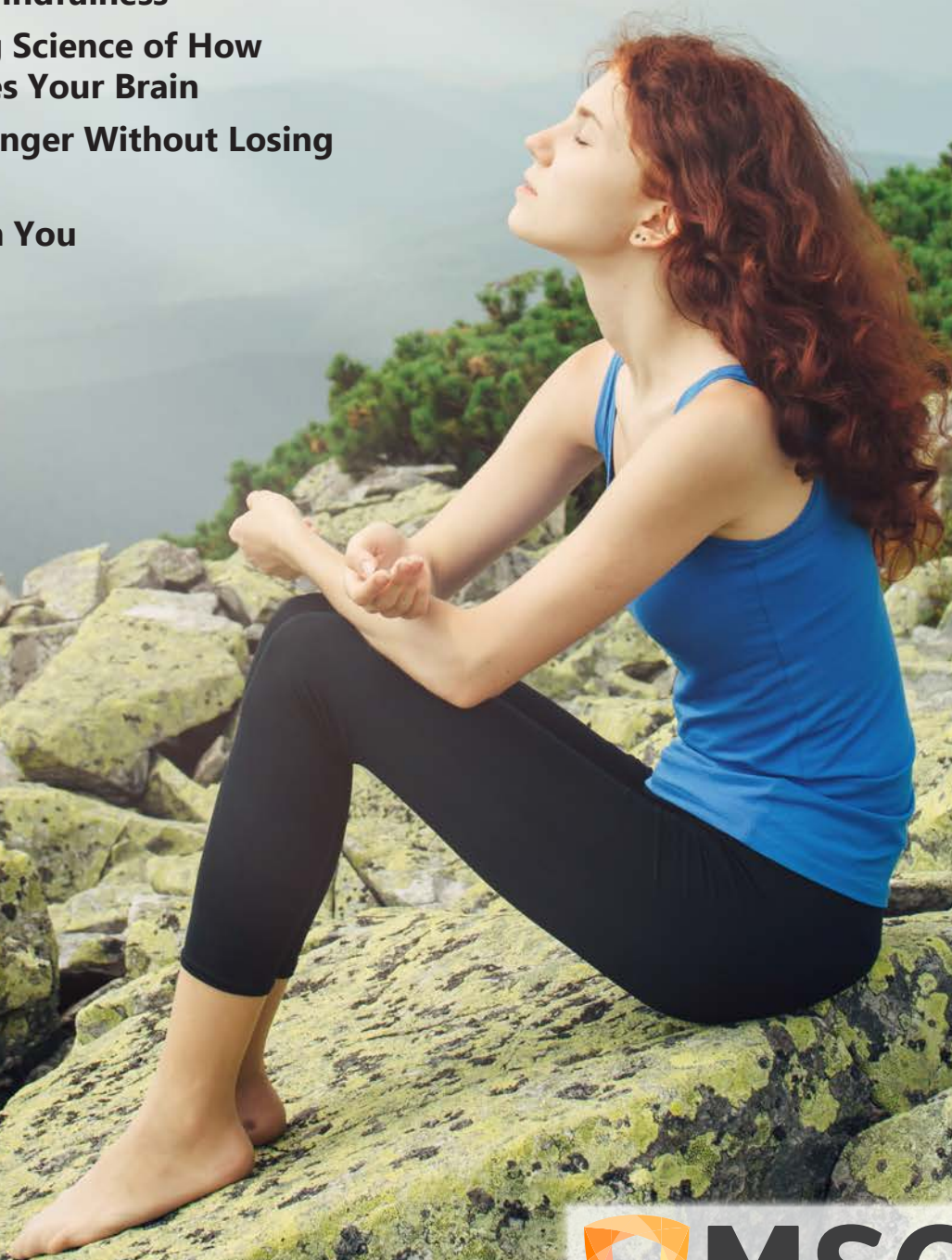


Med-Sense Guaranteed Association JOURNAL

Inside This Issue

- Mindfulness Meditation
- How to Practice Mindfulness
- The Mind-Blowing Science of How Meditation Rewires Your Brain
- Connect to Your Anger Without Losing Control
- MSGA Investing In You
- Benefit Spotlight



MSGGA
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MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

What is Mindfulness Meditation?

Mindfulness meditation is a mental training practice that involves focusing your mind on your experiences (like your own emotions, thoughts, and sensations) in the present moment. "It is simply the act of paying attention to whatever you are experiencing, as you experience it," explains Kate Hanley, author of "A Year of Daily Calm." "By choosing to turn your attention away from the everyday chatter of the mind and on to what your body is doing, you give the mind just enough to focus so that it can quiet down."

Mindfulness meditation can involve breathing practice, mental imagery, awareness of body and mind, and muscle and body relaxation.

How to Do It:

One of the original standardized programs for mindfulness meditation is the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD (who was a student of Buddhist monk and scholar Thich Nhat Hanh). MBSR focuses on awareness and attention to the present. Other simplified, secular mindfulness meditation interventions have been increasingly incorporated into medical settings to treat stress, pain, insomnia, and other health conditions.

Learning mindfulness meditation is straightforward, however, a teacher or program can help you as you start (particularly if you're doing it for health purposes). Some people do it for 10 minutes, but even a few minutes every day can make a difference. We have listed the basic techniques to get you started.

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place. Sit in a chair or on the floor with your head, neck, and back straight but not stiff.
2. Try to put aside all thoughts of the past and the future and stay in the present.

3. Become aware of your breath, focusing on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body as you breathe. Feel your belly rise and fall, and the air enter your nostrils and leave your mouth. Pay attention to the way each breath changes and is different.
4. Watch every thought come and go, whether it be a worry, fear, anxiety or hope. When thoughts come up in your mind, don't ignore or suppress them but simply note them, remain calm and use your breathing as an anchor.
5. If you find yourself getting carried away in your thoughts, observe where your mind went off to, without judging, and simply return to your breathing. Remember not to be hard on yourself if this happens.
6. As the time comes to a close, sit for a minute or two, becoming aware of where you are. Get up gradually.



Other Ways to Incorporate Mindfulness Into Your Life:

There's no law that says you must be sitting on a cushion in a quiet room to practice mindfulness, says Hanley. Mindfulness meditation is one technique, but daily life provides plenty of opportunities to practice.

Here are Kate Hanley's tips on cultivating mindfulness in your daily routine:

Doing the dishes. Have you ever noticed how no one is trying to get your attention while you're doing the dishes? The combination of alone time and physical activity makes cleaning up after dinner a great time to try a little mindfulness.

Savor the feeling of the warm water on your hands, the look of the bubbles, the sounds of the pans clunking on the bottom of the sink. Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh calls this exercise "washing the dishes to wash the dishes"--not to get them over with so you can go watch TV.

When you give yourself over to the experience, you get the mental refreshment of a mind-body practice and a clean kitchen. It's multi-tasking at its best!

Brushing your teeth. You can't go a day without brushing your teeth, making this daily task the perfect opportunity to practice mindfulness. Feel your feet on the floor, the brush in your hand, your arm moving up and down. Einstein said he did his best thinking while he was shaving--I'd argue that what he was really doing in those moments was practicing mindfulness!

Driving. It's easy to zone out while you're driving, thinking about what to have for dinner or what you forgot to do at work that day. Use your powers of mindfulness to keep your attention anchored to the inside of your car.

Turn off the radio (or turn it to something soothing, like classical), imagine your spine growing tall, find the half-way point between relaxing your hands and gripping the wheel too tightly, and bring your attention back to where you and your car are in space whenever you notice your mind wandering.

Exercising. Yes, watching TV while running on the treadmill will make your workout go more quickly, but it won't do much to quiet your mind. Make your fitness endeavors an exercise in mindfulness by turning off all screens and focusing on your breathing and where your feet are in space as you move.

Bedtime. Watch your battles over bedtime with the kids disappear when you stop trying to rush through it

and simply try to enjoy the experience. Get down to the same level as your kids, look in their eyes, listen more than you talk, and savor any snuggles you get. When you relax, they will too.

*Article reprinted from www.verywellmind.com
By Cathy Wong*

How to Practice Mindfulness

- 1. Take a seat.** Find a place to sit that feels calm and quiet to you.
- 2. Set a time limit.** If you're just beginning, it can help to choose a short time, such as 5 or 10 minutes.
- 3. Notice your body.** You can sit or kneel however is comfortable for you. Just make sure you are stable and in a position you can stay in for a while.
- 4. Feel your breath.** Follow the sensation of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.
- 5. Notice when your mind has wandered.** When you get around to noticing this - in a few seconds, a minute, five minutes - simply return your attention to the breath.
- 6. Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.

www.mindful.org

THE MIND-BLOWING SCIENCE OF HOW MEDITATION REWIRES YOUR BRAIN

At first, I couldn't believe that a simple daily meditation practice affected my life so powerfully. So, I started doing research and devoured all of the scientific studies on meditation that I could find. I was amazed at what I found – it turns out meditation can transform nearly every area of your life.

Here are fourteen scientifically proven ways meditation rewires your brain for happiness, peace and success.

#1: Meditation reduces stress

Feeling the weight of the world on your shoulders? Meditation is incredibly effective at reducing stress and anxiety. One study found that mindfulness and Zen type meditations significantly reduce stress when practiced over a period of three months. Another study revealed that meditation literally reduces the density of brain tissue associated with anxiety and worrying. If you want your stress levels to plummet, meditation may be the answer.

#2: Meditation increases your sense of well-being

Want to fill your life with happiness and energy? Mindfulness meditation increases your psychological functioning and in the process improves your sense of well-being. Yoga and tai chi have been found to do this also – according to studies, they have significant therapeutic effects and increase quality of life when practiced regularly.

#3: Meditation increases your sense of connectedness and empathy

Feeling a little disconnected from those around you? Try compassion meditation. Loving kindness meditation (sometimes called Metta) is a compassion-based meditation that enhances brain areas associated with mental processing and empathy. It also increases your sense of social connectedness. Not a hugging person? You just might become one after trying metta!

#4: Meditation improves focus

Would you love to add razor-edge focus to your life? Research shows that meditation improves cognition and increases your ability to perform tasks requiring focus. One study tested a variety of different meditation types, including Transcendental Meditation, Vipassana, Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, Sufi Meditation and Hindu Meditation, and found that they all improve focus by varying degrees. I used to think coffee was the best way to get focused – now I just meditate.

#5: Meditation improves relationships

Want to strengthen your relationships? Meditation has been shown to better your ability to relate to



others How? It improves your ability to empathize, and it hones your ability to pick up on cues indicating how others are feeling. Meditation also increases your emotional stability, making you less likely to be influenced by any negative people in your life.

#6: Meditation makes you more creative

Ever feel like you could use some more inspiration? Meditation increases your creativity, according to various studies. It's no wonder that famous creatives like Yoko Ono, David Lynch and Marina Abramović make meditation a major part of their life.

#7: Meditation improves memory

Whether you want to become a memory champion or you simply want to remember the name of that guy who works down the hall, meditation can help. Research has shown that it improves your ability to memorize things and to store and consolidate new information.

#8: Meditation improve your ability to make decisions

There's a reason high powered executives turn to meditation to help them do their jobs better. Studies

have found that both mindfulness meditation and Transcendental Meditation help you make better decisions by improving the functioning of your brain's decision-making centers. If you want to start cultivating your inner executive, give meditation a try.

#9: Meditation helps people overcome addictions

Do you know someone who has struggled with addiction? One of the most beautiful effects of meditation is that it can help people overcome powerful addictions. One fascinating study found that Vipassana meditation can be incredibly effective at helping people overcoming alcohol and drug related addictions, and similar effects have been found for various types of meditation.

#10: Meditation improves cardiovascular health

Want to get some of the benefits of exercise by sitting in one place? Researchers have found that both mindfulness and Transcendental Meditation improve your cardiovascular health and reduce your risk of heart disease.

#11: Meditation enhances your immune system

Do you get sick more often than you would like? Believe it or not, a variety of different types of meditation, from mindfulness to yoga, have been shown to strengthen the human immune system and make you more resistant to viruses and infections. Take that, cold season.

#12: Meditation helps you find “flow”

Have you ever felt totally, utterly absorbed in the moment? Maybe you were playing a sport or painting a picture, and the world around you just seemed to vanish. This is called “flow,” and is a rare state where the human mind is operating in complete harmony with itself, when you reach a challenge perfectly suited to your abilities. Meditation can help you reach this amazing state of mind, according to some fascinating research.

#13: Meditation reduces physical and emotional pain (better than morphine)

Perhaps the most amazing benefit of meditation is that it has the capability to reduce mental and physical pain better than morphine. Yep, you read that right. That's a pretty incredibly scientific finding.

#14: Meditation takes you towards enlightenment?

Traditionally, the goal of meditation is to reach Enlightenment, or a state of perfect happiness and understanding. Can you reach enlightenment by meditating? Who's to say? Many people say yes, although science still doesn't have an answer. If you're curious, there is a podcast dedicated to interviewing people who claim to have reached some stage of enlightenment called Buddha at the Gas Pump.

Article reprinted from www.scienceofpeople.com

CONNECT TO YOUR ANGER WITHOUT LOSING CONTROL

Anger has a lot of energy, but what you use it for is up to you. Sharon Salzberg provides two practices to reflect on anger and transform it into self-compassion.

Anger is such a prevalent feeling these days, and so many people are struggling with trying to understand where strength is, and where power lies.

And what about the things we've been taught to think of as weak or even foolish, like generosity or compassion?

We're hearing more about compassion fatigue. And while many associate anger with power and strength, when we really look at it, compassion requires a whole lot more fortitude.

We have an ability to modulate and develop a different relationship to what's happening to us—that's actually the transformation that mindfulness makes room for.

One of the incredible things about mindfulness, and using the meditative or contemplative process to develop mindfulness, is that we are like our own

laboratory. We get to see from within—like, is anger really that strong? What happens when we're not feeling anger, but consumed by anger? What's the consequence? What's the nature?

None of this is to say that we should be judging our feelings. We feel what we feel, and this isn't an invitation to be condemning ourselves or launching some vast self-improvement projects so that we never feel a certain thing again. It's not that at all, but depending on our relationship to what we are feeling, we may be sucked in there and overcome and overwhelmed, and that's consequential, because these states, like anger and rage, have certain characteristics.

But we actually have flexibility. We have an ability to modulate and develop a different relationship to what's happening to us—that's actually the transformation that mindfulness makes room for.

Continued on page 6

Understanding the Benefits of Anger

Anger has a lot of energy. That's the positive part. It's a way of saying no, it's a way of drawing boundaries, and sometimes it has a lot of courage too. We can depend sometimes, in certain collective workgroups situations, on the angry person in the room—it's like they're pointing out the terrible flaw in the carpet and no one else wants to look at it. Everyone is studiously looking somewhere else, trying to pretend it's not there, and they're saying, "No, look at that." And that's a useful thing for all of us, for all of society.

Anger has a lot of energy. That's the positive part.

And yet, if we are lost in anger, if we're overcome by anger, if that's really what's guiding us, it can have terrible consequences for us and for our actions.

Two Exercises for Anger

1. Watch Your Anger Movie

Our first exercise is a thought experiment.

- Bring up a time in your mind when you were really angry at yourself.
- Just bring it back and let it fill you.
- Notice what that feels like in your body. Notice what that story is. It's like you're watching the anger movie, and it's interesting.

Anger can feel like a kind of compression, like tunnel vision. Maybe you did five great things that same day, but those five great things have been lost and only the angry moment remains. That's how we become lost in the conviction that: "I'm a stupid idiot. That's all I'll ever be." We've erased all the evidence that says we're more than just our anger.

That's part of the destructive nature of anger. Our task in a way is certainly not to belittle ourselves for what we're feeling, but to somehow capture that energy in a way that is courageous, in a way that gives us permission to say "no," that helps us set boundaries, without getting lost in anger's tunnel vision.

That's actually the definition of mindfulness: It's a relationship to our experience, so we are not consumed by what's happening. And we're also not projecting it.

And that means, first of all, having a certain space from the anger. We see it, we connect to it, and yet we're not necessarily drowning in it. At the same time, we're not pushing it away.



That's actually the definition of mindfulness: It's a relationship to our experience, so we are not consumed by what's happening. And we're also not projecting it.

2. A Meditation to Treat Anger with Self-Compassion

A very common foundation practice involves resting your attention on the feeling of the breath. Just the normal, natural breath, wherever you find it most powerful—this is where we hone our relationship with our present experience, so we can connect to it as it is, without judgment.

1. **Sit comfortably.** You can close your eyes, or keep them open.
2. **Notice your breathing.** See if you can find the place where your breath is strongest for you, the clearest for you, e.g. where do you feel the rise and fall of your breathing most strongly? Maybe the nostrils, or the chest, or the abdomen.
3. **Direct your attention towards one place.** Bring your attention to that place and just rest your attention lightly.
4. **Focus on one breath at a time.** Just feel the sensations of the natural breath, one breath at a time.
5. **Note when the inner voice surfaces.** If your attention starts to wander, and you realize that, notice how you speak to yourself. Is it harsh? Is it punitive?
6. **Gently return to the breath.** If so, see if you can gently that voice, and bring your attention back to the feeling of the breath.

*Article reprinted from www.mindful.org
By Sharon Salzberg*

MSGA Investing in You



MSGA Scholarship Program

MSGA is currently accepting scholarship applications for the 2019-2020 school year. Up to 50 scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 each will be awarded to eligible students. Applicants must be able to demonstrate how the scholarship funds will be used to help with their academic success. The Scholarship Committee will also review letters of recommendation, overall GPA, and the student's goals when awarding scholarships.

Log in at www.medsensemembersonline.com to apply. The deadline for submitting your application and letter of recommendation is July 15, 2019. Scholarships will be awarded in mid-August for the upcoming school year.



MSGA Speaker Series

The MSGA Speaker Series connects the most popular speakers with Medsense members. Our speakers share their unique experiences, stories and expertise on a wide variety of topics - from mindfulness, to stress management, to cooking, to healthy living.

Log in at www.medsensemembersonline.com to view the complete list of speakers and topics.

MSGA members now have access to Drive.Fitness

Drive.Fitness is a free benefit exclusively for members of Med-Sense Guaranteed Association. Drive.Fitness has partnered with a team of experienced trainers to provide workout routines designed to help you lose weight, gain strength or stay fit.



Download the Drive.Fitness app on your iOS or Android device and use it at work, home or in the gym. The app offers over 200 different exercises for cardio and strength training and over 60 workout plans. You can even connect the Drive.Fitness app to other applications such as Fitbit, MayMyRun, and MyFitnessPal.

Use the app to view on-demand instructional videos that can guide you through your workout. After your workout you're able to track what you did - how long you worked out, how many reps you did, how much weight you lifted, etc. You can even track results such as weight, waist size and BMI!

[Login](#) today to get started!

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