

## MEDITATION TECHNIQUES FOR SENIORS

Just because you're no spring chicken, that doesn't mean your goose is cooked as far as meditation is concerned. In some ways, older adults have an edge when it comes to meditating. If you're a senior, you may have more time to devote to practice than when you were younger, more of an ability to relax and enjoy the moment without feeling like you need to jump up this very moment and get things done, and more wisdom that helps you prioritize and understand the value of meditation.

Meditation, in a nutshell, is about cultivating presence, awareness and non-judgment. "Well and good," you may think, "but how should I meditate? What's involved?" Most often you would begin by giving yourself dedicated time to focus—on the breath, on physical sensations, on a recorded guided meditation or on a word, phrase or sound that you repeat in your mind with or without audio support, for example.

There are countless resources explaining meditation for beginners out there that apply to seniors as well. If you're an older adult and this practice is new for you, you may be happy to learn that you don't have to sit cross-legged on the ground: you can meditate on a chair, lying down, standing or walking. You can try different postures on for size until you've found the one or ones that are right for you.

Here a few simple meditation tips for seniors:

- If your mind is prone to wandering or tuning out, try simple guided meditations that take the guesswork out of practice and that you can easily become familiar with. If you're able to maintain an upright sitting posture, this will help keep the energy of your mind focused.
- If your mind is alert but your body tires easily, try lying down or sitting in a comfortable chair and focusing on a series of physical sensations as presented in the "body scan" mindfulness technique. A mind that is focused and in motion is more likely to remain alert while the body is relaxed.
- Finding a word or sentence—a prayer, a motivational phrase, a mantra—that speaks to you and you can come back to is a form of meditation that can offset anxiety and may have spiritual or psychological benefits as well.

What are the benefits of meditation for seniors? Studies suggest that meditation can improve brain power and reduce age-related cognitive decline. It enhances long- and short-term memory, the ability to focus and resilience. The well-documented stress reduction results of mindfulness practice come with a host of related physical benefits, including lower blood pressure and inflammation. Psychological benefits may include a sense of well-being, an improved ability to cope with loneliness and sadness, and increased empathy. Those who live within a community or family structure may enjoy meditating regularly with others as a dedicated moment of collective relaxation and well-being.

Will meditation cure all of your aches and pains? Unlikely. Will it turn back the clock? Nope. Will it help you live life to the fullest? In our experience, it most definitely will. As meditation enthusiast Oprah Winfrey writes, "Every year should be teaching us all something valuable. Whether you get the lesson is really up to you." Meditation might just be this year's "something valuable," whether you're a spring chicken or a wise old owl.

Want to know more? Give me (your Nutritionist Jen) a call at 848-288-9902.