

# Beginning A Meditation For Pain Management

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# Introduction

## *Who Am I?*

Acupuncture Physician, Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine, Functional Medicine Practitioner, Founder of Let Go & Grow®, Author of The LG&G Holistic Journal, Holistic Guide Book, Reminders Workbook, and the children's book series Let's Grow With Zo.

## *What does my practice look like?*

I create evidence based, holistic treatment plans for my patients and then, I partner with them to meet their health goals through building a strong and resilient foundation focused on healthy fundamentals such as mindset, diet and lifestyle medicine.

## *What will we be up to today?*

Today, we will dive into practical tools to shift the stress response for pain management and clinical outcomes- leaving you with practical tools and resources that you can use to explore and implement right away.

# Defining Meditation

Meditation can be defined as a set of techniques that are intended to train yourself to achieve a deepened state of awareness. I call it the practice of presence, where we can work to hone our attention and focus. Meditation techniques have been shown to have a wide number of benefits on mental well-being by encouraging a psychologically clear and emotionally stable state.

Meditation gives you the space to look at experiences and connect with them- connect with the growth you've attained now so that you can choose new choices in that moment.

# On Meditation

## *World Within Worlds*

Research shows that we can access more expansive experiences within ourselves coming into pronounced **states of coherence** and even entering into **theta and alpha brain states**.

## *Meditation as Medicine*

Meditation is, in essence, medicine, a practice where **neuroplasticity** and a myriad of other health benefits can come forth- studied to relieve pain, regulate digestion, boost mood, and decrease stress, anxiety and depression, and more by taking command of the nervous system.

# Mindfulness, Meditation and Pain

- The terms **meditation** and **mindfulness**, although often coupled or interchangeable in research, are different in that that **mindfulness is a form of meditation but meditation is not a form of mindfulness**
- **Mindfulness** is unique in that it can be used any time, anywhere by becoming awareness while meditation is typically more broad spectrum referring to many different types of self-reflective practices such as: heart focused, body scan, guided visualization, mantra and breath work and moving meditations
- Both have been studied extensively to shift the stress response and relieve pain through promoting presence, acceptance and resilience, clearing distortion, addressing fear, boosting mood, regulating physiological functions, decreasing inflammation and more-also, promoting healing experiences such as deep appreciation, happiness and creativity

# Meditation vs. Distraction

## *Distraction Technique for Pain Management*

The idea for this method is to make yourself busy and focus on things outside of your pain to “avoid” it, not heal it.

## *Meditation for Pain Management*

You may use meditation as an avoidance strategy, but it doesn't have to be. Meditation can be intentional. By shifting your perspective and turning towards the discomfort and the pain, you are able to acknowledge it and begin to break it down through connection, presence, and observation.



# Less Is More

**When you don't know which way to go, go within.**



# How to Start a Meditation Practice

Consider Reality

Set a Time

Choose a Practice

Choose a Place

Flexible with Structure

Remember Why You Started

# Find a Comfortable Position

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to the best meditation position.

A mindfulness practice can be done in one of four postures: **sitting, standing, lying down, and walking**. Many teachers believe that sitting is the optimal position as it provides a balance of focus and relaxation. When the body is upright, both the body and mind tend to be alert and attentive. At the same time, when we're seated there's a degree of letting go and relaxation that takes place. Compare this to lying down, when most people immediately feel a little bit too relaxed and drift off to sleep, or standing, when most people feel a bit too tense after just a few minutes of standing still in one place.

# Types Of Meditation

## Most Common Practices

- Mantra Meditation
- Guided Visualization
- Silent Meditation
- Body Scan
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Movement Meditation

## Breathwork

- Natural Breathing
- Box Breathing
- Body Connection

## Everyday Awareness

- Connection
- Presence
- Observation
- Engaging
- Intention
- Commitment

# Benefits of Meditation

- **Connection:** Setting aside the time to reflect states that you acknowledge your own importance.
- **World Within Worlds:** What a gift it is to be able to experience ourselves in new and vibrant ways!
- **Self-Regulation:** When the system feels safe, we can more easily deepen into being versus trying and striving and the monotony of doing.
- **Your Own Heartbeat:** You can interrupt any old + outdated pattern through this simple act. You can clear the noise and engage in change with your own awareness, simple breath work and feeling your own heart beat.
- **Free Medicine:** Meditation is, in essence, free medicine- studied to relieve pain, regulate digestion, boost mood, decrease stress, and more by taking command of the nervous system.

# Benefits of Meditation

- **Better sleep**
- **Improved memory**
- **Enhanced willpower and concentration**
- **Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations**
- **Building skills to manage your stress**
- **Increasing self-awareness**
- **Focusing on the present**
- **Reducing negative emotions**
- **Increasing imagination and creativity**
- **Increasing patience and tolerance**

# Relaxation Response Training

Harvard scientists have come up with evidence that the mere act of clearing your mind for 15 minutes each day actually alters how your genes operate. A new study indicates that people who meditated over an eight week period had striking change in the expression of 172 genes that regulate inflammation, circadian rhythms and glucose metabolism. That, in turn, was linked to a meaningful decrease in their blood pressure.



Stress & Pain Management through  
Self-Regulation: Focusing On What  
We Can Do and How We Can Be

# What is stress?

**Stress:** is the total, mind body, response experienced when we perceive that we do not have the resources to handle a life experience. At its core, stress is a disturbance in homeostasis that results in a series of psychological and physiological adaptations. **Evolutionary Mismatch.**

**Stressor:** while a stressor is the stimulus, or the perceived threat, that in turn triggers the stress response like pain, a final exam, argument or food intolerance.

**Level of Stress:** simply, our level of stress is determined by what we are given and how we choose to interpret it. It is the interplay between our genetic predisposition, life experiences, perception and choices.



# What if stress isn't the only problem?

**Conventional Approach:** “how to be stress free” and “how to fight stress”

*To (stuck in victimhood) vs. Neutral vs. For (move forward, seek solutions, find meaning)*

**Evidence Based Approach:** stress is synonymous with meaningful life experiences (think motherhood, public speaking, a big work project or exam)

*What if the stress response is just our system's way of rising to the challenge?*

*What if I could learn to work with my system?*

*What if it is an opportunity to redirect and to let go of what does not work and optimize what does?*

# Shifting the Stress Response

## Mindset Training & Working with Emotions

- Awareness of your experiences: the signs, symptoms, benefits, etc.
- Recognizing that you are important and capable
- Intention and commitment
- Expansion vs. Contraction
- Engaging change, working through fear
- Perception
  - To you (survival) vs. For you (revival)
  - Division vs. Connection
  - Judgment vs. Observation
  - Resistance vs. Resilience

# When Perception is the Medicine

In a 2012 study, titled *Does the perception that stress affects health matter? The association with health and mortality*, researchers from Harvard University looked at the link between the belief that stress is bad for you and public death records.

They concluded that both high amounts of stress and the perception that stress impacts health are each associated with poor health and mental health. Individuals who perceived that stress affects their health and reported a large amount of stress had an increased risk of premature death.

# Shifting the Stress Response

## Diet & Hydration

- Eating anti inflammatory, nutrient dense, high quality whole foods that work for your body
  - Foods rich in natural antioxidants (leafy greens, cherries), polyphenols (olive, turmeric), omega 3's (salmon, flax and chia seeds), bioavailable protein and minerals (bone broth)
- Removing the foods that do not work for your body
  - Processed, refined and sugary foods
- Drinking at least half your body weight in fluid ounces in clean, filtered water

# Shifting the Stress Response

## Lifestyle

- Relationships (family, friends), Spirituality, Support & Community
- Environment (Home & Work, organization), Nature, Technology
- Movement, Play, Sleep (7-9 hours), Relaxation
- Restorative Practices (yoga, walking)

## Holistic Support

- Professional assistance such as counseling or acupuncture
- Supplementation: Core, Food Based, Therapeutic (curcumin, boswellia, cbd oil, resveratrol), Symptomatic
- Healing Tools: such as at home devices like HeartMath, Fisher Wallace Stimulator, meditation apps like headspace, etc.



# Making The Time

**On placing yourself first, stepping up with yourself, being vs. doing, learning a new process, when the journey and the destination are one in the same.**



# The Heart Based Practice [a simple 3 min. meditation]

The Heart Based Practice is the first prescription I give to each and every one of my patients, where we can send the self a signal of safety through the power of the heart, and its ability to rewire the nervous system.

**Take 3 min., place both hands over your heart, feel your heartbeat, inhale (5 count) and exhale (5 count) through your heart.**

This is a reminder to reconnect to your heartbeat, reset and return home to the present moment, and remember who, what and where you are

3:01





# Envisioning Health

With age, we may feel the wind leave our sails as we lose hope for a solution and unknowingly deepen into futile choices.

We may also find reverence and deepened appreciation for the gift of life, the choice is ours- and we can choose our perspective at any age.

If we close our eyes, reconnect and return to the present moment, we can envision health and the life affirming choices that can bring us there. Think clean water, nutrients, fresh air, sunlight and internal experience of health and vitality that extends beyond the self.

# Our Objective

As caregivers and patients, we can provide and try on tools and resources to assist in the shift from a sympathetic, fight-flight-freeze state to a calm, connected parasympathetic state, through building resilience and sending the system a signal of safety- thus, releasing total burden, decreasing inflammation and relieving pain.

By focusing in on the fundamentals and what we can do, we can empower ourselves as we mobilize towards health.

# Resources: Apps & Devices

## Apps for Sleep, Meditation, Stress

- Calm
- Headspace
- Insight Timer
- Unplug
- Simple Habit
- 10% Happier

## Therapeutic Devices

- Fisher Wallace Stimulator

## Research & Websites

- HeartMath Institute  
[[www.heartmath.org](http://www.heartmath.org)]

# Clinical Pearls

- Meditation can be fun!
- There is not a right or wrong way to meditate.
- When you don't know which way to go, go within.
- Start where you are, with what you have, and go from there.
- Reconnect. Reset. Remember.
- We can empower ourselves as we mobilize towards health.

# Continual Support

**We're here for you every step of the way!**

For more information and free resources, check:

**[drbrookestuart.com](http://drbrookestuart.com)**

**[letgoandgrow.com](http://letgoandgrow.com)**

To reach out, feel free to contact our team here at anytime:

**[contact@drbrookestuart.com](mailto:contact@drbrookestuart.com)**