Meditation – What is it and how do you do it?

Meditation is the practice of relaxing and turning your attention inward to your own being. We sit still and close our eyes and connect with our deeper energies...our own inner power. Our day to day experience is made up of many layers. We have our outer experience with work and with relationships and all the dramas that make up our life. We have the experience of the physical body. One day we are healthy, the next we are sick. One day we are tired and the next full of energy. We have the experience of our mind and our emotions, thoughts, feelings and the constant chatter that goes on in our head. Meditation gives us a simple way to take a break from the things in our lives, to make the body comfortable and rested and to quiet the thoughts in our mind so we can become aware of deeper dimensions of self.

There are many different styles of meditation. I will discuss the practice of seated meditation. In seated meditation, there are several methods such as focusing on the breath, reciting a mantra or positive affirmations or visualization techniques. It doesn’t matter what method you use to meditate because the purpose is always the same -it is to help you let go of life for a little while, let your body sit still and to let the mind rest down into the heart.

Five Principles of Meditation

1. **Be Kind to Yourself:** Meditation doesn’t have to be boring, hard or serious to be effective. Look at your attitude when approaching meditation. Many people get into meditation wanting to control their mind, overcome their thoughts, or “master” the practice in some way. When doing meditation, do it with the spirit of nurturing yourself. You want your meditation practice to be something you look forward to doing. This way when you meditate your mind relaxes and your heart softens.

2. **Get Comfortable:** The physical body MUST be comfortable. Instead of emphasizing correct posture, put more attention on comfort in your seated position. If your body is uncomfortable, it is more difficult for the mind and the heart to open in the way it needs to while you are meditating.

If you are sitting on the floor in a crossed leg position, have something soft underneath your ankles such as a towel or blanket. Also, put something underneath your hips such as a folded blanket, towel or a soft cushion to help elevate your hips so your spine can elongate. Another suggestion is sitting on a chair or if you are at home sitting on a couch. The back support on the couch is comfortable and it allows you to use less energy to support your spine in an upright position. If your feet are not flat on the floor, you can place a cushion underneath so your feet feel supported. You can place your hands anywhere that feels natural and comfortable. You will know what the correct posture is for you because you will be comfortable enough to relax.

3. **Relax Your Body:** We experience different moments in our life on a daily basis that impact our body and the way we hold our body. When we are anxious, fearful or constantly on the go, we create a chemical response called the sympathetic stress response in our body which often times shows up as tension, unwanted habits or symptoms. When you let go of the tension on the physical level, that physical relaxation translates into a mental and emotional release because there is a link between our inner mind and heart to our physical body. We are not just relaxing the muscles and bones, but we are allowing a process in the nervous system and the emotional body called the parasympathetic relaxation response to take place which makes it much easier to go inside during our meditation practice.

4. **Connect Your Breath:** The emphasis on breath has three main functions: 1) it connects us to the present moment; 2) it lets us know exactly where we are at on the inside (i.e. our mind, our emotions and our basic state of being at any given moment); 3) the breath is a relaxer. The breath relaxes any physical and/or mental tension or it can shift an emotional state that isn’t working for you. One breath is enough to do all of these things.

(5th principle continued on second page)
5. **Let Go and Be Patient**: The process of “letting go” takes time because we are very used to moving our body or being very active in our mind, we get caught up in the many layers of our day, OR as soon as we sit still we want to fall asleep! The meditation practice and its techniques are a way to let go and release. Letting go allows us to take a break and relax tension in the body as well as allow the mind to get quiet and soften so it too can release. The act of mediation is a pulsation. This means from time to time you may have to shift your posture to get comfortable. The same is true with the mind - our thoughts come and go. If we are patient and we allow these things to happen and we learn how to adjust our posture and our focus during our mediation practice we can learn to stay there and be at ease. We are not meditating for the sake of saying, “we toughed it out”. We are learning how to be comfortable in our inner space. Give yourself a chance to come and go with your attention, to come and go with physical discomfort throughout the meditation. Being patient with the “letting go” process and the natural pulsation of the body and mind are key to a sustained meditation practice.

**YouTube Video - Breath Awareness Meditation**

In this video, I lead you through a Guided Meditation. Get into a comfortable seated position and enjoy 😊

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**Fun 4th of July recipes (two of my favorites)**

The 4th of July is all about getting together with friends and/or family, enjoying each other’s company and of course….eating! This is one of the best times to fire up the grill.

**Garlic Wet Rub**

Here is a Garlic Wet Rub that can go on just about any type of meat. I have used it on pork chops, chicken and salmon.

- 2 tsp sea salt
- 8 garlic cloves, minced or squeezed in a garlic press
- 2 tsp thyme
- 4 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Combine ingredients and brush on meat about an hour before cooking. Makes about 8 tablespoons.

**Corn and Cherry Tomato Salad**

I just love salads in the summer time especially when I can get most of my produce at the Socorro’s Farmers Market.

- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 4 cups fresh corn (cut of the cob)
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
- ⅛ cup fresh basil leaves
- 3 tbsp sherry vinegar
- 2 ounces soft goat cheese
- Salt & pepper to taste

Over medium heat, cook the onion in olive oil for 5 minutes. Add the fresh corn and cook 5 more minutes or till tender to bite. Remove from heat and pour into a bowl. Stir in cherry tomatoes, vinegar and basil. Add salt & pepper. Bring to room temperature then add goat cheese. Serve at room temperature.