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Using Meditation to Reduce Stress, Anxiety and Panic

Improving Emotional Well-being Naturally with Meditation, Breathing Exercises and Relaxation Techniques

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Suffering with mental and emotional challenges like depression, anxiety, and panic can be incredibly debilitating. The good news is that there are plenty of things we can do to heal ourselves, such as practice relaxation techniques, meditation, and deep breathing. These natural, low-cost methods to achieving greater well-being and happiness are a great way to feel better and overcome some of your most challenging psychological hold-ups!

Photo credit: Flickr / RelaxingMusic (Meditation Music Store)

The Science Behind Breathing Exercises, Meditation, and Relaxation Techniques

The research has repeatedly confirmed that meditation and relaxation techniques help to reduce stress and improve overall emotional well-being. Take, for instance, one study using **EEG measurements** of electrical activity along the scalp during meditation. The results showed that meditation performed by Buddhist monks increased parasympathetic system function, having a positive impact on heart rate and breathing. Conversely, the sympathetic system—responsible for vigorous activity and arousal—decreased with meditation. The result was an overall greater sense of

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relaxation and calmness.



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Another study by the [The Shamatha Project](#) trained 60 healthy people in intensive meditative practice over 3 months. Assessing their health against the baseline at the beginning of the study revealed that those who trained in meditation had improved perceptual sensitivity, elevated psychological wellbeing, and a greater level of compassion. What's even more exciting is that enzymes that protect cell division and viability showed increased activity, meaning those who meditated have improved overall well-being and may have added days or weeks to their lives in the process!

Indeed, many other studies have uncovered similar results: that intentional meditation and relaxation trigger the relaxation response in our bodies which helps to lower blood pressure, relax muscles, slow our breathing, and reduce the toxic effects of stress on our bodies.

Reduce Stress, Anxiety and Panic through Meditation, Breathing Exercises and Relaxation Techniques

Many of us suffer privately or publicly with symptoms such as anxiety and panic, which most mental health experts will tell you originate with stress. While stress can be induced from many sources, as we've seen stress can be reduced when we take care of ourselves through self-guided healing techniques. The good news is that for as many different types of stress there are an equal number of mental health practices you may wish to consider adopting to achieve a greater sense of happiness and calm in your life.



Photo credit: Flickr / RelaxingMusic (Meditation Music Store) ; Flickr / lululemon athletica

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Consider these as a place to start:

- Mindfulness meditation—guided or solo
- **Yoga**
- Tai chi
- Qi gong
- Mantra meditation
- Guided imagery exercises
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Deep breathing exercises

Not only can these meditation and relaxation techniques help you gain control over stress and anxiety, they can also **improve your sleep** and eliminate insomnia, increase your energy levels, reduce negative emotions, and much more.

You may also wish to consider:

- **Online meditation courses**
- **Meditation workshops**
- **Vision quests**
- **Life coaching**

Not every technique works for everyone. If you're having trouble determining the right one for you, why not seek the counsel of a life coach to discuss the obstacles you'd like to overcome and get some ideas on what would be the most effective fit for you?

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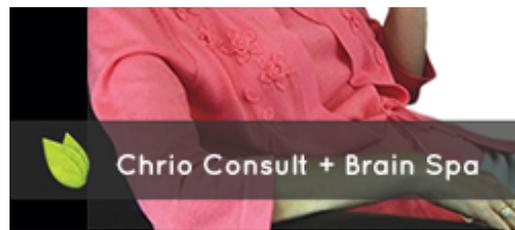
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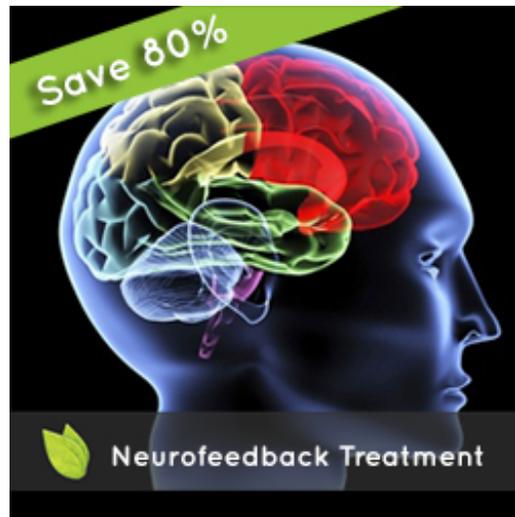
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About the Author:

Maryruth has been seeking the keys to environmental justice—both at home and at work—for over a decade. Growing up adjacent to wild spaces, Maryruth developed a healthy respect (and whimsical appreciation) for things non-human, but her practical mind constantly draws her down to earth to ponder tangible solutions to complex eco-problems. With interests that range from green living to green business, sustainable building designs to organic gardening practices, ecosystem restoration to environmental health,

Maryruth has been exploring and writing about earth-matters for most of her life. Of special interest is the subject of ecopsychology and the role the natural world plays in the long-term health and well-being of humanity. You can learn more about Maryruth's work by [visiting her site](#).

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