

Improve your health with silence

by Eve Lees



NOTE: This article was published in Vista Magazine (Sept/Oct 2006). In the original article, I thoughtlessly used the words “stop thinking” when I referred to meditation. That is not correct or accurate. When I used the word ‘thinking’ I meant the unwanted “mind-chatter” we are all prone to do. I apologize for my lack of clarity. My blunder stands corrected in the rewritten article below. ~ Eve Lees

Psst . . . wanna get high?

There’s a way to feel euphoric that’s free – and legal!

Meditation is a mental exercise used to train your attention and awareness. It can slow aging, boost your immune system and control stress. You can meditate anywhere, anytime, for short or long periods.

We rest our bodies between and during exercise sessions to allow muscles and other tissues to recover. Quieting the mind does the same for our brains. Added to our deep sleep each night (which, sadly, many aren’t getting), our brains are allowed to recuperate, and our cells continue to develop and function. This keeps us mentally fit. And it can keep you younger: With less stress affecting your mind and body, there’s less cellular wear and tear.

Many thoughts we have are worry- or fear-based. Chronic fear and worrying can cause several harmful chemical changes – including weakening your immune system and increasing the risk of illness. Meditation gives your mind a break from this potential damage. Meditation also teaches you to control your thoughts and your reactions to them. You train your brain to be calm, allowing clear thinking under pressure.

On most days, try to silence your mind of its thoughts of the past or future – whether it’s two five-minute sessions or a ten-minute session. Keep at it; you’ll soon master the ability to stop those ongoing conversations in your head (mind-chatter). The calmness and peace you’ll feel is the best legal “high”!

Here are some meditation basics (incidentally, there are no “rules” for meditating): Close your eyes (or not), relax and be aware only of the present – of your current surroundings. Stop all the mind-chatter. Be completely absorbed in the present time. You can choose to focus on your heart beating, your breathing pattern, or any sensations (physical or emotional) within you. Don’t judge or analyze – just notice. Visualize a form of energy flowing through your body and pulsating within every cell. Simply *feel*. If you stray to mind-chatter, gently coax yourself back to a calm awareness of the present.

While meditating, you are fully aware and not asleep, so you can conveniently squeeze it in throughout your day. No one will know if you are meditating while standing in a line-up or sitting in a waiting room. When doing daily tasks like loading the dishwasher or vacuuming, focus entirely on your task and perhaps pause periodically to feel what’s happening inside you. Outside, notice the trees you walk by, the people at the bus stop, and the colourful flowers along the boulevard. See it all. Feel it all.

Have your morning tea or coffee as you look out the window or stroll through your yard. *See* your surroundings: the plants and trees. Notice everything around you without judgment. You’ll start your day with a calm, serene disposition.

Instead of mindlessly watching television or reflecting on your day as you soak in the bathtub, use this time to meditate. If you exercise regularly, use your stretching time at the end of the workout to focus on feeling your muscles – or how you are breathing – as you stretch.

If meditation becomes a habit, reserve a particular area for meditating. How about that easy chair in the corner? The bench in your yard? Or turn the spare room into a meditation room.

There’s always time for health-boosting inner silence. Watch. Listen. Feel. And stop the mind-chatter.