

Relax and De-stress with Meditation



It can be a challenge to make the time to rest our minds, relax and find peace. But it is definitely worth the effort.

According to a study reported at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University (csbsju.edu/chp/counseling/self-care/relax-meditate), chronic stress may be linked to many physical illnesses and can negatively affect our mental health. The study showed that:

- * 43% of adults experienced adverse health effects from stress.
- * 75-90% of visits to a physician's office are for stress-related conditions and complaints.
- * Stress has been linked to the six leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide. Developing the ability to relax is essential to effectively mitigating the impacts of stress and anxiety.

How can we learn to relax and enjoy life's simple moments with all our duties and responsibilities? Meditation may be the

answer. Consider this information.

Meditation has been used for years as a way to increase calmness and help with physical relaxation. Meditation is a combination of the mind and body working together to calm the mind and help us find peace. According to the National Center of Complementary and Integrative Health, there are numerous types of meditation, but most have four common elements:

1. A quiet location with few distractions.
2. A comfortable position (sitting, lying down, walking).
3. A focus of attention on something specific.
4. An open attitude to let distractions come and go without judgment.

There are numerous benefits to meditation. It calms, restores, reduces stress, lowers blood pressure, frees our mind from worries, helps us focus on happiness, creates a more stable mood and increases our feelings of control over life's situations. It also decreases muscle tension, helps with weight loss, enhances energy levels, improves memory, promotes greater tolerance, gives deeper spirituality, slows the aging process and helps us put things into perspective.

Learning to relax through meditation is a skill that takes time and practice. There are many online resources and apps available. Take time to explore different methods and find what works best. Dedicate 10 minutes each day for meditation, and learn ways to relax and reflect on the positive things in life.

By: Cindy Nelson, Utah State University Extension associate professor, cindy.nelson@usu.edu