



Teen Stress: Introducing Meditation by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: Dear Susie, We see a lot of at-risk adolescents in my busy metropolitan medical practice. I know meditation is an empowering, drug-free tool. How can I introduce it to this population without turning them off?

A: I'm glad you're considering stress-reduction as a means to help this population make healthy changes. Here are a few thoughts:

- It's often the language, more than an actual experience that determines teens' attitudes toward something new.
- You might begin by simply asking about a favorite place. *"Where do you wish you could be right now?"* Encourage them to describe how it feels for them to be there, how it looks, smells, the weather, textures they can feel there, sounds, etc. If you're able to open this door - Ta-dah! You're there. You will learn a lot about what makes them feel comforted and safe, and they will have begun the process of multi-sensory imagery in a gentle, familiar way.
- Once they've experienced the pleasure of "imagining" comfort, it becomes something they look forward to. They can find respite from the stress that is inherent in waking up every day in a different body, which is the experience of an adolescent.
- Without a name or any preconception, guided imagery meditation is an extremely pleasurable "brain vacation," a potentially powerful life-long healing tool, and something they can do on their own.

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