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BENEFITS OF HEALTH THROUGH MEDITATION

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ABSTRACT

How can man secure sound health through knowledge of the mental faculties? Let us first inquire what sound health is. Does it mean muscular strength or never having had a day's illness? If a person is endowed with overflowing vitality never having had occasion to rub some soothing balm for a headache but is tense, irritable, or cruel and inconsiderate to subordinates, or lacked initiative and cultural interests, can be placed in the category of one in prime health.

KEYWORDS: Health Through Meditation , cultural interests , physical body.

INTRODUCTION:

The Westerners concentrated all their attention on externals. They placed enormous emphasis upon the



claims of the physical body. They sought emotional stimulus in speed, noise and glare. They looked outside for interest and amusement. Gradually, they began to pay heed to inner forces, the manifestation of the mind; and there has sprung up many new cults. There are numbers of health conditions that may benefit from meditation and its positive effects. For example, we can practice meditation to improve our life through such things as eliminating drug addition, prolonging our life expectancy and improving the condition of several illnesses.

Numerous studies have shown that meditation has health benefits. Many of these benefits are related to the decrease in stress that occurs through meditation. Therefore, what is the meditation? Meditation is "The practice of thinking deeply in silence, especially for religious reasons or in order to make your mind calm"

Meditation maybe defined as an altered state of consciousness, which is induced in a controlled manner. There is nothing very mysterious about it, and people slip in and out of meditation spontaneously in the

course of waking life. A good deal of waking life is punctuated by daydreams, reveries and fantasies in which the mind withdraws to contemplate an interior landscape.

"The word meditation is a very poor substitute for the original term Bhavana, which means 'culture' or 'development', i.e., mental culture or mental development. The Buddhist Bhavana, properly speaking, is mental culture in the full sense of the term. It aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness, sceptical doubts, and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of highest wisdom which

sees the nature of things as they are, and realizes the Ultimate Truth, Nirvana."

The word "meditation" carries different meanings in different contexts. Meditation often involves an internal effort to self-regulate the mind in some way, it is often used to clear the mind and ease many health issues, such as, depression, anxiety, melancholy, etc. On the other hand, meditation may involve generating an emotional state for the purpose of analyzing that state, as anger, hatred, etc. or culture particular mental response to various phenomena, such as compassion. The term "Meditation" can refer to the state itself, as well as to practices or techniques employed to cultivate the state. In addition, meditation has a calming effect and directs awareness inward until pure awareness is achieved, described as being awake inside without being aware of anything except awareness itself.

Regard to Buddhist, Meditation in Buddhism can be appreciated by recalling that it was while meditating that the Buddha gained enlightenment. Virtually all schools of Buddhism see meditation as the high road to enlightenment, and it constitutes a major part of the aspect of Buddhism as religion.

In the Buddhist tradition, meditation is used to defuse the source of all the trouble the illusion of self and other. On the other hand, in meditation, the aim is to overcome thought and defilement. Having done this, and with thought no longer stirring, the real substance of mind becomes evident. Without thoughts and without the illusion of self and other, greed, anger and hatred have no place to arise; and the energy that was tied up by those illusions becomes available, helping to provide an overall improvement in health. That is why meditation is called the Fundamental practice.

Such, meditation offers us the most effective tool to calm these waves of mental energy. Inability to stem this flow of energy when desired causes mental restlessness, which often leads to all sorts of inner tension and disharmony. Meditation refers to a broad variety of practices that includes techniques designed to promote relaxation, build internal energy or life force and develop compassion, love, patience, generosity and forgiveness. A particularly form of meditation aims at refers to a group of techniques, most of which originated in Eastern religious or spiritual traditions and are also practiced today for stress reduction and other health-related purposes. Common elements of most types of meditation include a space with minimal distractions; a specific comfortable position; a particular focus of attention; and an open attitude.

For the human life, when we live in the mind it is easy to get distracted by small irritations. For example, maybe we find it intolerable to be kept waiting in a line, or we get upset by a small misdemeanor of another person. The solution is not to avoid these minor problems, because they will keep appearing no matter how hard we may try.

The only effective solution is to develop detachment and keep things in perspective. A powerful benefit of meditation is that we are able to detach ourselves from these insignificant, yet irritating thoughts. This detachment is not indifference, it is just that we are able to maintain equanimity in the midst of life's inevitable turbulence.

Meditation can help us to achieve a state of heightened mental awareness which enables us to slow down our body processes, and achieve a positive state of relaxation. Longevity is believed to be one of the effects of the slowdown in body processes. It has a great impact upon one's mind and relaxation of mental health is gained thereby. The root of all the diseases is unequanimous mind, which is cured by meditation. People suffering from any disease slowly may practice meditation, which will help to have speedy recovery. Health problems can be solved by this meditation. A number of mediators have cured their diseases such as Hypertension, Pain, Glands Subsiding. Many Cardiologists advise meditation to lower cardio-respiratory rate and for elevated blood pressure patients. It is proved that meditation is far a greater importance than medication.

On physical level, it helps each cell to revitalize itself; it facilitates digestion; it makes respiration more efficient; it improves circulation and quality of blood. And on the mental, on level, it becomes a methodology to train the mind to concentrate; it cleans and relaxes the mind; it offers a way to treat serious psychosomatic illnesses without drugs; it is an efficient exercise in self-discipline leading to the end of addiction and other bad habits; it leads to what lies beyond conscious mind.

People often adopt meditation in order to reduce stress factors. Indeed, it is a very efficient solution to improve our capacity to resist the negative effects of outside pressures. The source of these pressures may come from various aspects of life, such as family, work, illness. Scientific research has shown that several hormones and

other biochemical compounds found in our blood, which is good indicators of stress, do decrease during meditation. Stress factors often manifest themselves as muscular tensions and psychological problems such as depression and anxiety, so by using meditation techniques we should be able to minimize their effects on our mind/body.

Reducing the risk of strokes and heart attacks is also one of the benefits of meditation. We can lower blood pressure because of meditation practices, thus lowering the chances of heart problems. The rapid full breathing techniques in meditation allow better displacement of carbon dioxide in the lungs and blood by increasing the amount of oxygen. This increase of oxygen saturation in the body enhances metabolic processes and purifies the body more effectively. The conversion of food nutrition into energy harnessed by the cells becomes highly efficient.

About Cancer, the investigators concluded that meditation may improve the psychosocial adjustment of patients with cancer. In a study of the psychological effects of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy on patients diagnosed with various stages of cancer (n= 115), patients were randomly assigned to 8 weeks of 2-hour sessions of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (1-hour of which was spent in meditation), plus an additional full-day session during the course, or to a wait-list control. Patients were assessed at pretreatment and at 10 weeks and 3 months post-training. Compared with the controls, patients who had received mindfulness training had significant improvements on measures of mindfulness, depression, distress and quality of life.

Substance Abuse: A critical review of the literature indicates that the most widely studied types of meditation have a helpful emerging role to play in treating substance-abuse disorders. A systematic review of three clinical studies suggested that Vipassanā meditation could reduce alcohol and other substance abuse in incarcerated populations. Because mindfulness was positively associated with a sense of control among 158 enrollees in a smoking-cessation program, it was concluded that mindfulness-based interventions might enhance smoking cessation.

Memory Loss: A recent preliminary study indicates that patients with memory loss may potentially be helped by meditation, if the results are borne out in future trials. This 8-week meditation program with 14 subjects with memory loss produced improvements in cerebral blood flow and memory.

Meditation can be a powerful adjuvant in all the above-mentioned conditions. Of course, it is not a cure for some of them and medical treatment should always be considered first. Meditation helps support medical treatments by helping us relax and accentuate more positive aspects of our life, while diminishing the negative effects of distress factors and illnesses.

Maybe meditation is not so mysterious after all. Neuroscientists have found that meditators shift the brain activity to different areas of the cortex; brain waves in the stress-prone right frontal cortex move to the calmer left frontal cortex. This mental shift decreases the negative effects of stress, mild depression and anxiety. There is also less activity in the amygdala, where the brain processes fear and paranoia. Many successful business people, celebrities and sports professionals practice and enjoy the benefits of meditation. Numerous businesses promote and provide help and assistance to their staff with the benefits of meditation courses and because of this; they gain an advantage over their competitors and create more profit.

Research has scientifically proven that meditation is a safe and simple way to balance your physical, emotional and mental state and its countless values have been known and practiced for thousands of years. More and more doctors promote the benefits of meditation to cure many stress related illnesses. Everyday most of us experience stress in many different ways and we believe many people are simply not aware of the benefits of meditation or of how much stress we actually hold on to. Normally life-threatening situations trigger off the stress response, which enables us to act without contemplation and deliberation and survive intense situations using fast reflexes. When our bodies are exposed to a sudden threat, we respond with the characteristic fight or flight reaction, which is known as an adrenaline rush. When adrenaline and other hormones are released from the adrenal glands the pulse races, blood pressure increases, our breathing becomes faster and the blood flow to the muscles increases. If we are in extreme danger, these reactions are of great assistance and gain to us. We have inherited this survival response from our ancestors who faced many life-threatening situations every day. The same response is now triggered in our daily lives when we are in a traffic hold up, someone irritates us at work or

we simply break a cup. If we do not confront the situation (and many are beyond our control), we end up being in a permanent state of stress.

One of the most important benefits of meditation is how it releases stress from our bodies. Meditation practiced regularly will lead you to a deeper level of relaxation and contemplation. If you want to be free of constant worry, pressure and stress, the benefits of meditation can give you a life that is calm, peaceful, happy and relaxed. Even ten minutes of meditation a day will help alleviate stress.

The critical skills of effective managers, as well as the relationship of these skills to effective management, are very much in need of further understanding. This is not to say meditation guarantees our good health. However, there is a growing awareness of the link between our state of mind and physical health. Quite often physical ailments are symptoms of inner turmoil. Meditation can give us peace of mind, and this can be a helpful step in avoiding many stress related ailments. Meditation has also been shown to relieve the pain associated with certain illnesses.

One of the more obvious benefits of meditation is the reduction of stress. Imagine yourself rushing to the hospital to see a friend that just had injuries in a car crash. The roads are icy, one of our headlights burns out, the traffic is crazy and the knob on the radio breaks, leaving a half-tuned station blaring in our ears. Then we recall that we were trying to decide when to quit our jobs and which type of business to start.

Obviously stress is not conducive to good decision-making (or good living), but sometimes we forget this lesson and push our way through problems despite an overloaded mind. The scenario above is not necessarily more extreme than what is going on inside our busy minds when nothing so obvious is happening externally. Our monkey minds may take us on a wild, noisy ride on icy roads with one headlight while we are just sitting there eating breakfast. One of the benefits of meditation is that it can tame those monkeys, lessening our stress level. Less stress means better decision-making and better living.

Meditation is now widely accepted as a mind-body technique for maintaining holistic health and wellness. In medical and rehabilitation settings, meditation has proven to be a safe and effective adjunctive therapy for treating a variety of conditions and the psychologic effects of chronic illness and pain—effects often not addressed in conventional treatments. Evidence suggesting that meditation has neuroprotective properties has implications for enhancing cognition and preventing dementia. Further efforts are needed to apply meditation practices in clinical settings in ways that are practical, effective and meaningful. Comparison of different types of meditation and of meditation with other therapies, evaluation of long-term effects, and further elucidation of the neurobiological and clinical correlates of this nonpharmacologic modality are warranted.

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