

STYLUS

Scratching Beneath the Surface

stylus n. an instrument of metal, bone, or the like,
used by the ancients for writing

ESCAPING MENTAL CLUTTER Meditating for Health and Well-Being

by Nina Durfee

Ever feel like there's so much to do that focus on any one thing is impossible?

Our lives are like movies. The scenarios play out in color, light, motion, sound, and plot on the screen of our mind. We play multiple roles: parent, business manager, volunteer, committee member, shortstop, elder-care giver, bill payer, handyman, housekeeper. All in one day. Every day!

The simultaneous projection of multiple movies on one screen causes the boundaries to blur and focus to fade. The result is frustration, inefficiency, non-productivity, anxiety, fear, and stress. We fall into bed at night, welcoming unconsciousness. We awaken somewhat refreshed, but often with the mind still running at full tilt.

Sleep erases the lighter, surface-level stress, but deeper tension accumulate over time, compacting into concrete blocks. Mental stress manifests physically as indigestion, ulcers, high blood pressure, inefficient heart rate, tense muscles. Left unchecked, stress over time produces major dis-ease: clogged arteries and bowels, chronic pain, cancer.

How can you consciously escape the stress, eliminate the clutter, and move purposely forward with mental clarity and renewed physical energy?

Meditation is one way.

Before I reached the age of majority, I landed a job as a legal secretary. Even at that tender age, my desk job and repetitive motion sent me home each evening with a knot in my shoulder. After a good night's sleep, the knot would be gone, and I'd go back for more. After about six months, the knot was stronger, and sleep wouldn't untie it. I carried it with me all the time.

A friend (to whom I am deeply indebted to this day) invited me to an introductory lecture about meditation. The speaker described the technique as one of "restful alertness," quieting the mind, plumbing the depths, reaching a state of "pure awareness." It all sounded very abstract until he mentioned it also releases physical stress and tension. I was hooked.

I learned the technique and meditated morning and evening. I felt immediate relief from the shoulder tension while I was meditating. A few weeks of regular practice whittled away at the knot. Before long, the knot disappeared with my evening meditation. One day, the knot ceased to appear. I was so impressed with the results that I became an instructor of meditation, and I've meditated regularly for over thirty years.

Doctors, scientists and health-care providers worldwide recognize the benefits of meditation. Brainwave studies show that meditation produces alpha waves, which characterize relaxation. Scientists report that lack of alpha wave activity results in stress and anxiety, with negative consequences for our immune systems. The experience is restfulness deeper than sleep, without losing awareness.

The physical results are only the beginning.

Along with physical release of stress, I experienced an increase in both physical and mental energy. Meditation is like entering the mind with a broom and sweeping away the clutter. It gets stuff out of the way that interferes with smooth functioning. During meditation, hearing, smell and physical sensation are more acute. After meditation, colors are more vivid, taste buds more alive and discerning. Increased mental clarity allows for more efficient focus, improved reaction time, and greater productivity.

And it gets better.

When our sense of accomplishment grows, so does our self-satisfaction. When we feel fulfilled, we are naturally happier, friendlier, easier to get along with, more communicative, intuitive and creative. Our relationships with family, friends, and co-workers naturally improve.

How we behave with others influences how others behave. When we approach others from a platform of ease and contentment, we elicit the same from them. Think what this means on a grand scale. It's been said that peace begins at home. Happiness, satisfaction and self-acceptance promote a healthier state of being in our circle of influence. Those within our circle spread that well-being to their respective circles. The wave goes on, and . . . you get the idea.

The potential is unlimited.

A WORD ABOUT HABIT

The success of meditation lies in regular practice. Alternation of dipping in and emerging, rest and activity, stabilizes the results. For me, meditation is a habit, like brushing teeth. I enjoy the cleansing experience in the moment and don't think much about the results throughout the day. On days when I don't meditate, I feel mentally and physically sluggish. My attention span is shorter, as is my fuse. I'm grumpier and more tired in the evening. Several days without meditation and I feel downright crabby and worthless. Habitually accessing the inner pool of quiet ensures consistent achievement of desired results.

WHAT CAN MEDITATION DO FOR YOU?

- ◆ Meditation creates a state of relaxation deeper than sleep.
- ◆ Deep relaxation quiets the mind and dissolves physical, mental and emotional stress.
- ◆ Benefits of meditation include more physical energy, increased mental clarity, greater productivity, deeper fulfillment, improved relations with others, and peace of mind.

- ◆ Regular practice, alternating rest and activity, stabilizes the benefits, enriching all aspects of life.

HOW CAN I LEARN TO MEDITATE?

Meditation comes in many forms. Some techniques require complex physical posturing. Some techniques require intense mental concentration. These techniques can be difficult and time-consuming.

For a less time-intensive technique that is comfortable, enjoyable, relaxing and does not require gazing into the navel, go to www.lifesculpt.net/programs.