**Meditation**

**On his law they meditate day and night.**

**They are like trees planted by streams of water,**

**which yield their fruit in its season.**

**In all that they do, they prosper.**

***(Psalm 1:2,3)***

**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart**

**be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

***(Psalm 19:14)***

**On the glorious splendor of your majesty,**

**and on your wondrous works,**

**I will meditate.**

***(Psalm 145:5)***

 **How meditation alters the mind: Buddhists have maintained for centuries that meditation can actually change the way the mind works. Now, researchers at the University of Wisconsin have evidence to back that claim. They monitored the brains of eight of the Dalai Lama’s most accomplished meditators – monks who have practiced meditation for up to 50,000 hours, over decades – and compared the results with those of novice meditators. The monks’ brains were dramatically different, producing higher levels of “gamma” brain waves than scientists had ever observed in a laboratory. Gamma waves are associated with happiness, heightened awareness, and coordinated thinking. Earlier studies have found that this kind of brain activity also boosts such mental functions as memory, learning, and concentration. Meditation, the researchers say, actually appears to rewire the brain’s circuitry – in effect, training the brain the way physical exercise trains the body. “The trained mind, or brain, is physically different from the untrained one,” researcher Richard Davidson tells The Washington Post. He says the monks appear capable of controlling their minds and emotions to a degree Westerners can scarcely imagine, and that further studies will “increase the likelihood that meditation will be taken seriously.” *(The Week magazine, January 21, 2005)***

**If you sometimes get so angry that you can feel your heart pounding in your chest, beware: It could augur a future heart attack. Yale University cardiologist Dr. Rachel Lampert performed EKG heart rhythm exams on 62 of her patients, testing their physical reactions to emotional anger. When asked to recall an angry moment, some of the patients showed irregular heart rhythms, while others’ hearts stayed steady. Years later, Lampert found, those patients whose hearts had responded strongly to anger were 10 times more likely to have suffered heart attacks. “Anger causes electrical changes in the heart,” she tells the Associated Press. She suggests that people with strong anger responses take anger-management courses, learn to meditate, or undergo psychotherapy. *(The Week magazine, March 13, 2009)***

**Good week for: New Age Publishing, with the release of the U.S. Army's new "Holistic Health and Fitness training manual. It recommends journaling, meditation, and "short infrequent naps to restore wakefulness," and notes that military service can help soldiers appreciate the "interconnectedness of all things and people." *(The Week magazine, October 16,2020)***

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**The Art of the Pandemic Meltdown: Not all meltdowns are equal, said**

**Elizabeth Bernstein in The Wall Street Journal. No one should explode in anger in a way that hurts other people. But tension levels are high right now, so it's not uncommon to be holding it together until some small annoyance creeps up and "suddenly you're screaming alone in your car or sobbing to your dog about, well, everything." Don't feel ashamed. A meltdown, whether it manifests as rage, crying, or an emotional shutdown, is a natural mechanism by which the body releases negative emotions. You might even be able to achieve productive meltdowns by planning for them. "When you start to feel overwhelmed, find a private place where you may feel freer to let your emotions out," perhaps the shower or a parked car. Loud music or strenuous exercise helps some people. Or try a splash of cold water, which is instantly calming. *(The Week magazine, October 23, 2020)***

**Meditation is the art of paying attention, of listening to your heart. Rather than withdrawing from the world, meditation can help you enjoy it more fully, more effectively, and more peacefully. *(Dr. Dean Ornish)***

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**Some unknown sage put it this way: “Don’t go to bed to meditate. Bed is for sleep or love. Profound meditation inhibits both.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Meditation is not a way of making your mind quiet. It’s a way of entering into the quiet that’s already there – buried under the 50,000 thoughts the average person thinks every day. (Dr. Deepak Chopra, in Perfect Health)**

**As Grandma meditates in a lotus position, Grandpa asks her: “What are you doing?” Grandma: “Shhh. I’m cleansing my inner self. I’m releasing all of my negative energy into the universe.” Grandpa: “Shouldn’t you go outside to do that?” *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Sleep is the best meditation. (The Dalai Lama)**

**The Dalai Lama has expressed a keen interest in science and has extensive involvement with research of how meditation affects the brain. He once explained: "If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change. In my view, science and Buddhism share a search for the truth and for understanding reality." *Charlotte Lowe, in Fact-O-Pedia, p. 67)***

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*Meditation delays aging: Meditation doesn't just improve mental and physical health in the present. It also slows the aging process, and can help meditators stay mentally sharp into old age, a new study has found. Once people reach their mid- to late 20s, their brains begin to lose volume and weight, which can eventually result in the loss of some functional ability. But when researchers from UCLA compared brain scans of 50 people who meditated for at least four years with scans of 50 people who didn't, they found that those who engaged in the practice had smaller reductions in gray matter -- the neuron-containing tissue responsible for processing information. "What we expected was to see this in just a few small regions," Dr. Florian Kuth, the study's co-author tells HuffingtonPost.com. "But what we saw was almost the entire brain. That was a big surprise." The findings do not prove causality -- meditators may have other healthy habits that contribute to brain health -- but the researchers said that meditation would appear to be a powerful tool for reducing the risks for age-related cognitive decline and neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease. *(The Week magazine, February 27, 2015)***

**Receptionist: "Sorry, Ms. Goose. The dentist will be late. He was doing his meditation on the commuter train and he passed up his stop." Mother Goose: "Transit dental meditation." *(Mike Peters, in Mother Goose and Grimm comic strip)***

**One dictionary defines meditation as “sustained reflection” and also as “the continuous application of the mind to the contemplation of some religious truth, mystery or object of reverence.” The word is also used to describe numerous states of reverie from which new ideas, innovations and even personality changes may spring. In one form or another, such activities are as old and as universal as the human race. *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**One big discovery that everyone makes in meditating is that we have spent our lives changing, and that we will continue to change. “I am trying to decide whether to end my marriage,” a correspondent wrote. “We were so happy together once. It took me hours of thinking alone to realize that I am not the same person I was then; and neither is he. Whatever we decide to do, it is two new people who are going to do it.” *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**The end product of meditation is increased awareness – of ourselves and of our fellow men, and also of the vibrating world around us. “Every day I took the ferryboat to work,” a West Coast businessman told me, “but I hardly saw the ocean. If I looked up from my paper, I felt that I saw nothing new or different. After I began meditating, though, I often sat on deck and really looked. And what a different ocean I saw – amber, silver, green, black, changing every minute!”** ***(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Eric Butterworth says that “meditation is a definite and very serious exercise, the development of the shock absorbers of life, the important cushions of silence.”*(Susan Smith Jones, in New Realities magazine)***

**We are in an exploring age. In search of treasure and discovery, we go down to the floor of the sea, scale the highest mountains, even journey toward the stars. With the same intent, we are beginning to travel to the depths of our own consciousness. Today’s meditators dream of some great adventure in consciousness, and grope for a new vision that can reshape troubled lives. *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**What, in fact, can be found when we look within?**

1. **Answers to Problems.**
2. **Self-Discovery.**
3. **The Way to Others.**
4. **The Sense of Joy.**
5. **The Infinite. *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**A few years ago, psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, after addressing a Canadian audience, was asked for “a practical solution to the problems of living.” “Quietness,” Fromm replied at once. “This experience of stillness. You have to stop in order to be able to change direction.” *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Meditation’s genetic impact: Plenty of research has proved that meditation and yoga can lower blood pressure, improve mood, counter stress, and benefit your mental and physical health. Now a new study has shown for the first time that these ancient centering practices can actually affect your genes, turning beneficial ones on and harmful ones off. Researchers analyzed the genes of 26 volunteers who were unfamiliar with meditation, and then taught them a 10 to 20 minute meditation routine that involved rhythmic breathing, chanting, and focusing the mind. After the volunteers meditated twice a day for eight weeks, researchers found that the practice had activated genes that make cells more efficient at metabolizing energy and that protect telomeres, the caps at the end of chromosomes that help protect DNA from damage caused by aging. The practice also appeared to deactivate genes related to chronic inflammation, a risk factor for many diseases, including heart disease and cancer. Meditation is “not New Age nonsense,” study author Herbert Benson of Massachusetts General Hospital tells New Scientist. “These effects are quite powerful in how they change your gene activity.” *(The Week magazine, May 24, 2013)***

Meditation’s health benefits: Meditating – the practice of sitting quietly and clearing the mind of all thoughts – could dramatically improve heart health, a new long-term study suggests. Researchers divided 200 adults with heart disease into two groups: One group was taught to meditate for 20 minutes twice a day; the other group was encouraged to spend a similar amount of time exercising and preparing healthy meals. After nearly a decade, researchers found that those who had meditated for the recommended time had reduced their risk of heart attack and stroke by 66 percent compared with those who hadn’t. The risk for those who meditated only eight times per week dropped by nearly 50 percent. The meditators also reduced their blood pressure and reported feeling better able to control their anger. “What this is saying is that mind-body interventions can have an effect as big as conventional medications,” study author Robert Schneider, director of the Institute for Natural Medicine and Prevention, tells WebMD.com. Indeed, previous studies have shown that “meditation can do a whole host of positive things: reduce anger and stress, encourage happiness,” says cardiologist Michael Shapiro. But, he adds, researchers still “don’t know how it works.” *(The Week magazine, November 30, 2012)*

**Meditation has been used in every part of the world and from the remotest periods as a method for acquiring knowledge about the essential nature of things. *(Aldous Huxley)***

Meditation and inflammation: While a growing number of people swear by the power of mindfulness meditation to ease anxiety, skeptics question whether the practice offers real physiological benefits. But doubters may want to consider a new study showing that mindfulness has measurable effects on specific markers of stress and inflammation. Researchers from Georgetown University Medical Center randomly assigned 89 people with generalized anxiety disorder to take either an eight-week mindfulness-meditation stress-reduction course, or general stress management classes that focused on wellness topics, like healthy eating and good sleep habits. After analyzing blood samples from each participant, the team found people who engaged in mindfulness meditation were better able to cope with stressful situations, ScienceDaily.com reports. Those who learned to meditate had significantly lower levels of the stress hormone ACTH (adrenocorticotropic hormone) and markers of inflammation, called pro-inflammatory cytokines, than the ones who didn't. Mindfulness-meditation training is a relatively inexpensive and low-stigma treatment approach," says Georgetown psychiatrist Elizabeth Hoge. "These findings strengthen the case that it can improve resilience to stress." *(The Week magazine, February 10, 2017)*

Grandpa: "What, you're not doing that mindlessness thing anymore?" Grandma: "For the last time, it's called mindfulness! And to tell the truth, I've found that knitting gives ms that same sense of serenity. Plus, I've got sharp needles in case someone tries to spoil it." *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)*

**Think of listening as a form of meditation. Quiet your mind and focus your attention on listening. *(Linda Eve Diamond)***

**How to lock in memories: Simply shutting your eyes and relaxing after learning something new may be the best way to remember it, LiveScience.com reports. Researchers at the University of Edinburgh asked a group of healthy volunteers between the ages of 60 and 90 to listen to stories and try to remember as many details from them as possible. Then, some were asked to close their eyes for 10 minutes in a quiet room and daydream about anything they liked, while others were asked to play a computer game. When it came time to recall what they’d heard – both 30 minutes afterward and a week afterward – the volunteers who had rested remembered far more details than those who hadn’t. That suggests that “the formation of new memories is not completed” in mere seconds, and “that activity that we are engaged in for the first few minutes after learning new information” determines how well our brains absorb it, says study author Michaela Dewar. Previous research has shown that sleep is crucial to crystallizing memories, but taking a brief waking rest – without studying what you’ve learned or facing any external distractions – appears to return similarly beneficial results. *(The Week magazine, August 24-31, 2012)***

**Dennis the Menace: "Mrs. Wilson said you were meditating." Mr. Wilson: "Yep. It makes doing nothing sound more respectable." *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis the Menace comic strip)***

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**After two weeks in a meditation class, all I had acquired were stiff joints and a burning curiosity about the woman assigned to the spot next to me. At every meeting, she would arrive late, breathless and frazzled. But soon after she assumed her meditation position and started to chant “1984, 1984, 1984,” you could almost see her blood pressure fall. A look of utter bliss would appear on her face. Mystified as to what she had found in George Orwell’s disturbing book to inspire such contentment, I finally asked her why she used it as her mantra. “Who’s talking about a book?” she replied. “In 1984, the mortgage on our house will be paid off, my fourth and final child will graduate from high school, and my mother-in-law plans to retire to Florida.” *(Rheta Lum, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Boss says to employee: “‘Ummm…’ isn’t an answer. ‘Ummm…’ is a mantra. Are you trying to put this company into a meditative state?” *(Mike Baldwin, in Cornered comic strip)***

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**Frank says to Ernest: “Just think of meditation as mental floss.” *(Bob Thaves, in Frank & Ernest comic strip)***

**As anyone setting out on a walk or bike ride knows, it’s hard to empty your mind of worry and planning, analyzing and hurting, and that deadly armada of what-ifs. Your agitations seem to travel with you, and soon you conduct small theaters of the mind, in which you play various roles and rehearse dreaded or hoped-for conversations. But if you can, give yourself a mental vacation. Hold a board meeting of the psyche and agree to leave home all the worries, hurts and misgivings. Then you can set off to enjoy the sensations of being alive: the beauty of light, the rustle of dry cornstalks, the birdcalls, the wind and sun on your face. Freed from the commotions of your mind, you can allow yourself to be the photographic plate on which the world etches itself. *(Diane Ackerman, in A Slender Thread)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**We find inner peace, not through silence alone, if by silence we mean exclusive solitude of some sort, as if we could find freedom only by shutting people out. To do this is to find that we have shut ourselves out, too. Nor do we find it by mere contemplation of “the One without a second”? by renouncing the social world that we have found too difficult. The many are also with us on “the Mount” of meditation, howbeit each ascends by his own path. *(Horatio W. Dresser, in Unity magazine)***

The nice thing about meditation is that it makes doing nothing quite respectable. *(Paul Dean, in Phoenix Arizona Republic)*

**Another man, Dr. C. Norman Shealy, was diagnosed as having rheumatoid spondylitis. This man suffered incredible pain because of degenerated disks in his spine. It took four days of positive prayer, meditation, and attitude adjustments to achieve his goal – freedom from pain. Ten years later, he continues to live pain-free. *(Christopher Ian Chenoweth, in Unity magazine)***

Perry's alternative worldview: Katy Perry holds herself together with the help of New Age therapies, said Brian Hunt in Rolling Stone. Twice a day, the pop star does 20 minutes of Transcendental Meditation, which she says helps her cope with stress. "My ex-husband actually introduced me to it," she says, referring to British comedian Russell Brand. "It was the best thing I got from that whole situation. When I do it, I feel like I'm opening up holes in my brain, like -- what do they call it -- neural pathways." While on tour, Perry, 29, undergoes a range of treatments to help ease the aches from her choreography-battered body. "It's like I'm a Kobe beef cow. I get acupuncture, massage, cupping, cranial sacral work, which connects the energy through your spine." *(The Week magazine, August 29, 2014)*

**Meditation is not an escape from daily living, but a preparation for it, and what is of surpassing importance is what we bring back from the experience. Like pearl divers, meditators plunge deep into the inner ocean of consciousness and hope to come swimming back to the surface with jewels of great price. *(Ardis Whitman, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Soldier: “How does a great leader like Hagar prepare for battle?” Other Soldier: “By meditating!” As Hagar stands over in the corner with a cold beer in his hand the soldier continues: “As a matter of fact, he’s over there meditating right now!” *(Brian Crane, in Hagar the Horrible comic strip)***

One of the saddest stories I ever heard was about a girl who took up Transcendental Meditation to lose weight – and her mantra was “Hot Fudge Sundae.” *(Orben’s Current Comedy)*

**Half and hour’s meditation each day is essential, except when you are busy. Then a full hour is needed. *(St. Francis de Sales)***

**If you want to be successful, just meditate, man. God will tell you what people need. *(Carlos Santana, in Entertainment Weekly)***

**As Opal sits in the lotus position while meditating, she asks her husband: “Earl, would you say I'm serene?” Earl: “Uh, no. Not exactly.” Opal then yells back: “Not exactly? What do you mean, not exactly? You don't think I'm serene?” Earl: “My mistake. You are definitely serene. From now on I'm calling you Mahatma Opal.” *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

**E. V. Ingraham has observed that meditation is the “silence, not in any sense the discovery of a new process of mind, but it is a practice known very well to every genius, every philosopher, and in fact every individual who has in any degree outstripped his fellow men and brought back to the world some new idea or invention from beyond the range of habitual thought and experience.” *(Susan Smith Jones, in New Realities magazine)***

**Meditation is simple. It is we who are complex. But we also are wise and courageous, each and every one of us. No matter how many times we forget, or for how many years, stillness awaits us with great patience. (Nina Wise)**

**My son has taken up meditation . . . at least it’s better than sitting around doing nothing. *(Max Kauffman, in Catholic Digest)***

**Meditation may help people stay mentally sharp. Brain bulk peaks in the early 20s and gradually declines over time, as the brain loses weight and volume. But brain scans taken in a UCLA study revealed that years of meditation are associated with smaller reductions in gray matter throughout the brain. "What we expected was to see this in just a few small regions, but what we saw was almost the entire brain. That was a big surprise," says co-author Florian Kuth. By preserving brain tissue involved in memory, decision-making, and sensory perception, the study suggests, meditation could reduce the risk for age-related cognitive decline. *(The Week magazine, December 25, 2015)***

**I recently went to Fairfield, Iowa – population 9,500, smack in the middle of Midwestern farmland, the last place you’d expect to get stuck in an evening traffic jam because so many people are headed off to practice transcendental meditation. But that’s what people do in Fairfield; in fact, it’s often referred to as TM town. The action takes place in two golden dome-shaped buildings, one for the women, one for the men. Housewives, shop clerks, engineers, waitresses, lawyers, moms, single ladies, and me – we all gathered in our dome for the sole purpose of being still. Knowing that stillness is the space where all creative expression, peace, light, and love come to be. It was a powerfully energizing yet calming experience. I didn’t want it to end. When it did, I walked away feeling fuller than when I’d come in. Full of hope, a sense of contentment, and deep joy, Knowing for sure that even in the daily craziness that bombards us from every direction, there is – still – the constancy of stillness. Only from that space can you create your best work and your best life. So now, I give myself a healthy dose of quiet time at least once (and when I’m on point, twice) a day. Twenty minutes in the morning, 20 in the evening. TM teachers have taught everyone in my company who wanted to learn how to meditate. The results have been awesome. Better sleep. Improved relationships with spouses, children, co-workers. Some people who once suffered migraines don’t anymore. Greater productivity and creativity all around. *(Oprah Winfrey, in O magazine)***

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