

# W.O.W.

WAC ON WELLNESS

## GETTING STARTED WITH MEDITATION

More and more people these days are reading and hearing about the benefits of meditation and relaxation exercises. Since there is a growing body of research which has been confirming these benefits, an increasing number of doctors and health care professionals are recommending these practices to their patients and clients for a wide range of health issues and conditions. Fortunately, for those of us who are curious about these practices and what they might do for us, we don't have to venture too far to experiment with them. Here are a couple of simple practices you may like to try:

### 1. Breath Awareness

It turns out that paying a little attention to your breathing can go a long way. Have you ever noticed that there is a relationship between your emotional states and your breathing? Uncomfortable emotions such as anger, anxiety, and stress tend to produce faster, more shallow breathing, while relaxed emotional states elicit a smoother, calmer breath. The beauty of this relationship is that we can use it in the reverse; we can use our breathing to affect our emotional states. Simply becoming aware of our breathing and allowing the breath to become smoother and slower can help soothe some of our uncomfortable emotional states. Try it in the midst of your daily situations like waiting in line at the grocery store, a frustration at work, or a conflict with a family member. Breath awareness provides a sense of calm and grounding, which may even allow you to respond to the situation in a healthier way.

### 2. Relaxation Exercises

You might also be interested in establishing a regular practice in relaxation exercises. There are a wide variety of relaxations that can be done including body relaxation exercises, guided imagery, and meditation using the breath. If you are new to these exercises, you might like to find a 3-10 minute guided audio to lead you through the steps. Another option is to take a class and learn how to guide yourself. Either way, incorporating a short period of daily relaxation time has been shown to have various physical benefits including managing stress, lowering blood pressure, and promoting quality sleep. Not only that, but these practices are also the gateway for learning to observe our thought and emotional patterns, which helps us in developing healthy ways of responding to various challenges that life offers us. With benefits that extend beyond our physical health to our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, these practices are certainly worth a try.



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