

How To Meditate to Tackle Your Anxiety and Depression

Many people these days report feelings of uncontrollable anxiety, as well as depression. In fact it is estimated that approximately 17 million Americans suffer from depression, and over 19 million suffer from some form of anxiety disorder. In fact, many sufferers of depression will agree with Rollo May who aptly said - Depression is the inability to construct a future. Anxiety disorders are equally as debilitating, and destructive. In fact anxiety and depression are two of the most common mental conditions facing individuals today. From a broader social point of view, it is an interesting phenomenon. After all, in privileged developed countries that have high standards of living, you would think that anxiety and depression rates would be low. Not so! In fact, the opposite is true with many health professionals stating that anxiety and depression are part of the malaise affecting modernized societies across the world. The problem of depression and anxiety is part and parcel of the failure of modern day materialism and consumerism. Despite having all the things we want and need, people everywhere are still failing to find happiness in their day-to-day lives. And it is not surprising really when you consider the costs of our material wealth. Too often these days people are spending more and more of their time working, and losing precious time with their families and friends. Our urbane existences are hectic, fast-paced and individualized with little opportunity for meaningful social interaction. It is no wonder so many people feel anxious or develop depression. Thankfully, many people who suffer from these conditions are finding meditation a very effective way of treating the signs and symptoms.

1) Do you suffer from an anxiety condition? But firstly, what are the signs of anxiety conditions? The symptoms of anxiety illnesses are varied and diverse that includes any one (or a combination) of the following problems: a) Breathing problems, or shortness of breath b) Hot flushes or cold sweats c) Numbness or tingling sensations. d) Heart arrhythmia, palpitations or chest pains e) Dizziness or lightheadedness. f) Morbid thoughts, or terror or sudden fear that something terrible will happen. g) A sensation of loss of control h) Agoraphobia i) Inability to socialize j) Avoidance of crowds or open spaces k) General tension and anxiety and an inability to relax most of the time. 2) Do you suffer from depression? The symptoms that accompany depression include: a) Feelings of sadness, tension, confusion or irritability b) A diminished interest or pleasure in usual activities or hobbies c) Loss of energy, feeling tired despite lack of activity d) Unusually lowered or increased appetite, with corresponding weight gain or loss e) Over sleeping or insomnia or lack of sleep f) Listlessness, restlessness or feeling slowed down g) Decreased ability to concentrate or make decisions h) Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, or guilt Suicidal ideation 3) How meditation can help both anxiety and depression Obviously if you experience anxiety or depression-related symptoms in an ongoing way, or in a manner that interferes with normal life, then the very first step is to see a doctor. There is no doubt that medical attention and treatment is crucial to coping with anxiety or depression. That said, you can use meditation to help alleviate the symptoms and perhaps even cure yourself of both these life-affecting problems. Unfortunately many people think you have to be part of a particular religion or spiritual tradition to meditate. Indeed meditation is too often associated with unconventional or offbeat eastern or new-age spiritual practices. This is a common misconception that overlooks the enormous mental benefits that mediation brings to peoples lives every day. You certainly do not have to be a Buddhist or new-age hippie to get the benefits of meditation. In fact, for people suffering from either anxiety or depression, the great weight of medical research suggests that the relaxation techniques taught through meditation are invaluable for coping with the symptoms of both conditions. 4) How do I incorporate meditation into my day? If you have decided to explore how meditation techniques can help your anxiety or depression, here are a few tips on including meditation into your day. Start by telling your family that you are going to start practicing meditation every day, at a particular time during which you do not want to be disturbed. Find a quiet space in your house, preferably a room that can be closed off, giving you maximum privacy and seclusion. If you wish, you can play soft, relaxing music. Get comfortable either in a cross-legged position or by lying on the floor with your head supported by a pillow or bolster. Close your eyes and systematically work through every muscle in your body, relaxing each one in turn. Start with your toes, then work up you legs, and so on, relaxing every single muscle so you feel loose, tranquil and as if you are melting into the floor. Even relax your jaw and eyelids! Once you feel completely relaxed, focus on slow, deliberate breathing. With every in-breath think of a word (for example, deep) and say to yourself inwardly. In the same way, recite a word inwardly when you exhale (such as - gentle). Recite these two words as you inhale and exhale (deep then gentle; deep then gentle and so on) for approximately 20 minutes. Control your mind by not letting it slip into analysis, planning or reflection. Simply focus on your breathing, and tune out all other thoughts. This is all it takes to meditate. If you suffer from anxiety or depression, you can help manage your problem by simply incorporating the deep relaxation techniques of meditation.

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