcium, which is found in yogurt, cheese, tofu, and chick-peas.

If you find that you have difficulty managing stress and often feel fatigued or stressed out, you might want to examine your diet for deficiencies in certain nutrients. If you are deficient in certain nutrients, you will need to alter your diet or take supplements.

Since every person is unique, nutritional needs vary to some degree. It will probably take several months to change your diet and establish healthy eating habits. Experimenting and taking the time to reform your eating will have very positive immediate and long-term effects. Choose foods that you enjoy and try to make meals pleasurable times. Eat a relaxed meal. Continue your healthy diet and supplements even after the period of stress has passed so that your body will be best prepared to cope with the next stressful situation you encounter. The goal is to maintain maximum health with good nutrition, exercise, and active stress management.

### **Osteopathy**

Osteopathy is a touch therapy, and, just like massage or aromatherapy, it uses a fine sense of touch and relaxation to achieve some of the required results with patients who are in pain or overstressed. The muscles at the back of the skull that connect the spine to the head can become very tense and tight as we become stressed. This can lead to headaches or neck pains, as well as pain in the shoulders and back.

### **Naturopathy**

Naturopathy is excellent for treating stress, including psychotherapy, relaxation techniques, herbal and homeopathic support, and osteopathic soft tissue treatments where appropriate. Supplements of vitamins and minerals may be advised as these are used up more quickly when the body is under stress.

### **Positive Thoughts, Positive Feelings**

Thoughts cause feelings, and the wrong kinds of thoughts can cause stressful feelings.

We can look at the same event different ways. One is in the optimistic way and the other is pessimistically. It is the age old debate of whether to look at the glass as half full or as half empty.

It helps if you can learn to look at the good things in life rather than the ugly. For example, if you got into a car accident and totalled your car, you can sit there and feel sorry for yourself, or angry for losing the car. These are all self-defeating. On the other hand, you can thank god that you were not killed or, worse yet, maimed in the car accidents. When you look at life's events like that you will have something to smile at every event and that is the power of positive living.

Robert Schuller, the author of "Tough times never last. Tough people do!" gives the following guidelines in looking at problems in the proper perspective:

1. ***Every Living Human Being Has Problems.***

Perhaps you are unhappy with your work. Isn't it good that you have a job rather than being unemployed? Many people have the mistaken notion that successful people do not have any problems. It is not true. Success tends to breed its own set of problems.

Everyone has problems. A problem-free life is an illusion – a mirage in the desert. Accept the fact that everyone has problems. This will help you to move on with your life rather than sitting and feeling pity for yourself.

2. ***Every Problem Has A Limited Life Span***

Every mountain has a peak and every valley has a low point. Similarly, life has its ups and downs. No one is up all the time or down all the time. Problems do get resolved in the long term. They don't last forever. History teaches that every problem has a limited life span. Your problems will not live forever; but you will! Storms are followed by sunshine. Winter is followed by spring. Your problems will get resolved given enough time.

3. ***Every Problem Holds Positive Possibilities***

There are two sides to every coin. What may be a problem for one could be interesting opportunity to someone else. Hospitals are there because people get sick; garages are there because cars do break down; lawyers are there because people get in trouble with the law occasionally. Every cloud has a silver lining.

4. ***Every Problem Will Change You***

When we meet problems head on in life, they leave their indelible mark on us. The experience could make you better or worse. It is up to you. What is certain is that problems never leave us the same way they found us. We will change.

For example, let us say that you lost your job. You can sit and feel sorry for yourself. Or you can be aggressive and decide to do something about it. You are better than them. You want to show them what a mistake they did in firing you. You have to be fired before you can be fired up. That may be wake-up call you needed before embarking on a successful mission. Again, for every problem, there is a positive and negative side. Look for the positive side and work on it.

5. ***You Can Choose What Your Problem Will Do To You***

You may not be able to control the problems, but you certainly can control your reaction or response to the problem. You can turn your pain into profanity or into poetry. The choice is up to you. You can control the reaction even if you cannot control the problem. You control the effect of the problem by controlling the reaction. It can make you tough or tender. It can make you better or bitter. It all depends on you.

6. ***There Is A Negative And A Positive Reaction To Every Problem***

Tough people, according to Schuller, have learned to choose the most positive reaction in managing problems. The key is that they manage their problems. Remember, we have little control on problems, we have control on how we react and manage the problem. Positive people chose to react positively to their predicaments.

Do you automatically interpret silence on the part of your spouse to mean anger when it could just as easily mean fatigue? Do you blame yourself when a sudden downpour drenches your wash on the line? Do you dwell on the few times your boss criticized your performance and ignore the innumerable times s/he's praised you?

We all fall into the negative thinking rut from time to time. We badger ourselves with "should haves" and lose sight of the fact that "good" and "bad" in life is rarely black and white.

All-or-nothing thinking can lead to anxiety, depression, feelings of inferiority, perfectionism and anger. We are our worst enemies. We tend to put a higher standard for us compared to others. We tend to criticize ourselves for our miscues rather than being happy for the accomplishments. Allow yourself to fail now and then. It's all part of being human.

### **Reflexology**

An overall reflexology session, touching all of the major points of the hands and feet, will help relax you and ward off stress. To deal with extra tension, pay special attention to the diaphragm, the spine and the pituitary, parathyroid, thyroid and adrenal gland reflexes.

### **Relaxation And Meditation**

Any of the relaxation and meditation techniques, such as mindfulness meditation, autogenics, progressive relaxation and stretching, will relieve stress. Find the technique that works best for you by trial and error and stick with it.

Meditation is something very few really understand. It involves Quieting The Mind. The less sensory input, the better – Total Darkness, Total Quiet, Total Lack of Sensory Input. Many would say this would drive them crazy, that is a distinct possibility, since it is something we are not accustomed to. The fact is, it must be approached with caution and discipline.

In the meditative state one also becomes Super Aware of everything, far from being asleep they are totally Awake. The trap and flaw of many meditation techniques is they require conscious effort which is completely counter-productive, only those that incorporate removing all conscious effort and desire should be considered.

### **Breathing**

Breathing exercises are the simplest path to inner calm. Fifteen minutes a day can achieve a significant reduction in your stress-related symptoms. Breathing is one function that is controlled by both the voluntary and involuntary nervous system, forming a bridge between our inner and outer selves. There are a number of relaxation techniques that focus on breath control. One, a good sleep inducer, involves focusing on the area below the navel. Sit quietly, watching the breath as it goes in and out of your abdomen. Do this for five to ten minutes. Breath is the most natural object of meditation and an easier

focus for attention than thought. If you find yourself having disturbing thoughts, instead of trying to stop them, try to simply move your attention back to your breath.

The Progressive Relaxation exercise is particularly good at bedtime. Lie down and take several deep breaths. Then breathe in slowly as you tense the muscles in your feet. Hold your breath and the tension for a count of 20. You may not make it to 20 at the beginning. Then, slowly breathe out, releasing the muscles until they are totally relaxed. Repeat the process with your calf muscles, and work your way up, finishing with your facial muscles. Close with a few more deep breaths. Unless, of course, you are already asleep.

### **Meditation, Biofeedback, and Neurofeedback**

Meditation, biofeedback, and neurofeedback are all powerful techniques for training the mind to distinguish between false alarms and signals of true danger. More directed in their approach than conventional psychotherapy, they tame the restless mind, helping you to deal with stress, anxiety, and insomnia. They help to promote relaxation and balance on a levels--mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual-which is the starting point for all healing.

### **Learning To Like Ourselves**

The messages we receive from other people and from the media are largely negative. Bad news gets more attention than good news.

This seeps into our day-to-day lives as well. If we admire some aspect of ourselves we are seen to be conceited. If we say negative things about ourselves, people will console us.

We were rewarded for misery since our childhood; we are offered candy or hugs when we are unhappy. No rewards for our laughter and happiness! Some people like the attention and sympathy. So they purposely distort the facts and tell others all the troubles and miseries they have. After some time, their sub-conscious mind will start believing what they are saying and start acting accordingly. Soon they will have reasons to be unhappy for real. Do not get into this trap. See the positive rather than the negative in you.

Optimism and a positive attitude promote good health. Research shows that the optimistic persons have healthier immune system. Pessimistic expectations breed negative experiences.

How can you incorporate these into your own life? Be grateful. No matter how bad things might appear, you can see a silver lining. There is someone who has worse problems. Misery loves companions. Reach out to such people. This will help both parties.

Make a conscious effort towards finding good things. As far as possible stay away from pessimistic people. Don't get drawn into other people's misery. Catch yourself if you are whining and stop. Your stress levels will benefit immediately.

We all can make a deliberate choice between being negative or positive, happy or unhappy. Say and believe in the following:

■ *You are unique.*

- *There is no one like you in the whole world.*
- *Enjoy and cherish the feeling that you are special.*
- *Remember your successes when you are feeling defeated.*

### **Taking Time To Do The Things We Enjoy**

If you feel tired and jaded and have little enthusiasm for life, it is possible that you aren't making time for fun. We all get into a grinding routine of getting up, going to work, coming home, doing more work, going to bed.

Leisure time is vital in order to keep enthusiasm for the other aspects of our lives. We have a right to this free time but often feel guilty about taking it. Work off tensions by gardening, pursuing a hobby, or joining a club.

Take time to be alone, doing nothing.

Burnout is a mental, physical, and emotional condition that is often not recognized until we are in real danger; it is often the result of "all work, no play". These are some of the symptoms:

- Being permanently tired.
- Having no enthusiasm for work, family, or friends.
- Finding it difficult to laugh and getting upset very easily.
- Having a feeling of impending doom hanging over you.
- Suffering from backaches, headaches, and stomach aches.
- Inability to sleep; or waking up in the morning feeling anxious and as tired as when you went to bed.

If some or all of the above apply, then you may be suffering from burnout. You may need to get professional help from a trained counsellor or therapist to overcome burnout.

### **Learning To Share Our Feelings**

There are a number of steps you can do to share our feelings with someone.

- Find someone such as a good friend who you can trust and with whom you can share your feelings.
- Join a support group.
- Open up and be genuine when you talk to your friends. Don't keep a 'stiff upper lip'.
- If necessary cry. Crying is a great tension reliever. (Yes, adults do cry too and it is OK for men to cry. Don't keep it within you.)

Support groups work because you can put your problems in perspective. Others also have problems and, in fact, it may be worse than yours. In support groups, people can use their experiences to help others, and be helped in the process.

Make sure that the support groups do not get you into sympathy seeking and whining and complaining.

### **Awareness and Self-Awareness**



We have many ways of reconnecting to our inner and outer selves. We must only stay still long enough to allow it to happen. In the words of Jon Kabat-Zinn, author of 'Wherever you go, there you are:'

"Letting go means just what it says. It's an invitation to cease clinging to anything – whether it be an idea, a thing, an event, a particular time, a view, or desire. It is a conscious decision to release with full acceptance into the stream of present moments as they are unfolding. To let go means to give up coercing, resisting, or struggling, in exchange for something more powerful and wholesome which comes out of allowing things to be as they are."

Watching your breath as it goes in and out is an excellent starting place for this practice of letting go. As you allow your body to "breathe itself," interesting things start to happen. Gradually, the "out there" becomes "in here" and the "in here" becomes "out there". "I" becomes "we," and "we" become "one" as boundaries fade and disappear. For a moment, we slip into that space between the worlds. We have shifted from human "doing" to human "being".

Even done briefly, this awareness exercise is amazingly refreshing, revitalizing, and awakening in more ways than one. Our habitual patterns become clearer, and we start to see choices in our perceptions and responses. Reality is not what it used to be! We begin to notice that maybe the boss didn't mean to be critical, he was just having a rough day. Or the attractive guy or woman in the next office is smiling at you and meaning it, and not just being polite as you had previously thought. By slowing down, you have practiced a sharpening of your inner and outer perceptions, with better understanding of yourself and those around you. Your intuition may be sharper. You may even find yourself saying 'no' to an unwanted assignment, and not even feel guilty about it.

### **The Way to Inner Peace**

Transcendental meditation (TM), yoga, Zen-they all work by inducing the relaxation response. Relaxation Response is a term first coined by Herbert Benson, M.D., at Harvard Medical School.

Relaxation response shuts off the distracting, stressful, anxiety-producing aspects of what is commonly called the fight-or-flight response.

A person experiencing the relaxation response turns off all the hormones and behaviours that are making him nervous. Basically any kind of meditation will produce it, though TM, yoga, and Zen require formal instruction and a good amount of self-discipline.

Dr. Benson suggests the following basic program for eliciting the response.

One, pick a focus word or phrase ("peace," for example) that is firmly rooted in your personal belief system.

Two, sit quietly, close your eyes, and relax.

And three, start repeating your focus word in time with your breathing, each time you exhale. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes.

### **Spiritual Needs**

Your feelings of stress or anxiety may be your mind's way of telling you to attend to your spiritual needs. The inspiration gained from spirituality is an essential part of the healing process. Mind, body, and spirit are inseparable. Making an overt connection with your spirit will provide healing for your mind and body. Prayer is a powerful healer as well. Praying for someone else is more effective than praying for yourself.

Belief in God helps put our problems in the right perspective. The ones we have no control on can be left to God to worry about. When there are problems that seem insurmountable, isn't it nice to believe that everything is for good and God has a reason for subjecting you to these problems. We will then see the positive side of these problems and will come out better from this experience. We have a section on prayer and spiritual healing where this subject is covered in depth.

## **Commonsense Remedies for Stress**

### **Steps to Help You Achieve Emotional Well-Being**

- Plan ahead.
- Make a to-do list in order of priorities.
- Do not bite off more than you can chew. Don't try to pack more into your day than you can cope with comfortably.
- Just say 'no' to unrealistic deadlines. There is no need to feel guilty if you have to change plans or arrangements because of an impossibly tight schedule.
- Finish the most important task before you tackle the next one.
- Take regular breaks. Short rests between periods of concentrated mental effort, particularly when you are frustrated with a project or are unable to move forward, can be refreshing and help you to refocus. Five minutes of each hour or 15 minutes every two hours allows a more manageable pace.
- Take regular vacations.
- Stop Living Beyond Your Means: Living beyond your means can actually make you sick. A researcher at the University of Alabama studied British census data on 8,000 households and found that families that tried to maintain lifestyles they couldn't afford were likely to have health problems.
- Sit up straight. A good upright posture improves breathing and increases blood flow to the brain. We often slouch when stressed, which restricts breathing and blood flow and can magnify feelings of helplessness.
- Learn to recognize your own symptoms of stress. These may include irritability, sleeplessness, social and/or sexual withdrawal, loss of interest in activities, and lack of appetite.
- Talk about stressful events to a friend or spouse before you reach a breaking point. If you can, let go and cry. Like talking, crying externalizes pent-up feelings and may reduce the risk of stress-related illness. If you need extra help, seek counselling from a mental health professional.
- Recognize that some things cannot be changed and put your energy toward those that can.
- Identify the sources of your stress. This gives you more choice in how you react. If necessary, make a note of the circumstances, and see if a pattern emerges. As you delve deeper, you are more likely to discover the root of your problem. This will allow you to solve it at the deepest, most effective level.
- Cultivate an optimistic attitude. Don't talk yourself into believing that you can't cope.

- Reduce your exposure to events that tick you off. Go to the bank at an off-hour to avoid maddening lines. Mask outside noise by turning on relaxing music.
- Maintain a sense of humour about it all.
- Learn to express anger in a constructive way. Keeping anger within you adds to feelings of stress; blowing up in a rage is almost as bad. Simply being able to say "that makes me very angry" and working out ways of avoiding anger-provoking situations are positive steps in dealing with anger.
- Focus on others' rather than your own problems. If time permits, do a few hours of volunteer work each week.
- Exercise every day, even if you have time for only a brisk, 20-minute walk.
- Stretch your chest for better breathing: The tense musculature of a person under stress can make breathing difficult and impaired breathing can aggravate the anxiety you already feel. To relax your breathing, roll your shoulders up and back then relax. The first time, inhale deeply as they go back, exhale as they relax. Repeat four or five more times, then inhale deeply again. Repeat the entire sequence four times.
- Get a Hand Exerciser: Keep a hand exerciser or a tennis ball in your desk at work and give it a few squeezes during tense times. When stress shoots adrenaline into the bloodstream, that calls for muscle action. Squeezing something provides a release that satisfies our bodies' fight-or-flee response.
- Pop a bubble. A study found that students were able to reduce their feelings of tension by popping two sheets of those plastic air capsules used in packaging.
- Soak in a Hot Tub: Soaking in hot tub is a very good stress-reliever. We have covered this in detail elsewhere.
- Hold your breath. This technique should help you relax in 30 seconds. Take a deep breath and keep it in. Holding palm to palm, press your fingers together. Wait 5 seconds, then slowly exhale through your lips while letting your hands relax. Do this five or six times until you unwind.
- Pay attention to such signs of stress as a tension headache and stop what you are doing for a rest break. If possible, take a warm bath or treat yourself to a massage during periods of stress. If this is not possible, practice deep abdominal breathing whenever you feel muscular tension setting in.
- Don't neglect your diet. Start off with a breakfast containing protein and carbohydrates for sustained energy and don't let the demands of your day get in the way of lunch.
- Take a ten-minute holiday: Meditation is a great stress reliever, but sometimes it's hard to find the time or place for it. Take a mini-vacation right at your desk or kitchen table instead. Just close your eyes, breathe deeply (from your stomach) and picture yourself lying on a beach in Mexico or Hawaii. (Guided Imagery) Feel the warmth of the sun. Hear the waves. Smell the salt air. Just put a little distance between yourself and your stress. A few minutes a day can be a great help.
- Keep it Quiet or Down: If you work, live or play in a high-noise area, consider wearing earplugs. Make sure the ones you buy reduce sound by at least 20 decibels.
- Remember, on their deathbed, no one says, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office."

### **Visit Your Doctor When**

- You have uncontrollable anger and you don't know why.
- You have insomnia.

- You have difficulty sustaining relationships.
- You have persistent feelings of guilt.
- You consistently rehash incidents in your mind.

**Overstress that you can not clear up yourself may be the earliest warning sign of some hidden illnesses such as:**

- Thyroid disease
- Calcium imbalance (too much or too little)
- Anemia
- Diabetes
- Manic-depression (Bi-polar disorder)
- Liver disease
- Kidney malfunction
- Vitamin deficiency
- Hormone deficiency

### **Alternative Therapies: Aromatherapy**

Many plant essences can help to bring on a calm, relaxed state of mind. Aromatherapy is simple to do: just a dip cotton in the essences and inhale. A mixture of lavender, geranium, and patchouli relieves tension and anxiety; chamomile and melissa act as antispasmodics and nerve sedatives.

To treat stress, anxiety, tension, or mental fatigue, try any one or a combination of the following: basil, bergamot, Borneo camphor, cinnamon, clove, cypress, eucalyptus, garlic, geranium, ginger, hyssop, lavender, lemon, marjoram, neroli, nutmeg, onion, peppermint, pine, rose, rosemary, thyme.

Smell all the following essential oils and choose the one or combination of aromas that appeals to you the most.

- Lavender relaxes and relieves stress.
- Rosemary stimulates and sharpens the mind.
- Geranium reduces stress.
- Chamomile reduces stress.
- Clary sage is useful for relaxing.
- Sandalwood is good for insomnia and depression.
- Juniper berry is good for reducing anxiety and anger.
- Sweet marjoram is also good for reducing anxiety.

### **Essential Oils For Stress-Related Problems**

**Anger, Anxiety:** Basil, bergamot, chamomile, clary sage, cypress, frankincense, geranium, hyssop, jasmine, juniper, lavender, marjoram, melissa, neroli, ylang-ylang

**Depression:** Basil, clary sage, grapefruit, jasmine, lavender, melissa, neroli, rose, sandalwood, vetiver, ylang-ylang

**Insomnia:** Basil, chamomile, lavender, mandarin, marjoram, melissa, neroli, petitgrain, rose, sandalwood, thyme, ylang-ylang

**Nervous Exhaustion:** Basil, cinnamon, citronella, coriander, ginger, grapefruit, hyssop, jasmine, lavender, lemon grass, peppermint, nutmeg, rosemary, ylang-ylang

**Nervous Tension:** Basil, bergamot, cedarwood, chamomile, cinnamon, frankincense, geranium, jasmine, lavender, marjoram, melissa, neroli, palmarosa, rosemary, vetiver, ylang-ylang

### **Essential Oil Blend For Stress**

The following mix is useful for relaxing body aches and other pain associated with stress.

20 drops lavender oil  
 10 drops rosemary oil  
 10 drops black pepper oil  
 5 drops peppermint oil  
 5 drops cypress oil

Add the ingredients to the entire bottle of Basic Massage Oil. Shake well to mix.

When you are mentally exhausted and sick of thinking, the following blend will allow you to fade far away, relax your mind, and forget the world for a while.

10 drops bergamot oil  
 20 drops geranium oil  
 10 drops ylang-ylang oil  
 5 drops frankincense oil  
 5 drops cedarwood oil

Add the ingredients to the entire bottle of Basic Massage Oil. Shake well to mix.

### **Arts therapies**

Dance movement therapy allows stress sufferers to release their pent-up feelings in a manageable way. It helps to explore resources through the therapist. Art therapists will give the sufferer the opportunity to share and explore concerns through images. Through musical interactions, a music therapist will engage the sufferer in supportive and understanding relationships, which may help them to make more sense of their stressful situations.

### **Autogenic Training**

Autogenic, which means "self-regulation or -generation," refers to the way in which your mind can influence your body to balance the self-regulative systems that control circulation, breathing, heart rate, and so on. Autogenic training allows you to control stress by training your autonomic nervous system to become relaxed.

It is suggested that you learn progressive relaxation first. Autogenic training will then teach you to respond, in a passive manner, to verbal and visual cues that reduce tension. By focusing on relaxing phrases and images, the training conditions positive, relaxing responses, such as rhythmic breathing and heart rate and a warm, relaxed, heavy feeling throughout the body.

Autogenic training is based on the notion of passive concentration: that is, you try to achieve your goal of relaxation by not working actively to do so (as in progressive relaxation).

Practice autogenic training twice each day in order to maximize the benefits. Choose times and places that are feasible for an uninterrupted session. Wear comfortable clothes. Sit or be in a position that allows total support for your entire body. When you begin autogenic training, first work on reducing your heart rate and calming your breathing; then you can move on to trying to evoke warm, heavy, relaxed sensations in your limbs and body.

As you practice, try to combine phrases with images in order to keep your mind occupied. If thoughts do intrude into your session, just observe them and let them go.

### **A Sample Session**

Following is an example of a session using phrases and images. You can run through this mentally as you practice, or you can make a tape recording to guide you through the session.

Sit comfortably and gently roll your head in a half circle in front of you. Roll from side to side a few times then bring your head up to face forward. Take a deep breath in, drawing the air deep into your stomach. Slowly release the breath.

Concentrate on your breathing, which is smooth and rhythmic. Imagine that your breaths are like waves lapping at the shore. Keep this image in your mind as you repeat to yourself, "My breathing is rhythmic and smooth . . . my breathing is rhythmic and smooth."

With each breath, feel relaxation wash over you like the waves. The waves wash over your feet and legs, your stomach and chest. Feel them cover your arms, your neck, your head. Your arms and legs feel warm and heavy. Feel the waves of relaxation sweep over you. Feel your limbs growing heavier, warmer. Your breathing is calm, rhythmic, and smooth.

Now move your focus to your heart. Imagine the waves of relaxation washing over you, calming your breathing and your heart. Say to yourself, "My heart- beat is gentle and even . . . my heartbeat is gentle and even." "I feel quiet, calm, relaxed . . . my heart- beat is gentle and even."

Your body feels peaceful and tranquil, you are relaxed. Concentrate now on your right arm and hand. Say to yourself, "My right arm and hand feel warm and heavy . . . my right arm and hand feel warm and heavy." Imagine the sun shining on your arm and hand. Feel the warmth spread through your arm and hand as they grow heavier and heavier. Say to yourself, "My right arm and hand feel warm and heavy .."

Now focus on your left arm and hand. Say to yourself, "My left arm and hand feel warm and heavy . . . my left arm and hand feel warm and heavy". Again imagine the sun shining on your arm and hand, or that they are soaking in a hot tub. Feel the warmth spread through your arm and hand, and feel them grow heavier. Say to yourself, "My left arm and hand feel warm and heavy . . ."

Concentrate now on both of your arms and hands. They both feel warm and heavy. Say to yourself, "Both of my arms and hands are warm and heavy . . . my right arm and left arm are warm and heavy . . ." Feel the warmth flow through your arms and hands, down into your fingers to the tips. You feel relaxed all over as your arms and hands get warmer and heavier. While your arms are warm and heavy, scan your body from head to toe to find any muscle tension in other parts of your body. Make sure your shoulders are dropped and relaxed, your jaw is not clenched, your legs are relaxed. You should feel relaxed all over, your mind free from thought.

Now turn your concentration to your legs. Feel the warmth and heaviness from your arms flow down into your legs. Say to yourself, "My legs and feet are warm and heavy . . . my legs and feet are warm and heavy". Imagine bathing in the sun and feel the warmth spread over your body, radiating through your arms and hands, down through your legs and feet. Say to yourself, "My feet and hands are warm and heavy . . . my arms and legs are warm and heavy". All of your limbs now feel warm and heavy. Your body is relaxed and calm, your breathing is deep and rhythmic, your heart is beating gently and evenly.

To complete the autogenic exercise, take a deep breath and exhale. Picture yourself now in the room where you began the session. You are calm and relaxed, and you will become more relaxed each time you do this exercise. Take a few more deep breaths, open your eyes, and you will feel relaxed yet alert and refreshed.

### **After The Session**

If you are going to resume physical activity, you can follow your autogenic exercises with stretching to stimulate your muscles. If you find yourself yawning, don't assume that you are now tired. Take this as a sign that the exercise has worked-that you are relaxed and free from tension.

### **Contra-indications / Warnings**

While autogenic training is effective in reducing stress, tension, and anxiety, it is not recommended for people with severe mental disorders. You should have a complete physical examination before beginning to practice autogenic training, and people with diabetes, hypoglycemia, heart conditions, and high or low blood pressure should practice only under the supervision of their physician. If you feel any adverse side effects, discontinue your practice and consult with an experienced autogenic training instructor.

### **Bach Flower Remedies**

Remedies will depend on the cause and the nature of the stresses. Stress due to frustration and a sense of injustice might respond to vervain. Stress due to impatience may be treated with impatiens. Stress due to responsibility responds to the treatment with elm. Many others would be appropriate according to the personality and mood of the sufferer.

## **Biofeedback**

Biofeedback operates on the notion that we have the innate ability and potential to influence the automatic functions of our bodies through the exertion of will and mind.

Stress affects your muscles by causing them to tense and tighten. This, in turn, can produce other aches and pains, such as headaches or backaches.

By helping you to become more attuned to your internal body functions, biofeedback teaches you to control certain unhealthy conditions. Muscle biofeedback equipment, for example, can measure the tension of your muscles and relay this information to you. By focusing on this information, your mind becomes less preoccupied with the problems causing stress, which in turn causes fewer messages to be sent from your brain to your muscles telling them to stay tense. You can use the information from the biofeedback instrument to make connections between the information and the way you feel. This increases your awareness of your own muscle tension and helps you learn to recognize tension when it first begins. Biofeedback training also teaches you ways to control the tension before other symptoms have a chance to develop.

Biofeedback is more effective if you combine it with relaxation techniques, self hypnosis and psychotherapy. In this way you not only learn how to control your reactions to stress but you can explore the causes of the stress and your thoughts and behaviour that contribute to it.

## **Risk, Cautions and Contraindications**

Biofeedback therapy is not recommended for persons with severe psychosis, depression, or obsessional neurosis, nor for debilitated patients or those with psychopathic personalities. It is dangerous for diabetics and others with endocrine disorders, as it can change the need for insulin and other medications. Please check with your doctor to see whether this is an appropriate treatment for you.

## **Chiropractic**

Anxiety and stress frequently attack the weak spots of the spine, and it is the spine that can cause general muscular tension, headaches, migraine, neck pain and back pain. This pain can then aggravate the stress and anxiety and so chiropractic treatment is aimed at relieving any physical complaints which will in turn help with the mental conditions.

## **Colour therapy**

Colour therapy helps to alleviate stress by utilizing the colours of the rainbow through visualization, coloured oils, coloured glass or coloured silk in a therapeutic environment.

## **Crystal and gemstone healing**

Under the guidance of a qualified practitioner, crystal healing may promote a feeling of relaxation and facilitate a release of stress. Crystals may be placed on or around the body or held in the hand during the session.

## **Diet**



A well balanced diet is crucial in preserving health and helping to reduce stress. Certain foods and drinks act as powerful stimulants to the body and hence are a direct cause of stress. This stimulation, although quite pleasurable in the short term, may be quite harmful in the long run. We will look at a few of them:

### **Caffeine**

This is found in coffee, tea, chocolate, Coke, etc. It causes the release of adrenaline, thus increasing the level of stress. When taken in moderation, coffee can increase your alertness, increased activity in the muscles, nervous system and heart. Consuming too much caffeine has the same effect as long term stress. It is suggested that there is a link between caffeine intake and high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels.

Be careful in reducing the coffee or caffeine consumption. Cutting it off abruptly can result in your experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Reduce the consumption slowly over a period of time.

### **Alcohol**

Like caffeine, taken in moderation, alcohol is a very useful drug. It has been shown to benefit cardiovascular system. Alcohol is a major cause of stress. The irony of the situation is that most people take to drinking as way to combat stress. But, in actuality, they make it worse by consuming alcohol. Alcohol and stress, in combination, are quite deadly.

Alcohol stimulates the secretion of adrenaline resulting in the problems such as nervous tension, irritability and insomnia. Excess alcohol will increase the fat deposits in the heart and decrease the immune function. Alcohol also limits the ability of the liver to remove toxins from the body. During stress, the body produces several toxins such as hormones. In the absence of its filtering by the liver, these toxins continue to circulate through the body resulting in serious damage.

### **Smoking**

Many people use cigarettes as a coping mechanism. In the short term, smoking seems to relieve stress. But in the long term smoking is very harmful. Its disadvantages far outweigh its short-term benefits. Cigarette smoking is shown to be responsible for a variety of cancers, hypertension, respiratory illness and heart disease.

### **Sugar**

Sugar has no essential nutrients. It provides a short-term boost of energy through the body, resulting possibly in the exhaustion of the adrenal glands. This can result in irritability, poor concentration, and depression. High sugar consumption puts a severe load on the pancreas. There is increasing possibility of developing diabetes.

Keep your blood sugar constant. Do not use sugar as a "pick me up."

### **Salt**

Salt increases the blood pressure, deplete adrenal glands, and causes emotional instability. Use a salt substitute that has potassium rather than sodium. Avoid junk foods high in salt such as bacon, ham, pickles, sausage, etc.

### **Fat**

Avoid the consumption of foods rich in saturated fats. Fats cause obesity and put unnecessary stress on the cardiovascular system. High fat is believed to cause breast, colon and prostate cancers.

### **Eat a meal high in carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates trigger release of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin, which soothes you. Good sources of carbohydrates include rice, pasta, potatoes, breads, air-popped popcorn and low-cal cookies. Experts suggest that the carbohydrates present in a baked potato or a cup of spaghetti or white rice, is enough to relieve the anxiety of a stressful day.

### **Eat Food High In Fibre**

Stress result in cramps and constipation. Eat more fibre to keep your digestive system moving. Your meal should provide at least 25 grams of fibre per day. Fruits, vegetables and grains are excellent sources of fibre. For breakfast, eat whole fruits instead of just juice, and whole-grain cereals and fibre-fortified muffins.

### **Eat More Vegetables**

Your brain's production of Serotonin, is sensitive to your diet. Eating more vegetables, can increase your brain's Serotonin production. This increase is due to improved absorption of the amino acid L-Tryptophan. (Vegetables contain the natural, safe, form of L Tryptophan.) Meats contain natural L-Tryptophan also, but when you eat meat, the L-Tryptophan has to compete with so many other amino acids for absorption that the L-Tryptophan loses out. The net result is that you get better absorption of L-Tryptophan when you eat vegetables.

### **Foods to Eat**

- Whole grains promote the production of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin, which increases your sense of well-being.
- Green, yellow, and orange vegetables are all rich in minerals, vitamins, and phytochemicals, which boost immune response and protect against disease.

### **Foods to Avoid**

- Coffee and other caffeinated beverages: If you are currently addicted to coffee, drink black tea; it has less than a third of the caffeine of coffee, and none of the harmful oils.
- Fried foods and foods rich in fat are very immune-depressing, especially when stress is doing that, as well.
- Reduce animal foods. High-protein foods elevate brain levels of dopamine and norepinephrine, both of which are associated with higher levels of anxiety and stress.

You should also take a good multi-vitamin and mineral preparation.

### **Herbal Therapy**

Siberian ginseng tones the nervous system and increases your resistance to stress.

Infusions of lime blossom, catmint, lemon balm or chamomile have a calming effect. A herbalist may suggest taking skullcap, valerian or cowslip as stronger relaxants than the above, or the restoring herb St. John's wort. Oats should be included in the diet.

Perhaps the most important herb that helps in relaxation is Kava. This herb is used for anxiety, nervousness, insomnia, stress and restlessness.

### **Homeopathy**

In homeopathic medicine ailments such as food allergy, hypoglycemia, high blood pressure, asthma and digestive disorders are regarded as being manifestations of stress, so treatment is likely to be long-term and constitutional; however, in acute circumstances, one of the following remedies may be useful, according to a person's circumstances:

- Phosphoric ac. for stress due to grief or bad news.
- Picric ac. for stress due to overwork..
- Ignatia for stress following emotional upset such as a broken love affair.
- Nux for stress brought on by burning the candle at both ends, including smoking, eating or drinking too much, making the sufferer irritable.

The following remedies can be used to treat stress-related conditions, such as anxiety, nervousness, tension, and mental fatigue. Be sure to match your symptoms with the remedy that has the most similar characteristics.

#### ***Ignatia imara (Ignatia)***

**Symptoms:** Emotional strain; mental stress; negative effects of grief, worry, disappointment, shock; hysteria; sad, moody, sighing; insomnia; headache, often following anger or grief, which becomes worse from stooping; intolerance to tobacco.

Worsened by: suppressing emotions, tobacco, coffee, brandy, smoke or strong odours.

Better from: lying on the painful side, warmth, walking, hard pressure.

#### ***Phosphorus***

**Symptom:** Restlessness; overexcited state that causes weakness and exhaustion; burning pains; chilliness with thirst for cold drinks; expressive, animated, overdramatic; acute senses; bothered by light and noise; nervousness and fear; sense that something bad will happen; fearful of being alone and crave company; easily frightened or upset, though can be reassured or distracted; crave salt, spicy food, ice cream; tendency to bleed easily (this should be evaluated medically); nosebleeds.

Worsened by: cold or heat, lying on left or painful side, thunderstorms.

Better from: massaging or rubbing; cold food or drink.

Your homeopath may suggest you learn some form of relaxation or meditation and perhaps take supplements of vitamin B complex; taking exercise may also be advised.

**Whilst we are receiving the Father's Divine Love, and that this Love is causing change within our soul and spirit attributes, the greatest Truth known to man and spirit is that this is the way the Father is actually loving us! When we progress, it is the Father's way of loving us into love and then we live what we are, love.**

Message 278 Destiny

**"Father, open my soul to this Gift, Your Love. Open my soul and may Your Holy Spirit touch my soul and pour within it your essence, your Love that I may be transformed, that I might be your true child, embraced and carried, lit along my life's path in the glory of your Light and care and protection."**

Jesus 11 May 2016

**Our Heavenly Mother and Father simply desire for us to ask for Their Love.**

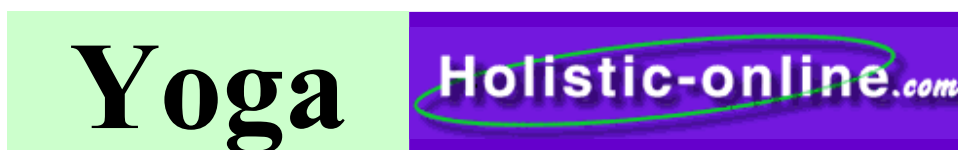
**"Every day is a day of devotion."**

**Please Mother and Father, may I receive Your LOVE.**

**God's Divine Love: Pray for it, ask for it, and receive it.**

**Our salvation IS the embracing of the Feeling Healing process and Divine Love.**





*Everything you want to learn about yoga and more.*

**Dr. J. Mathew – Chief Editor and Webmaster**

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## **Yoga – Introduction**

Yoga provides one of the best means of self-improvement and attaining one's full potential. In the advanced stages of yoga, superconscious states are attained which result in a feeling of bliss, deep peace and the emergence of psychic powers.

Yoga was developed and perfected over the centuries by philosophers and mystics in India. It is basically a method by which we increase the body's supply of energy and remove any interference to the transmission of energy throughout the body. Yoga has specialized in this subject for thousands of years, and streamlined the methods to attain this aim.

These days, yoga classes are being held at most health and wellness centres across the United States. Along with meditation, it is probably one of the most popular alternative therapy. Many physicians, who are skeptical about the efficacy of alternative medicine, support yoga with a passion. There are many clinical studies that show the effectiveness of yoga. And the best part of it is that it is something that can be done in the comfort of your home. A few breathing exercises recommended by yoga will go a long way towards better health and relaxation.

A few months ago, I was talking to Rev. Fr. Philip Jacob of Indian Orthodox Church, Detroit, Michigan. The conversation got into alternative medicine and spiritual healing. Rev. Jacob remembered how his father used to practice alternative nostril breathing, a well known yoga pranayama practice, daily. According to his father, one does not have to do any other exercise to maintain health. A few months later, my sister-in-law, Susan Jacob M.D., who is a board certified paediatric allergist, was visiting us from Houston, Texas. She was searching my library for books about yoga. I asked her why she is looking for books on yoga. She replied, "It is very good. I want to start practicing yoga." Apparently, her cardiologist had recommended yoga. My neighbour and friend, Dr. Donti M.D., often attends out of town workshops on yoga to learn better because, "its effectiveness is well proven." Cleveland Clinic, a world renowned hospital in Cleveland, teaches yoga to patients (especially those who are undergoing cardiac rehabilitation.) These are examples of the far reach of yoga, it is popular with doctors, professionals (many of which do it for stress relief and relaxation) and with common people.

Practiced for more than 5,000 years, yoga is one of the oldest forms of healing therapy. The amazing results of yoga are now being studied by scientists all over the world. Teams of doctors at the various yogic health centres in India, keep detailed records of patients treated with yoga for diabetes, respiratory ailments, digestive complaints and obesity. Now it is studied and accepted across the globe for its many healing and relaxation effects.

### **Why Yoga?**

Yoga works on the mind and the body at the same time, as well as exploiting their interdependence. No other system does this. Western psychology studies the mind, western exercise physiology studies the effect of exercise on the body, but there is no emphasis on the interrelationship of the mind and the body.

Yoga asanas (postures) and breathing deal with the physical body, but due to their effect on the brain, they also affect the mind.

All the wonders of modern science will not bring happiness, peace of mind, health or a long life. Although wonders have been achieved in our external environment – space travel, computers, etc.- our internal environment has been neglected. Thousands of years ago the ancient yogis turned their minds inwards and discovered their true nature. This allowed them to work out a system of body and breathing exercises which results in vitality, rejuvenation and peace of mind.

Why not enjoy the benefits of modern science, but also do yoga to enjoy the benefits of vitality, rejuvenation and peace of mind as well? Yes, you can have the cake and eat in too!

### **A Brief Philosophy Of Yoga**

The yogis consider that we are all searching for happiness and that this is everybody's main goal. It's just that most people settle for the brief, watered-down version of temporary pleasures.

The yogis state that at some stage in our spiritual evolution over many lives we will become dissatisfied with brief, temporary pleasures and start our quest for eternal bliss. Methods to achieve this were developed and perfected by the yogis thousands of years ago. They consider that nature's laws are so designed that we must evolve. The main mechanism nature uses in the early stages is pain. When we find that relationships, money or alcohol, for example, do not produce happiness or a sense of purpose, we will start looking more deeply into life. Yoga waits patiently for you to reach this stage.

In the later stages of spiritual evolution, pain is no longer needed to spur us on. Each stage of progress produces such peace and happiness that this entices us to go to a higher level of happiness. Thus, instead of pain, reward becomes the prime mover.

The above is a very brief indication of yoga philosophy, which is so comprehensive that it deals with every aspect of life and delves into the very nature of reality. It is obviously beyond the scope of this book.

### **What is yoga?**

In practice, yoga is an applied science of the mind and body. It comes from the Hindu vedas (scriptures). Practice and study of it help to bring about a natural balance of body and mind in which the state of health can manifest itself. Yoga itself does not create health; rather, it creates an internal environment that allows the individual to come to his own state of dynamic balance, or health. Basically, yoga teaches that a healthy person is a harmoniously integrated unit of body, mind and spirit. Therefore, good health requires a simple, natural diet, exercise in fresh air, a serene and untroubled mind and the awareness that man's deepest and highest self is identical with the spirit of God. As a result, to many devotees, yoga becomes a philosophy that offers instruction and insight into every aspect of life: the spiritual, the mental and the physical. Of course, because it is all-encompassing, people who want to pick and choose from its smorgasbord can do so without being disappointed. Yoga is equally satisfying as a physical therapy alone.

Yoga is best known as a set of physical practices that include gentle stretches, breathing practices, and progressive deep relaxation. These physical practices are intended to ready the body and mind for meditation as well as for a meditative perspective on life. These meditative practices also follow a sequence. First developed is the capacity to withdraw the senses from focus on the outer world, then,



the capacity to concentrate on a meditative subject—a candle flame, a sacred or uplifting word or image, or the movement of the breath. Finally, and for most of us only occasionally, the concentration leads into a wordless and timeless experience of inner peace. The yoga masters describe various subtleties among these states of inner peace, but most of us, at best, achieve moments of this experience from time to time.

*Michael Lerner, "Choices in Healing"*

## The Yoga System

One basic assumption of the Yoga Sutras is that the body and the mind are part of one continuum of existence, the mind being more subtle than the body. This is the foundation of the yogic view of health. The interaction of body and mind is the central concern of the entire science. It is believed that as the body and mind are brought into balance and health, the individual will be able to perceive his true nature; this will allow life to be lived through him more freely and spontaneously.

Yoga first attempts to reach the mind, where health begins, for mental choices strongly affect the health of the body. Choices of food, types of exercise, which thoughts to think, etc. all affect the body. As practiced traditionally in India, yoga includes a set of ethical imperatives and moral precepts, including diet, exercise, and meditative aspects. In the West, yoga focuses primarily on postures (gentle stretching exercises), breathing exercises, and meditation. Yoga is frequently used in Western medicine to enhance health and treat chronic disease as well as stress.

Yoga therapy begins with relaxation. Living in an age of anxiety, we are often unconscious of our tensions. We are often depressed, tired, and an easy victim of diseases. There are a number of reasons for our stressful life. Often it is lack of rest, anxiety, tension and fatigue. These are constantly draining our health energies continuously. Thus, the first priority is to get us into a relaxed state. Yoga employs asanas, pranayama (breathing exercises) and meditation and/or visualization.

**Asanas (postures):** Postures are gentle stretching movements designed to help balance the mind and body. The yoga postures are designed to rejuvenate the brain, spine, glands and internal organs. They work by increasing the blood and prana supply to these areas and by stimulating them with a gentle squeezing action

The asanas were designed with economy of time and effort in mind. Most of them work on more than one aspect of the body at the same time. For example, the twist asana benefits the spine, adrenal glands, liver, pancreas and kidneys.

The yoga asanas produce their beneficial effect on the organs and glands in three ways.:

- The position of the asana causes an increase in blood circulation to the specific target organ or gland.
- The position of the asana often produces a slight squeezing of the organ or gland. This has the effect of massaging the organ or gland and stimulating it.
- Deep breathing and visualizing the target area sends an extra supply of prana to the area.

Yoga's effect on the spine is to increase its flexibility. This ensures a good nerve supply to all parts of the body, since the nerves from the spine go to all the organs and glands.

**Pranayama:** Pranayamas are specially developed breathing techniques. Yoga breathing produces a huge storage of energy in the solar plexus area. This will cause the body to radiate vitality and, if any sickness is developing, the body can call upon some of this energy reserve to combat the disease.

Yoga breathing also improves brain function (intelligence and memory), as well as increasing the elimination of toxins from the system.

The total effect of yoga asanas and breathing is to produce a state of high vitality and rejuvenation.

**Concentration/Meditation practices:** The benefits of the postures are greater if you concentrate the healing action where it is needed. You can incorporate a variety of affirmations, meditation / concentration practices and visualization. Meditation and concentration is covered in detail elsewhere. Many times focusing on an object or sound (like clicking of a clock) can help us concentrate and leave our distracting thoughts away.

An affirmation is a declaratory statement of yourself. They are inner-self conditioners. Our inner mind will believe everything we say with conviction and emotional force. It takes some persistent repetitions to get the desired result. Typical affirmations that can be used are:

- I am at my desired weight (for dieters).
- My lungs are pure and clean (for smokers who want to get out of the habit).
- I feel continuously alert, vital and useful (general), etc.

Even more powerful technique than affirmation is visualization. Here, we show our subconscious mind a picture of what we are talking about. Forming such picture inside your mind is called visualization.

To be effective, visualization should involve all senses, not just sight. Imagine the state or thing we want. How does it feel when we have it? What will you be with it? What does it feel? What does it look like? How does it sound? How does it taste? How does it smell? For healing therapy, visualize the state without the condition. For example, for those trying to lose weight, visualize yourself in the desired weight and physical condition and imagine the life in the new state.

In other words, you should mentally see the affected area as it receives fresh blood circulation, oxygen and physical massage. A diabetic should visualize the healing energies flowing into the pancreas, near the stomach. A rheumatic can concentrate on the release of synovial fluid. Synovial fluid is a lubricant and also disperses waste matter which can cause stiffness at joints.

Thus, most effective yoga therapy involves a three-pronged attack. When you practice yoga postures, you are strengthening the body. When you control your breathing, you are creating a chemical and emotional balance. And when you concentrate your mind on affirmations, you are practicing the power of prayer. But when all three approaches are synthesized, you are entering the most powerful mystery of healing: the basic harmony of life.

### **Yoga's View Of Disease**

Yoga considers that most diseases are due to insufficient life force, either in the body as a whole, or a blockage of life force to one part of the body. This leads to a lowered body resistance or immunity to disease.

Those practicing yoga have learned many centuries ago that most diseases are due to reduced immunity. Medical science is gradually coming to the same conclusion.

When the whole body has lowered life force, the result is a lowered vitality level, poor health and susceptibility to infection. No infections would occur if the body's life force is high enough to fight off the infection. Pathogens (bacteria, viruses and so on) are a normal part of life and will only cause trouble when the body's resistance is too low to keep them in check.

The best way to increase the general life force of the body is by good nutrition, sufficient deep sleep, a positive mental attitude and yoga.

A blockage of life force to one part of the body, such as the thyroid gland, is usually caused by a slight misalignment of a vertebra which impinges on the nerve that travels to that particular organ. This causes an interference to the life force (nerve impulses) to the organ. As a result, the organ not functioning at its optimum level. If the spinal misalignment is not corrected, the organ may develop pathology. It is much more difficult to correct at this stage.

The ancient yogis were well aware of the importance of the spine in relation to disease, since most of their asanas or postures were designed to make the spine more flexible to prevent spinal misalignments. Some of the asanas will even correct minor spinal misalignments.

The spine is so important for a high vitality level, good health and the correction of many health conditions that a whole science of healing has been developed to correct spinal misalignments. In fact, chiropractic is now the second largest healing profession after medicine and the fastest growing healing profession in the world.

### **Types Of Yoga**

One of the features of yoga, which can be confusing at first, is that a variety of forms of yoga are practiced. Together, they are called yoga. While these share common elements, some focus more on postures and breathing exercises, whereas others have a greater focus on spirituality. Each emphasizes a particular path that comprises a certain set of beliefs, practices, and rituals. Yoga forms constitute a ladder of sorts, from the "lowest" form of Hatha yoga, with its focus on physical postures and breathing techniques, to the "highest" form known as Raja, or "union by mental mastery."

Newer forms of hybrids of yoga are also proposed such as Power yoga or Acu-yoga. There are also variations of yoga depending on "the teacher that is being followed."

The most popular forms of yoga are:

Hatha yoga ("the yoga of vitality") – The Foundation

Bhakti Yoga: The Yoga of Love

Karma yoga ("the yoga of action") – the Yoga of Selfless Action

Jnana Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge

Raja yoga – The Highest form of yoga

Mantra yoga

Laya, Tantra or Kundalini yoga

Integral Yoga (Purna Yoga)

### **Hatha yoga ('the yoga of vitality') – *The Foundation***

An easy-to-learn basic form of yoga. Very popular in the United States. Hatha Yoga is the foundation of all Yoga systems. Hatha Yoga is the preparation for higher Yogas. Ha means "sun" and tha means "moon". Thus, Hatha Yoga refers to positive (sun) and to negative (moon) currents in the system. These currents are to be balanced and mastered so that vital force, prana, can be regulated, the mind cleared and superconscious states experienced.

The ideal way to practice the Hatha Yoga poses (*asanas*) is to approach the practice session in a calm, meditative mood. Sit quietly for a few moments, then begin the series, slowly, with control and grace, being inwardly aware as the body performs the various poses selected for the practice session. Do not overdo the asanas or try to compete with others. Take it easy and enjoy.

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# Arvonal Revelation

- We are to live Feelings First.
- We've been made to use our mind to live against many of our feelings.
- Our mind control commences at conception and is developed through our childhood.
- All the bad feelings we didn't express as we were growing up are still repressed inside us.
- And all such hidden, buried and unwanted feelings have to come out.
- And whilst they remain repressed within us, they will continue to make us feel bad and unloved.
- We get sick, depressed, suffer, have bad things happen to us because of our repressed childhood feelings.
- Humanity was brought into this state of living against itself by higher rebellious spirits.
- These Evil Ones caused the Rebellion and Default.
- We are made to rebel by default – as we have no idea we're doing it through our parenting in wrongness.
- We are all parented unlovingly – against ourselves, against our will.
- Some parenting in the wrongness is done with more love, yet it's all still wrong.
- To heal this unloving state within ourselves we have to do our Healing.
- Our Healing is our Feeling-Healing or Soul-Healing with the Divine Love.
- We can long to God for Their Divine Love, and this will help us with our Healing.
- God is our Heavenly Mother and Father, the Feminine Aspects of God having been kept hidden from us by the Evil Spirits.
- All humanity's religions and spiritual systems are designed to keep the wrongness going, to keep us away from God.
- Only by living Feelings First Spirituality, The New Way, can you become right, and truly find God.
- Long for the Divine Love.
- Long for the Truth of your Feelings.
- Accepting all you feel is accepting all of yourself, it's your greatest act of self-love.
- And wanting to know the truth of your feelings, is your next greatest act of self-love.
- Love yourself through your feeling-acceptance, and the Truth will set you Free!

## Suppression and Repression:

We are all living untrue to ourselves. All we do is wrong, even though mostly we believe it is right.

We are living untrue as shown by the denial of many feelings. We don't accept them, particularly our bad ones. And this feeling denial, suppression and repression, causes all our problems.

All pain, suffering, fear, anger, guilt, depression, misery, sadness, feelings of feeling alone and lonely, feeling rejected, unwanted, uncared about, unloved, feeling will-less and powerless and unhappy and frustrated because we can't assert ourselves lovingly in life, are all the sorts of bad feelings we do everything we can to deny. And it's the ongoing suppression and rejection of these feelings that cause all our illnesses, problems, relationship difficulties, all that's wrong with us both personally and generally in society.



Right from conception we're all inducted forcibly – against our will – into such feeling-denying systems, we take it on, doing what our parents have taught us, thereby continuing to keep all our childhood pain and bad feelings repressed. And as adults, life cycles us through our various experiences in accordance with these early life established patterns all so we can keep feeling those same bad feelings and keep denying them. And this is our rebelling against ourselves by living untrue to all we feel, all of which we do unknowingly, which is by default.

And the healing of this negative, unloving, anti-self condition can only be done by doing one's Healing, which is Feeling-Healing, or your Soul-Healing with the Divine Love. (Soul-Healing being Feeling-Healing inclusive of the Divine Love.)

How one does their Feeling-Healing is by looking to their feelings for the truth they are to show you. You stop, acknowledge and thereby accept that you are feeling bad (or good), want to express that bad feeling and emotion instead of denying it, all whilst longing for and wanting to uncover the truth such feelings are to show you.

You have to want to FEEL ALL of your feelings, and especially your bad ones. And you have to want to know the whole truth of why you're feeling them.

And to uncover the whole truth of yourself through your feelings, means you are going to be led by your feelings back into the complex dynamics and psychology of the relationships with your early carers and those people who were influential during your childhood, mostly your parents: feeling now as an adult the very same feelings you felt back then that you were forced to deny. So now you end the denial and finally release and express and bring out those long ago buried feelings, all so you can see the truth of what really went on between you and those people from your early life.

Our Healing is bringing out all our repressed childhood feelings, expressing them as fully as we can, as we long for and want to see, understand and know the whole truth of what happened to us to make us have them, how we reacted to having them, how we grew and developed into adults taking on our

feeling repression and denial from our parents.

And it's a long, hard process as we strive to liberate all such repressed feelings and at the same time ascend in truth understanding why we are wrong, how as adults we've expressed those unloving, negative, anti-self patterns and how we've passed them onto our own children.

Our Healing is the ONLY way out of our pain. We are to understand the truth of our unloved state. We've begun life in an anti-self and anti-love condition of mind and will, and we are to liberate, or reveal, the truth of this state to ourselves through our feelings. We are to do it ourselves and for ourselves because we want to set ourselves free of our pain. Only by uncovering the truth of that pain, can we finally be liberated from it. Uncovering the hidden (hidden in our feelings) truth, is the only way we can spiritually grow and evolve into becoming fully loving people, this being achieved when we've finished our Healing.

All the answers to humanity's age old questions about why we are not happy and why we're not living life on Earth as if it were Paradise, will be answered as people start to look to their feelings for the truth of themselves.



**And to spiritually help us, we are to understand:**

That we are conceived and so born into life being of Natural love. And because we've been brought into a state of deprivation of such love, so we have to Heal ourselves to become of such pure Natural love. And once done (and we can start anytime to help us with our Healing) we can long to God for the Divine Love. The Divine Love coming into our soul via the Holy Spirit, transforming our Natural love soul into a Divine Love soul.

So we can long to God, our Heavenly Parents, for Their Divine Love.

God is our Heavenly Mother and Father; God is one Soul expressing Two distinct Personalities, and Personalities we can get to know personally as we express the truth of our soul. We can ONLY know our Mother and Father personally through our feelings, we can't get to know them with and through our mind as many religions teach. Any truly loving relationship is expressed through feelings and not the mind, and it's no different in our relationship with God.

We are, being of the image of God, one soul that's expressing its two soulmate personalities in Creation. And we begin life at conception coming into being individualising our personality through our life experiences.

However the whole of humanity has been subjected to a high spirit Rebellion and Default, which has stuffed us up, taken us off our true spiritual path, and caused us to rebel by default against ourselves, against our own soul, and against God. So currently humanity is still living in rebellion to the higher spiritual truths, those denied truths being now readily available through feelings, and not by looking to the mind being the arch controller. The higher rebellious spirits that instigated the Rebellion and Default against the Truth, have caused humanity, have caused us all, to use our mind to control our feelings, which we do by looking to our mind to help us deny those feelings we wrongly believe are bad for us.

So our Healing is looking to end the Rebellion and Default personally within ourselves and impersonally for the whole of humanity, as we all come together understanding the dreadful plight we find ourselves

in, and deciding that we no longer want to live as we do by looking to our mind though all our mind-controlling religions and spiritual belief systems, choosing instead to look to our feelings for the truth they are to show us, and that will break down our controlling mind, setting us free to live true to our feelings.

And we are to understand that we have the freedom of will to live against our true selves by using our mind to control so many of our feelings. And we have the free will to end this mind control. **When we are living true to our feelings, we will be living true to the will of our soul no longer with our mind getting in the way. And so too will we be living True to God's Will. We live God's Will by living fully expressing all we feel as we long for the truth of such feelings. Our feelings are to guide us in life, not our mind; our true feelings are Our Way, which is also: God's Way.**

And we can ask our Mother and Father to help us. We can long to Them to help us embrace and accept and express, and long for the truth of our feelings; and we can long to Them for Their Divine Love.

Our Heavenly Parents have started us off in Creation by incarnating us onto a rebellious planet, one in which we experience what it feels like to go against ourselves and to go against Them. They have wanted us to start life in an unloving way, to live and experience and learn what living untrue to our soul and untrue to Their Soul feels like. And how it makes us all feel bad. We are starting off our lives in Creation in an unloving environment, which some people will find difficult to understand (for within it they do feel some love), and it can also be just as difficult to accept that God wants it this way. And not only that, but God is making you be the unloving person you are, God gave you your unloving parents (and the bits that might be loving), God is purposely making you suffer, God is in control of it all; and when your time comes, God will also help you do your Healing so you can come to understand yourself through your feelings. God will reveal all to you through your feelings. All the bad and all the good. We are all to one day understand what it's all been about for ourselves – and you will, God won't let you down, God will eventually answer all your questions.

So when you feel ready, you can decide that you want to live a Feelings First life. To begin your U-Turn, to start doing your Healing, and to end your pain, suffering and feeling unloved, by looking to the truth of such bad feelings.

And through your Healing you will slowly work your way deeper into understanding the truth of your unloving self- and feeling-denying state, and then once you've uncovered the whole truth of your wrongness, then a Great Change will come to you, and you'll no longer be living according to the negative, anti-self patterns you took on from your parents, you will be completely free of the Rebellion and Default, you will have finished your Healing, so you will be true and happy and wholly loving. And best of all, then you'll start living and learning about what it feels like to live being truly self-loving, loving of others and loving your Mother and Father. All the opposite to how you are living now.



**Long for the truth of your feelings.**

**Long for the Divine Love.**

**By living true to ourself, true to our feelings, we are living true to God. It's that simple.**



## It's time for the true Woman's Revolution:

Liberation of the Feminine:

Women are Spiritual – live true to your feelings.

Put your feelings first – always. Let your feelings speak, DON'T DENY THEM.

I am my feelings. I care what I feel. I deserve the right to allow my feelings the right to exist. Let me OUT – Let my feelings have their Say. I will no longer keep them back, hold them in, shut them up. I want to be Heard. I want my feelings to have their say. I want to hear what my own feelings are telling me. It's time to face the truth, and my feelings are the way to it. My feelings won't like being suppressed, not once I get my mind out of their way.

Viva La Feelings – Women are Feelings. Women are Spiritual. Our Feelings are our true spirituality. Deny our feelings and we are denying our spirit. The suppression and forced repression of our feelings is to end. Bring Them ALL Out. Open your mouth and let your feelings come out, let your feelings have their say, and Long for the truth of Them. Want to know the truth of your feelings. My feelings are the Way to My Truth. I want to be true, beginning with being true to my feelings. And through my feelings I will be guided and shown how to live.

God loves all Feelings. You can only love God with your Feelings. Give ALL your good and bad feelings to God. Bring them out, stop keeping them hidden and bottled up. If you do, you'll never uncover the truth of yourself, nor will you really get to know yourself or God.

Your feelings are the key to your successful relationships. Block your feelings and you're blocking your relationships. Express your feelings and want them to show you the deeper truth of yourself, and your relationships will become true too.



Long Live My Feelings. **MeTOOandmyFEELINGS**. I am Woman let me FEEL. It's time to honour what I feel. Liberate the true feminine by liberating ALL your feelings. It can be very difficult, there will be many obstacles within yourself and outside of you, however if you want to truly set yourself free of your pain and suffering, then seek and long with all your heart for the truth of your feelings – for your feelings to show you the truth God wants you to see about yourself. And slowly you will heal, slowly you will change and overcome all such difficulties.

# Feelings First Spirituality

## The New Way

**Feelings First**  
**FF**  
**Feeling Free**

The New Way, Feelings First Spirituality  
 Learn to live with God through your Feelings

Accept, express and long for the truth of your feelings

Be free in your feelings  
 Free your feelings from your mind's control  
 Live true to your feelings; your feelings are your true self  
 Live true to yourself through your feelings



Live true to yourself by living true to your feelings.  
 Long for the truth of your feelings.

Accept / Express / Bring out ALL of your good, and most importantly,  
 BAD feelings.  
 Want to understand why you're feeling them.  
 Use your surface feelings to take you deeper into your repressed and  
 hidden feelings.



The Feeling Way is the True Way.  
Your feelings are your spiritual guide.  
Your feelings will take you to God.



Your feelings will show you the truth of your relationships, including your relationship with God; and if anything is wrong, untrue and unloving, then why it is.

Our feelings are sacrosanct and we should respect them accordingly. And we should NEVER block them out, ignore, override, banish, deny or reject them, because if we do, we're only doing that to ourselves, as Our Feelings Are Our Self.

Our feelings are the gateway to our soul. Our feelings are the closest we can get to our soul. Knowing the truth of our feelings is knowing the truth of our soul, and knowing the truth of God.

Feelings First Spirituality is the True path for humanity.

It embraces all people.

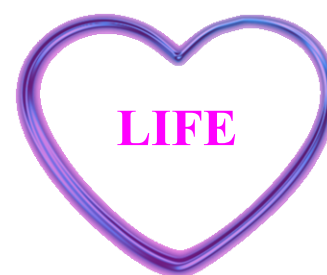
It completely unifies the world.

Everyone can relate to everyone else through their feelings.

And we can all live the truth that comes from our feelings, all sharing the same truths as we express and have the same feelings.

No one need be left out; no one is more special than anyone else – we are all united in Truth through our feelings.

So with and through our truth we live our lives, therefore without the need of any man-made mind-laws, rules and restrictions that limit self-expression as inspired by our feelings.



The New Way, Feelings First Spirituality is what is to replace all man-made, mind-contrived religions that so many people have enslaved themselves to. The New Way, Feelings First Spirituality will set us free of all that control, ending the Rebellion and Default within ourselves as we do our Feeling-Healing, and ending such control and spiritual stagnation in the world.

Bring on the End Times – get it over and done with! Let's all see that Jesus is not going to come again, that Prophecy has failed all the mind-controlled platforms. Allow such false systems of belief to die their long-awaited natural death, they've overstayed their welcome, it's now time they fade away. So let us show such antiquated, erroneous systems of belief the exit and bring on the fresh liberation of discovering the truth of how we are to live for ourselves, each of us personally in our lives, and all by looking to our own feelings for it. Self-revelation through our feelings is the way to go.

The Way of the Mind is ending, and is really the End Times – the End of our mind control, and **it's**

**about time!** With the Way of our Feelings replacing it.

The End Times means the end and therefore a New Beginning. And that new beginning is a whole new Spiritual Age – an age based on self-revelation of truth through one’s feelings, coupled with and supported by higher revelations from the Celestial spirits, angels and nature spirits.



The Feelings First Spirituality is the True Way to God because it helps you get to know God, helping you to reach out, connect and be personal with God, and do God’s Will, all through your feelings. It is the only true way of getting to know the God of Feelings – our beloved Heavenly Mother and Father, the Great Soul of Divine Love.

Love comes through our feelings and not our mind, as we’ve all been wrongly led to believe.

**Feelings First; then comes The Truth; then comes Love.**

**LOVE is the Religion of Feelings, being:**

**Feelings First Spirituality, The New Way**

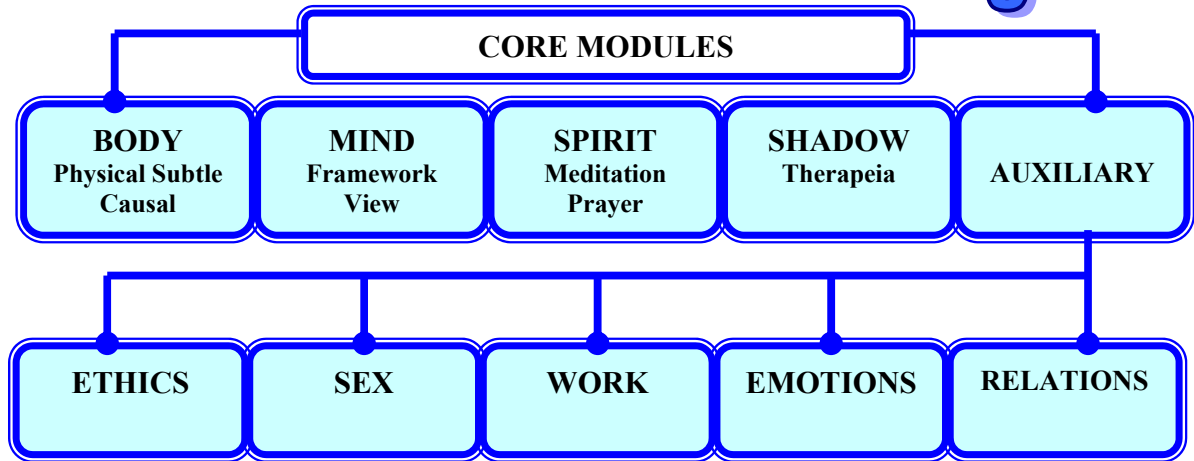


my  
**House** is your  
**Paradise**  
 **HOME**

# PASCAS CARE



## Life Practice Matrix - Feelings First



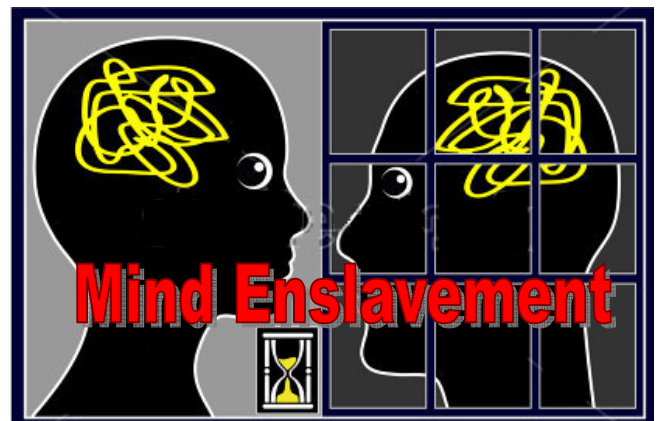
Mind imprisoned humanity has been subjected to the percepts imposed by the Rebellion and Default commencing some 200,000 years ago.

Humanity has universally adopted its mind as the pinnacle of one's intellect. In doing so, it has looked to its ego and arrogance to reveal the way to live one's life. Humanity has conjured up endless modalities enabling one's mind to suppress, albeit temporarily, discomforts, pains and illness through countless ineffective mind controlling systems, and has even categorised them into the boxes as outlined above.

Humankind has enslaved themselves to their mind, depowering themselves by ignoring their feelings. One's soul based feelings are always in truth and love – interconnecting with all aspects of life.

For those who have discovered and embraced their feelings, longed for the truth that one's feelings can reveal about their feelings, both good and bad, a great sense of freedom has emerged.

By living through **Feelings First**, and then having one's mind assist with the implementation of what one's feelings are conveying, we are then living true to one's self, and consequently true to our Heavenly Parents, our Mother and Father.



**Feelings First**  
**Feeling Free**

