



Meditation: Within, or Without, a Spiritual or Religious Belief System by award-winning author / stress-relief expert **Susie Mantell**

Q: Dear Susie, Can people benefit from mindful meditating without any religious or spiritual belief system? What are some applications for which we'd be well-advised to try meditation?

A: Absolutely! Many meditative practices require no specific belief system whatsoever. Simply defined, mindful meditation is the practice of being truly present in this moment only. When stress eclipses simple pleasures, we lose perspective on where we are in life today and who we hope to become.

Mindfulness is the fundamental principle of meditation, being here, now, allowing us to pause worry or fretfulness, breathing back into the moment and rebalancing. In so doing, we can fully experience this conversation, this apple or solve this problem.

Much of the stress we experience revolves around either past or future concerns. Bringing our awareness and focus into the present moment instantly replaces yesterday's regrets and wipes away worries for tomorrow. Meditation allows us to release yesterday's injuries and tomorrow's fears, the open space inside each of us fills with peace, and for a moment, we are free.

Within each of us there is a quiet place that knows perfect peace. In day-to-day life, no matter what the challenges we face, mindfulness allows the calm and gentle release of worry, anger or grief and allows the body-mind to pause and to rebalance in the open space of that quiet place inside. A deeply personal practice, individual style and belief systems will suggest forms of meditation that can create authentic, enriching experiences for anyone, within or without a conscious spiritual context. Refocusing in the present, we quiet the "inner critic" and for a little while, just let go.

I've seen meditation relieve symptoms of:

- Depression & Bereavement
- Anxiety
- Headache
- Back Pain
- Insomnia
- Chemotherapy
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Asthma

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Meditation: Is it Possible to Benefit From Meditation if ... ?

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Caregiver Stress
- Phobias & Panic Disorders
- Blood Pressure and Weight Management
- Pediatric Hyperactivity
- Addictive Disease and Eating Disorders
- TMJ and Other Chronic Pain
- Compromised Immunity (In Both HIV and Autoimmune Response)
- Accelerating Burn Healing And Post-Surgical Recovery
- ...and Many, Many Other Applications.

In addition to traditional Zen practice or Transcendental Meditation (TM), many also find great comfort in guided imagery meditation, movement, writing or walking meditation. Many reach a meditative state in the rhythm of the ocean, focusing on the in-breath and out-breath, or a "mantra" (soothing word/phrase), walking, practicing yoga, tai chi, even rocking a child. Knitting, dancing, painting a wall, or rebuilding an engine can each become a meditative experience. The hardest part is finding what feels right for oneself and then, making time for that practice.

Guided imagery is a particularly easy and accessible form of meditation for patients, as well as an excellent tool for loved ones and caregivers. Try Susie Mantell's, exquisitely soothing, award-winning "Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace, A Guided Imagery Meditation for Physical & Spiritual Wellness" at www.relaxintuit.com In addition to the reduction of stress as an aggravating factor in illness, books by Larry Dossey M.D., Andrew Weil, M.D. and Bernie Siegel, M.D., Jeanne Achterberg, PhD and others discuss positive outcomes and reversals in which personal belief systems and imagery are believed to have been significant factors in treatment.

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END OF THIS TIP