

Unhappiness, depression...meditation

Margot Phaneuf, R.N. PhD. ©¹

In our competitive society with its ephemeral interpersonal relationships and “throw-away” human beings, understandably we often feel dissatisfied. The difficulties of work, study and family life, especially when we must juggle them all at once, constitute important stress factors which generate unhealthy tensions which we now know cause all kinds of problems affecting our physical and mental health. Some days we feel apathetic, out of our depth, stress overcomes us and depression rears its ugly head with its plethora of gloomy days. And if we don’t intervene, it may invade our entire life. Moreover, these tensions can usher in a host of other afflictions such as anxiety crises, phobias, burnout, hypertension, digestive or sleep disorders, chronic fatigue, dependent behaviour and so on

Our patients suffer the same burden in the face of physical pain, the incertitude of the treatment, problematic circumstances, and the impasse of a monotonous life or the anguish of psychological suffering. They seem to lose their energy, their capacity to spring back, everything weighs on them and they cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel. For those of us who accompany them on this difficult path things are not simple either and we often ask ourselves what we can do to help².

Modern psychiatry offers some solutions, but at times we wish that we could give our patients effective tools so that they would not be so tossed about by life, drifting aimlessly, tools which would put them in command and give them better control over their lives.



Research on the strategies adjunct to treatment and the conservation of health

Several modern authors (Herbert Benson³, Servan Schrieber⁴, Frédéric Rosenfeld⁵, Jon Kabat-Zinn⁶) invoke the beneficial effects of certain methods of reconnecting ourselves

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². Image : *Mandala* <http://mandala.skynetblogs.be/>

³. Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medecine ; <http://www.mbmi.org/home/>

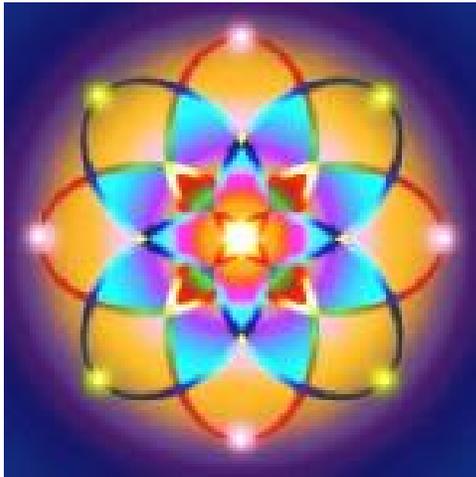
⁴. David Servan Schreiber(2000). *La spiritualité : un instinct* sur Psychologies.com : http://www.psychologies.com/cfml/chroniqueur/c_chroniqueur.cfm?id=232

⁵. Frédéric Rosenfeld (2007). *Méditer c’est soigner*. Paris, Les Arènes du livre

⁶. Jon kabat-Zinn (2005). *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness*. New-York, Hyperion Books.

with our life force for when we let ourselves be overcome by unhappiness in the face of our destiny, or the weight of the past, the physiological reactions of stress strain our physical and psychological resistance.

These thinkers explain that we can find a favourable balance for health by harmonizing our thoughts, emotions and body. They point to relaxation and meditation as a way to combat stress and its consequences, and show us how to regain a state of homeostasis, or what Thierry Janssen calls the **reflex of tranquillity**⁷. Modern research also shows the beneficial effects of these methods as powerful adjuncts to the treatment of certain illnesses. These and other related strategies, by their action on the mind-body connection, already have many adepts in general medicine, neurology, psychiatry, dermatology and oncology⁸. The relaxation response which results from meditation in all of its diverse



forms has become particularly popular in certain countries such as the United States, Australia and France. Research carried out in such well-known medical centres as the University of Massachusetts, (Kabat-Zinn), the University of Wisconsin (Richard Davidson) or the Harvard Medical School (Herbert Benson) demonstrates its beneficial effects⁹. One must recognize however, that the methodology on which this research is based is often difficult to establish¹⁰.

Meditation as a recourse to counter stress

Meditation should be considered as the discipline of choice to help us in our demanding professional life, to combat daily stress or as a means of intervening with our patients. It is easy to learn and to teach and costs nothing. What more can we ask for? Image¹¹.

On the personal level, developed as a life discipline, it enables us to cultivate a harmonious balance among all the molecules of our body which, each in their own way, work to maintain life around themselves¹².

It is easy to learn about meditation whether for oneself or as a possible intervention for our patients in certain circumstances. And, in order to understand what one is doing, it is important to understand what this practice is, where it comes from, how it has evolved

⁷. Thierry Janssen (2006). *La solution intérieure*. Paris, Fayard, p. 112.

⁸. D.Spiegel et J. Giese-Davis (2004). *Examining the evidence that psychotherapy improves the survival of cancer patients*. *Biological Psychiatry*. 56(1): 62-64.

⁹. Richard J. Davidson, PhD, Jon Kabat-Zinn et al. (2003). *Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation:*

<http://www.psychosomaticmedicine.org/cgi/content/abstract/65/4/564>

¹⁰. S.D. Schaffer, C.B.Yucha (2004). *Relaxation & pain management: the relaxation response can play a role in managing chronic and acute pain*, Am J Nurs. 2004 Aug;104(8):75-6, 78-9, 81-2.

¹¹. <http://mandala.mylinea.com/> sur Mandala: <http://mandala.skynetblogs.be/>

¹². David Servan-Schreiber (2007). *Anticancer*. Paris, Robert Laffont, p. 253

through the ages and above all, how it can help us and how to practice it without all the complexities and subtleties of the spiritual associations which may put some people off.

Meditation through the ages

Our contemporary image of meditation features monks sitting in a reverential position before a sacred image, reciting mysterious chants in a monotone, the traditional “om”.

Such a universe intrigues us and meditation is generally perceived as an activity of a religious nature, related especially to Tibetan Buddhism. However, this is not quite true for until recently, meditation was also associated with the practice of oriental ascetics in India, China and Japan and even in the Christian world.

Meditation goes back a long way in the history of humanity and indeed, its roots are in the Orient. It was already taught in India in high antiquity whereas Zen, began with the Buddha’s experience of awakening and illumination about 2,500 years ago. Imported from China, it solidly established itself in Japan.



But one must not forget that during the first centuries of the present era, in the Christian Middle East, even the Church fathers practised a form of meditation which focused on the act of breathing and the name of God. Today, this is known as **hesychastic meditation**, and is presently undergoing a form of renewal¹³. The word comes from the Greek *hsuxia* (hesychia) which means: stillness, rest, quiet, silence, tranquillity, the sign of a unified interior. According to this

discipline, the essential thing is to stand eternally in the presence of God¹⁴. Image¹⁵. Two thousand years old hesychastic meditation, also known as the prayer of the heart, was a means of experiencing the inner peace which enabled the person to refocus themselves on their deepest spiritual core.

However, since meditation is fundamentally a discipline based on serenity and the focusing of our minds in an attitude of personal introspection, it is currently practiced without any ideological, religious or mystical connexions which make it much easier to transpose to our lives as well as to the health-care system, too often concerned only with pragmatism and positivism.

¹³. Horia Roscanu *L'hésychasme, paix du cœur au cœur du monde : pour ne pas s'enliser*. <http://www.erudit.org/revue/theologi/1999/v7/n2/005026ar.html>

¹⁴. Lucien COUTU (1996). *La méditation hésychaste*, Montréal, Fides, p. 27

¹⁵. Image Fotosearch Libre de droits : <http://www.fotosearch.fr/lushpix/spiritualite-priere-et-meditation-hindoues/UNY713/2/>.

The search for serenity and the New Age

Several decades ago, meditation became fashionable in certain trendy circles. In general its practitioners sought to detach themselves from our competitive society and attain serenity. They were nourished by the New Age movement, the trend to the awakening of the spirit, the expansion of consciousness and a return to a certain spirituality. It was the era of “peace and love” and the discovery of various esoteric practices influenced by Hindu philosophies.

At that time, transcendental meditation was very popular and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was its most well-known guru. He maintained that transcendental meditation enabled our consciousness to open to the infinite reservoir of energy, creativity and intelligence which resides in each one of us.

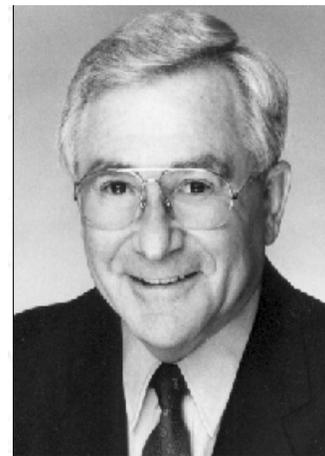
Many adopted this practice, although it remained a bit marginal because of its exotic origins and parareligious aspect. Moreover, certain sectarian abuses some of which were frankly mercantile gave the movement a bad name. Who hasn't seen publicity announcing training sessions for this type of meditation and who hasn't heard of the excesses of certain gurus?¹⁶ Some sects used meditation and personal development training to recruit adepts. And badly used, meditation can become an instrument to create dependence in the hands of exploiters without conscience¹⁷.

However, serious practice has been maintained over time and research validating its effects has been carried out demonstrating interesting results on relaxation with its positive corollaries: the stimulation of intellectual performance, decrease in arterial tension, etc.¹⁸.

Medical recognition

Today meditation continues to be practised and its use for certain health problems is again an object of interest stimulating medical recognition. One such school of thought, developed by Dr. Herbert Benson, influenced more by its therapeutic uses than by its religious affiliation, recommends its practice¹⁹.

Through his research, Dr. Benson demonstrated how meditation, specifically a certain practical form without any spiritual connotations which he recommends, can have an



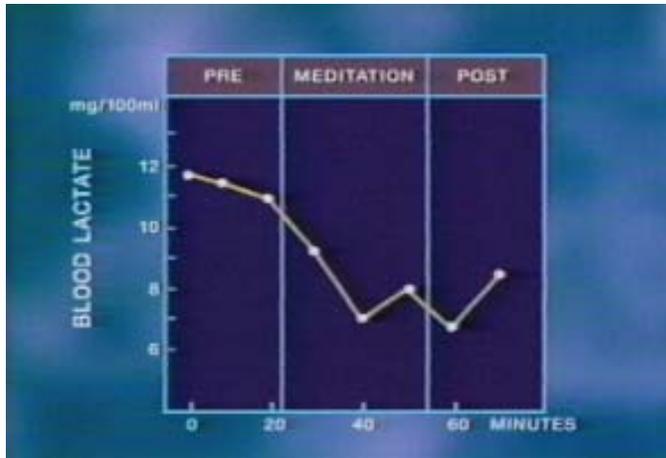
¹⁶. *La méditation transcendantale* sur le site la méditation transcendantale France : <http://www.mt-maharishi.com/>

¹⁷. Jean-Yves Roy (1998). *Le syndrome du berger*, Montréal, Boréal

¹⁸. L'orient dévoyé. <http://www.prevensectes.com/orient1.htm>

¹⁹. *Jon Kabat-Zin propose l'intégration de la méditation aux sciences médicales* <http://www.psychotherapie-integrative.com/jon-kabat-zinn.htm> Tiré de Jon Kabat-Zin *Où tu vas, tu es*. Paris, Éditions J'ai lu.

effect on arterial tension and other physiological parameters including blood lactate levels which is an indicator of stress. The following table from Dr. Benson's research clearly shows how blood lactate levels diminished during meditation and remained low even 60 minutes after meditation²⁰. Photo²¹.



The other table is taken from a presentation by Dr. Claude Fournier. He explains the advantages of the relaxation response whose effects he demonstrates by the discipline of qi gong²². For his part, Jon Kabat-Zinn, biologist at MIT, has been teaching meditation to patients for the last thirty years and his program is now taught with success in over 250 hospitals around the world²³.

Several authors have also recently become interested in the effects of relaxation on depression and the feelings of discontent which accompany it. This was of particular interest to Dr. Rosenfeld. In his book "Méditer, c'est se soigner".²⁴ He carries out an extensive study of the benefits of meditation as regards health and establishes the connection between medical science, meditation and its effects on stress, anxiety, panic and depression. The preface, by the psychiatrist Christophe André and the monk Mathieu Ricard holder of a doctorate in biology, attests to the seriousness of the work.

氣功 Relaxation response

Physiological state	Relaxation response
Metabolism	Decrease
Blood pressure	Decrease
Heartbeat	Decrease
Breathing	Decrease
Slow cerebral waves	Increase
Muscular tension	Decrease
Blood lactate	Decrease

(Translation)

²⁰. Herbert Benson et Myriam Z. Klipper (2000). *The relaxation response*. Revised. Edition. HarperCollins.

²¹. *Course for medial professionals. Prescribing medication- not just medication.*
<http://relaxationresponse.org/> / Blood lactate : <http://relaxationresponse.org/img/prfile163.jpg>

²². Photo: Site: *Mind Body medical Institute* www.mbmi.org

²³. Claude Fournier, colloque de Lévis, avril 2004. *Le qi gong un mode de relaxation pour gens anxieux ou déprimés.* www.hdl.qc.ca/fr/Informations_Generales/présentations_oncologie/Qigong%20-%20Dr%20Claude%20Fournier.ppt

²⁴. Frédéric Rosenfeld (2007). *Méditer, c'est se soigner*. Paris, Éditions Les Arènes.

In an article on depression, Dr. Williams, psychiatrist and researcher at Oxford University in England, also advocates meditation as an adjunct treatment for these states of unhappiness. He stresses the importance of the discovery that negative emotions and thoughts can be activated even when the subject is feeling well. Furthermore, a relapse can be avoided by preventing a moderate imbalance from going out of control. Research has shown that one can achieve this by a combination of the ancient practice of meditation and modern psychotherapy²⁵.

He explains that when treatment is stopped at the end of an episode of depression, more than 50% of the patients, who gave the impression of having entirely recovered, suffered a relapse. After a second or third episode of depression, the probability of a relapse increased to 80 or 90%. Moreover, the probability of a relapse is particularly high when the person has suffered an initial episode when they were young (less than 20 years old). Thus, recourse to antidepressants, both as a method of treatment and to prevent relapses, does a lot for the patient but it is important to add a discipline which will accompany them all of their lives and help them maintain better personal balance. This in turn will enable them to avoid the negative thoughts which activate cognitive reactivity and by the same token, a relapse.

For this reason meditation is now part of the British government's directive concerning the treatment of major depression with relapse²⁶. Even though some remain sceptical, we can see that meditation and certain disciplines of oriental origin are becoming part and parcel of state of the art medicine. Image²⁷.



Desired effects

Regardless of the technique used, the effects sought by the practice of meditation are above all immediate: relaxation is an efficient way to manage stress in our daily lives. But its practice also aims to modify our attitude towards life by increasing our tolerance of frustration, our receptivity to a more positive way of thinking, and giving us better control of our lives. The regular practice of meditation slowly but surely, even enables one to modify certain negative reactions and behaviours and through better self-control, improves our capacity to manage the sad thoughts which can initiate an episode of depression.

²⁵. J.M.G. Williams (2006). *La dépression vaincue par la méditation*. <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/williams1> et <http://www.project-syndicate.org/contributor/862>

²⁶. David Servan-Schreiber (2007). *Anticancer*. Paris, Robert Laffont, p. 256

²⁷. Image tirée de la présentation du Dr. Claude Fournier, colloque de Lévis, avril 2004. *Le qi gong un mode de relaxation pour gens anxieux ou déprimés*. www.hdl.qc.ca/fr/Informations_Generales/présentations_oncologie/Qigong%20-%20Dr%20Claude%20Fournier.ppt

A variety of options

Different meditation techniques were developed in different cultures and historical periods. It has never been shown that any particular manner of meditating is better than another. What counts is to adopt, or to propose to our patients, a method which suits us or which fits in with our lifestyle, our beliefs, or those of our patients. Whatever the nature or origin of meditation, the important thing is to focus our attention and turn it inwards. Jon Kabat-Zinn essentially states that the more we are hooked up to the exterior world, whether it be by phone, internet or television, the less we are able to turn inward²⁸. The period of meditation focusing on the breath, source of life and energy, enables us to create a place of inner silence and to establish a profound contact with ourselves. This quality of self-awareness encourages a clear mind and the capacity to concentrate our thoughts. It helps us to live in the present with intensity, paying attention to what is around us, thus empowering us.

The relaxation response

There are several methods of meditating and not all require that we sit in a particular way with our legs in the lotus position. For the relaxation response, Dr. Benson of Harvard University in the United States recommends that we simply sit comfortably in a quiet place with our eyes closed and concentrate on the movements of our breath, slightly lengthening the out-breath. In order to be effective, this practice should take about 20 to 30 minutes and if possible, be done twice a day. In contrast to other meditation techniques, it enables us to create a space in our mind and if thoughts rise up, we let them pass by, without holding onto them and without seeking to chase them away.



Zen meditation

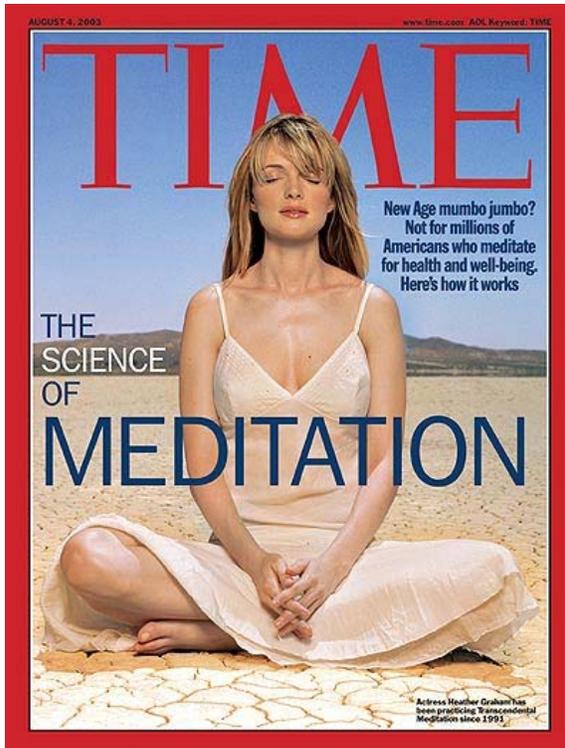
Zen meditation is more demanding. Of Buddhist origin, it appeared in China around the year 600 AD. It is based on a particular philosophy which aspires to appease all the struggles and conflicts within us by the interior silence it procures. It thus aims at an encounter with ourselves, without any intermediary, at developing a sentiment of goodness towards oneself and the dissolution of our tendency to compare ourselves with others or with an image we may have of ourselves.

There are several types of Zen meditation; we will describe the Zazen which consists of observing what happens without judgement. We become aware of all the sensations which enter through our eyes, our ears and all of our body, without becoming attached to them. Image²⁹.

²⁸. Jon Kabat-Zin (2005). *Coming to our senses*. New-York, Hyperion.

²⁹. Image : *Petit manuel à l'usage des aspirants qui désirent apprendre la méditation Zen*. Paris, Editions du Seuil, 2007, pp. 201-206. <http://www.zen-occidental.net/groupes/manuel.html>

This form of meditation requires that one sit cross-legged on a small cushion in the lotus position; hands placed palms down on our knees in a place devoid of all distraction, for example, before a wall. This position, called the position of dignity, with the back straight, chin up, favours the free circulation of energy. Sitting upright with our spine straight is important. The position should be energetic but not rigid, with the shoulders falling naturally, for one must be comfortable in order to meditate. Our way of holding ourselves can have a marked effect on what we feel and this posture enables us to be relaxed but at the same time stay alert and attentive. Whatever the meditation technique chosen, one should avoid the reclining position which risks inducing sleep.



Breathing through the nose with the mouth closed should be peaceful and unconstrained, the tip of the tongue touching the palate. Air is slowly and silently expired towards the exterior without any particular visualisation and the push of breathing out descends deeply through the abdomen producing a soft massage of the internal organs. The eyes are closed or semi-closed, the gaze settling at a distance of about a meter in front of us. Without seeking to distinguish objects, our vision becomes unfocused, the gaze enlarges and becomes hazy and turns inwards. The ultimate aim of meditation is to procure serenity²⁹.

Transcendental meditation

This form of meditation is generally undertaken with the help of a guru who

belongs to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi organisation but some people successfully take it up themselves. It is practiced in the sitting position, back straight, eyes open or closed, for 15 to 20 minutes, twice a day. In this method, the idea is not to create a void but to fill our thoughts using a *mantra*. “Mantra” signifies “liberation of the spirit”. The mantra is comprised of a sound, a word or a phrase which one repeats rhythmically, out loud or mentally³⁰. Image³¹.

The sounds which we emit, the words which we speak are charged with energy and the repetition of certain words has a particular vibratory effect. What acts is not the meaning of the words but the act of repeating them. Throughout history, all religious and spiritual schools have used words or sounds or repetitive phrases in the form of litanies or prayers, as a means of self-concentration. These mantras achieve a vibratory frequency which

³⁰. *Vivre sans stress. Méditation transcendante*. <http://www.gilray.ca/MT/MT.html>

³¹. *Introduction à la méditation avec mantra*. Sur L'esprit indompté. <http://france.wildmind.org/mantras>
Image. http://www.gilray.ca/MT/vivre_sans_stress.html

gradually influences the state of conscience during the period of meditation, absorbing the thoughts, sensations and emotions leaving only the waves produced by the mantra. Thus for a time, the mantra liberates the mind and its wanderings, that is our preoccupations, judgements, negative emotions. The idea is to silence the constant chatter in our heads.

It is said that the mantra must be given by a guide and should correspond to the person, but many adepts of meditation choose their own mantra. There are words which have a calming power or the power to awaken the conscience. These are the *Om* or *Aum* which have come down to us through the ages and which can be recited or chanted quietly. There are also the six sacred syllables of the Tibetans, the “Om Mani Padme Hum”, which literally means “homage to the crown of the lotus”, but one can also use the words: “God”, “love”, “charity” or the phrase “Jesus have mercy” or any other sound, word or phrase which we consider suitable. An author whom I once read meditated on the word “one”. One must pronounce the mantra inwardly and let it appease our thoughts returning to it each time that they arise.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness Meditation is another form of meditation currently associated with stress reduction. It is quick and easy to learn and is currently used. It is called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction or MBSR and is recommended by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn of the University of Massachusetts Medical School where the Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society, which has no religious affiliation, is located³². The term *mindfulness meditation*, refers to the action of focusing one’s attention in a deliberate and particular manner on the present moment, without making any value judgement, without trying to avoid or flee the sensations attached to the anxiety which may arise. This practice may lead to a reduction of the emotional tensions which accompany the symptoms of anxiety. It is based on a philosophy which aims to lead the person to appreciate the present moment, to live it fully, to open oneself to life and others. The observed effects are³³:

- A greater capacity to face anxiety, fear and stress;
- A reduction of pain and a better adaptation to sickness and suffering;
- A greater capacity to live difficult emotions;
- Greater clarity of spirit;
- A better appreciation of life and a lessening of the negative moods which lead to depression

³². Davidson, R. J. et Kabat-Zinn, J., et al. (2003). [Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation](#). *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65, 564-570.

³³. Michael Speca et al. *The Effect of a Mindfulness Meditation-based Stress Reduction Program on Mood and Symptoms of Stress in Cancer Outpatients* : http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&dopt=AbstractPlus&list_uids=11020090

Like a stone thrown in a lake where the ripples flow outwards along the surface of the water, the effects of meditation can be felt in all aspects of life, on the physical as well as the psychological plane. Image ³⁴. The practice of *mindfulness meditation* can even favour *cognitive restructuring and the cessation of negative emotions*, either by modifying the content of our thoughts or by modifying our attitude towards these thoughts. For example, observing without judgement our pain and the thoughts attached to the anxiety which accompanies pain, can lead to a change in attitude. It is not so much the content of the thoughts which changes but rather the attitude



of the person towards these thoughts³⁵.

This form of meditation consists, like all the others, of sitting comfortably and centering oneself first on one's breathing, then the body sensations, that is on what is seen, heard, and felt. This *body scan* enables us to check our entire body in order to explore its sensations. One can also concentrate on various objects such as an orange, a grape or on different daily activities such as brushing one's teeth, peeling a fruit, walking, stretching or tasting certain foods.

It consists of becoming fully conscious of what is going on at each moment, being fully present to oneself. The other step is to become aware of our thoughts, especially our painful thoughts and what they provoke in us. Most of the time we are on *automatic pilot*; mindfulness teaches us to quit this state and become conscious, at each moment, of all our sensations. The principal exercises which make it up are the *body scan* and *meditating on our breath*³⁶. It is easier to practice this method with a guide or better yet in a group.

Other forms of meditation

One can also meditate without any association with a traditional school. Some people meditate by looking at a flower, an image which pleases them or a *mandala*, a Sanskrit word meaning circle. One can also do walking meditation. One takes a dignified, energetic attitude while remaining at ease. The spine is held straight, the head is up and the eyes are lowered. The left thumb is bent within the left fist which is encircled by the right hand, and the hands are held against the sternum with the forearms horizontal. We walk to the rhythm of our breathing, attention being paid to each movement. For example, the in-breath coincides with the right foot forward and the out-breath with the left foot forward.

³⁴. Image libre de droits : <http://www.matton.fr/images/recherche/cercle+concentrique.html>

³⁵. Guido Bondolfi (2004). *Les approches utilisant des exercices de méditation de type « mindfulness » ont-elles un rôle à jouer ?* <http://www.erudit.org/revue/SMQ/2004/v29/n1/008827ar.html>

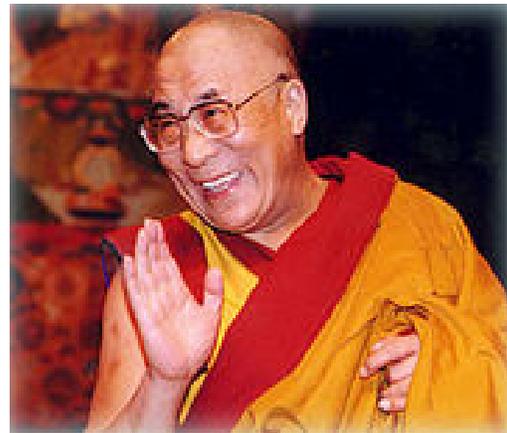
³⁶. Pierre Philippot. *La Mindfulness : la pratique de la méditation en psychothérapie*. <http://www.ecsa.ucl.ac.be/personnel/philippot/DocStudents/FormMindfulness05.ppt>



Meditating with a candle is also interesting. It consists of fixing the flame while taking slow, deep breaths and imagining that a golden light illuminates you and peace penetrates you. Another meditation practice centred on breathing and inspired by Taoism simply involves counting while breathing in a predetermined rhythm. For example, we count to four on the in-breath and up to six while breathing out gently through the mouth. The length of time can be modified to adapt to the capacities of each person. If one is seeking an invigorating effect, put the emphasis on the force of the in-breath and if one wants to relax, stretch the out-breath. This exercise is excellent to combat insomnia³⁷.

Can meditation make you happier...?

One remarkable thing is that meditators are not morose people. Look at the *Dalai-Lama* who, despite his wisdom and his knowledge, is forever smiling and never misses an opportunity to laugh. This serenity comes from his mental training which the neurosciences are beginning to discover³⁸.



In our daily lives, we are often at the mercy of our emotions, especially if they are negative and meditation, by strengthening the left hemisphere of our brain, gives us better control of this. But this action is also carried out by the *parasympathetic* or autonomous nervous system which controls among other things, our vital respiratory and cardiac functions. By slowing down these rhythms, it establishes a better balance with our *sympathetic* nervous system, which is involved in the stress response and is responsible for the acceleration of the respiratory and cardiac rhythms and assures that the organism is in a state of alert and ready for physical or intellectual activity³⁹. Propounding meditation, we can state that it favours silence, serenity and even that it is propitious for health although the goal aimed for is not healing but rather the acquisition of a certain wisdom.

³⁷. Image. Kalachakra, *La roue du temps*. Wikipedia : <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandala>

³⁸. Image. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dala%C3%AF_Lama

³⁹. Vulgaris médical. <http://www.vulgaris-medical.com/encyclopedie/systeme-nerveux-parasympathique-4463/physiologie.html>

A mini exercise for stressed urbanites

The text which follows furnishes a few details describing simply the concentration required for meditation and demystifying its application. To initiate us to meditation in our daily lives, these are the suggestions of Frederic Rosenfeld: ⁴⁰.

He states that it is better to begin practicing in a meditation hall or in your living room at a moment when you are calm and not too stressed out. You can however, train yourself to create inner calm no matter where you are by concentrating for example on your breath and on the physical sensations which accompany it: the feel of the air in your nostrils, your chest which rises and falls, your abdomen which follows the movement. Relax your muscles without going limp. Relax your mind and if it doesn't work don't worry, it will work another time.

- In the subway, bus or train, with noise all around, if you manage to concentrate on your breathing you will generate a calm mind. How? By the effect of competition: the more you concentrate on your breathing, the less your mind is attracted by other things, and the better you can concentrate...and calmness follows.
- In your car, even if your brain keeps a watchful eye on your driving, your bodily sensations and perceptions are completely dulled. Meditation will enable you to become aware of the vibrations of the engine through the steering wheel, your breathing, the air caressing your face if the window is open, the landscape streaking by.



- At the office, you can relax for a moment and become aware of the light, the colour of the walls, the freshness of the air, the back of the chair resting against such and such vertebrae...You integrate, by your senses and your thoughts, the present moment with everything that is simple and rich in it, and which you have a tendency not to notice in your everyday life.

⁴⁰. Frédéric Rosenfeld. *Petit exercice pratique à l'usage des urbains stressés*.
<http://www.psychologies.com/article.cfm/article/6454/frederic-rosenfeld-psychiatre-mediter-c-est-bon-pour-la-sante.html?id=6454&page=5>

Conclusion

As we have seen, meditation can become an adjunct therapy for depression as long as it is accompanied by appropriate medical treatment. Moreover, it is important to note that this practice also constitutes an effective means of preventing relapses during the post-crisis period. The references which support this text provide ample evidence of its efficacy⁴¹.

Even though the details furnished in this document may not be sufficient to learn a meditation technique, they may create interest among those of you who are sceptic and may help orient your choice of a strategy adapted to your needs and beliefs, or those of your patients.

Whatever one may say concerning its therapeutic efficacy, meditation posits a way of life based on physical and mental health. One should see it not as an esoteric practice which can only be appreciated by a few adepts, but simply as an inner journey which helps us to better know and empower ourselves.

In our competitive society where time propels us, it is important to find such a lifeline. All that is required is an ounce of discipline, a bit of willpower to seek one's inner path and a good dose of concentration.

The person who has never tried something can never know what he is capable of and he who has never tried an experience can never presume what its effects will be...Namaste: I respect the divine which is in you. Image⁴².

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