Meditation for Pain

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Meditation to Alleviate Chronic Pain

Meditation is a term used for many techniques that deal with mind-body experiences that involve relaxation as a means to ease pain, stress, or anxiety. It is helpful for pain-sufferers to manage pain by categorizing it in their minds or focusing on something more pleasant. The practice of meditation can be done as an individual or as a group led by a facilitator. Techniques used can include the following:

1. Deep-breathing
2. Cognitive-behavioral therapy
3. Body scanning
4. Yoga-based meditation
5. Chanting
6. Guided imagery
7. Contemplative walking

How Does Meditation Work?

Depending on the method, the focus is decreasing the pain felt by the meditator. It is desired that the pain is less intrusive on the person's life. It is encouraged by meditation that the person sees his or her life as bigger than the pain that keeps them down. It is important that the person can reach a point of feeling more pleasure with the experience, thus reducing stress. Stress can be a contributor in increasing pain so alleviating this is a benefit to the one meditating. The goal of meditation is to relax the mind, release tension, and focus on a positive outlook on life. It is hoped that thinking in this way changes the neural pathways of the brain to reduce pain sensation.

Meditation vs. Medication

Some pain sufferers take powerful analgesics to help take away their pain but to no avail. They still experience pain in a physical way as well as psychologically. It is believed by meditation practitioners that pain is an emotional experience and medication cannot help that dimension of pain. If the emotional part of pain is relieved, it can help many people with pain from inflammatory conditions. Studies have shown that meditation can help with many types of health issues. When stress is reduced, this can reduce inflammation. It helps reduce heart rates and improves immunity as well.

Here are some different techniques you can try at home:

1. **Guided imagery.** Find a place that is comfortable as you listen to a tape or other device that helps you focus on a relaxing scenario; you can also visualize the cells of your body rejuvenating and healing.
2. **Chanting.** Here you are just focusing on a word, sound, or anything you can fully invest yourself into. This can be done up to 20 minutes per session. You should do two sessions a day to benefit. You can do this while sitting comfortably or on a quiet walk.

3. **Yoga breathing.** This will entail focused breathing. You can start the morning with it and end your day with it, too. It is 2 minutes of inhaling and exhaling while you are sitting in a chair that supports your back. Give this a try: inhale for 4 seconds then exhale for 6 seconds.
4. **Transcendental meditation.** You do this sitting in a comfortable position with your eyes closed for 15 -20 minutes. Do this in the morning and evening. The object here is to allow your mind to transcend all mental activity. The goal is to open the state of consciousness. You may be able to find a class in transcendental meditation to help you learn the proper technique.
5. **Mindful meditation.** You are focused on the moment or a specific feeling. It is a method of quieting thoughts.