

Taking Care of Your Body: Activity No.12

Meditation: The core ingredient of all types of meditation is the cultivation of attention. Meditation is a very personal experience and maybe performed in many different ways, but experts have put together several crucial elements to aim for during its practice

- Be non judgmental: Observe the present moment impartially, with detachment, without evaluation.
- Be nonstriving. This does not conflict with goal achievement, but just encourages you not to be too focused on achievement.
- Be patient: Do not rush or force things they will unfold in time.
- Be trusting: Trust yourself and that things will work out in life.
- Be open: Pay attention to everything as if you were seeing it for the first time.
- Let go: Set yourself free of ruminations. This is what is called nonattachment.

Many studies have been completed on meditation and show multiple benefits on happiness and positive emotions, on physiological stress, cognitive abilities, and physical health.

Mediation teachers advise that meditating involves sitting alone in a comfortable place, back straight, close your eyes, and focus on breathing in and out. As you breathe out, say a word and focus on a specific object of sound. If your mind wanders let the thought pass, and then bring your attention back to your breath. Build up time that you are able to meditate from 5 to 20 minutes and try it every day.

Physical Activity: Over 170 studies show that exercise is beneficial to those suffering depression, as effective as medication in many of these cases. Yet exercise is less expensive and has little or no side effects. It seems to last longer than drugs. Physical activity reduces anxiety and stress; protects us from dying in general (heart disease and cancer in particular), reduces the risk of numerous diseases (diabetes, colon cancer, hypertension; builds bones, muscles, and joints; increases quality of life, improves sleep, protects against cognitive impairments as we age and controls weight. In sedentary older adults a very low-intensity exercise program reduces depression and increases confidence and maintains improvement for an astonishing 5 years. Studies show that exercise may very well be the most effective instant happiness booster of all.

Is that enough to get you going?