

Role of Meditation in Stress Management (Review)



CHEMISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years in different parts of world. It is commonly used for relaxation, stress reduction and also for divine purposes. Meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine. It tranquil mind. During meditation the stream of jumbled thoughts are being eliminated, this process results in enhanced physical and emotional well-being. Some of the most common features in meditation include Focused attention, Relaxed breathing, quiet sitting, and acquiring comfortable position.

Stress affects health and family life. Hans Selye (1936) first introduced the term stress into life science. The stress response is a complex emotion that produces physiological changes to prepare us, to defend ourselves from the threat or flee from it. Stress at job can lead to poor health and even injury (Sauter et al., 1999). Stress is a silent killer and prolonged exposure to stress may exert harmful effect on physical, Psychological and behavioural well being of an individual. Stress has emerged as a major issue and has reached alarming proportions. Meditation can act as an antidote to reduce stress.

Types of meditation

There are many types of meditation and relaxation techniques that have meditation components.

Guided meditation; with this method of meditation ,mental images of places or situations is imagined. Senses such as smells, sights, sounds and textures are being used for this. Meditation of this type may be led by a guide or teacher.

Mindfulness meditation; this type of meditation is based on increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment. One becomes observer and can observe his thoughts and emotions but lets them pass without judgment.

Tai chi; this is a form of gentle Chinese martial arts. In this meditation, one perform a self-paced series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner while practicing deep breathing.

Transcendental meditation; In this meditation mantra, word, sound or phrase are used repeatedly silently, to narrow conscious awareness and eliminate all thoughts from mind. Entire focus is on mantra to achieve a state of perfect stillness and consciousness.

Yoga; A series of postures and controlled breathing exercises are performed to promote a more flexible body and a calm mind.

Benefits of meditation; According to Dr. Gaurav Bissa, Dr. Amit Sharmain, meditation relaxes body and focus thoughts on one thing for a sustained period. This occupies mind, diverting it from the problems that are causing stress and this clears away stress hormones. Meditation is a useful and practical relaxation technique.

Certain studies suggests that meditation practices may impact physiological pathways, including the immune and neuroendocrine systems, which are modulated by stress and are relevant to disease development and progression (Taylor, 1995; Carlson et al., 2003.; Davidson et al., 2003; Ospina et al., 2007).

According to Harvard Cardiologist Herbert Benson (1984), transcendental meditation promotes the —relaxation response, mind becomes quiet and focused. This meditation styles induce

a host of biochemical and physical changes in the body, which may be collectively referred to as the “relaxation response” that includes changes in metabolism, heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, and brain chemistry. Also people with a high sense of humour are able to manage stress (Abel, 2002)

A study (Broome et al, 2005) conducted to see effect of Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique on Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR), showed that meditators maintained the equilibrium under stress more effectively than non- meditators.

The art of meditation is one of the best ways to reduce stress in the workplace. Companies like IBM Corp., Medtronic Inc, and Shuster Laboratories Inc. are offering meditation programs on-site to their employees to help them reduce stress.

A study (Lazar, et al., 2005) shows thicker cortical regions related to attention and sensory processing in long-term meditation practitioners compared to non-meditators. Also it suggests that meditation practice may offset cortical thinning brought on by aging.

In general meditation can give a sense of calm, peace, emotional well-being and overall health. And these benefits don't end with the end of meditation session. Meditation can help carry calmly throughout day. Meditation also might be useful if you have a medical condition, especially one that may be worsened by stress such as Allergies, Anxiety disorders, Asthma, Depression, Fatigue, Heart disease, High blood pressure, Pain and Sleep disorder.

CONCLUSION; Meditation is a tool for Life Enhancement, Efficiency, Stress Management, Emotional balance and Spiritual Fulfillment. It helps in balancing mind and body and increases mental alertness, concentration – resulting in clarity of decision making. Meditation is beneficial for physical health, illness and possibly well-being, strengthening the Assessment Center, weakening the unhelpful aspects of the Ego Center ,strengthening the helpful parts of the Ego Center (involved with empathy and understanding others) and changing the connections to/from the bodily sensation/fear centers such that one experience sensations in a less reactive, more balanced and holistic way. But the choice still remains between the selection of various meditative techniques. As all human beings are not same, everybody is having different type of psychology. So the selection of technique depends upon the nature of person. The meditation reduces anxiety, increase concentration leads to relaxed state of mind, but this state should not be confined to the period for which meditation is done, it should be the permanent state of mind while doing normal routine day to day activities also.

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