

10 minutes a day to happiness, getting more done and saving the world

Seems mad, right? 10 minutes a day to all that? Well yes, that's all it takes when you are doing the right thing. We have had such amazing advances in all areas of life – technology, science, medicine, even human performance, and yet we haven't also incorporated advances in how we think or our ability to feel peace. Stress has been directly linked to or contributed to the spread of 80% of all illnesses and is the number one reason for people missing work. And yet we aren't listening to all the thousands of scientifically proven research studies in this area. Now that's mad. If we did we would be able to be at peace, happy, do more and have a knock-on affect in the world, and with ease. So what does all that research tell us?

I'll keep it very brief as there is so much that has been covered, but one of the most powerful ways to achieve all that is meditation. This has been proven time and time again to significantly:

- improve depression and anxiety,
- actually change the shape of your brain so it can feel positive emotions easier and negative emotions are harder to access,
- slows down aging,
- improve immune efficiency,
- improve concentration,
- is better at improving performance than a nap,
- help you heal quicker,
- improve your reflex responses and ability to read people,
- help you sleep better,
- deal with stressful situations calmer,
- improve cognition and helps you solve problems quicker,
- reduce the affects of ADHD,

and the list goes on.

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Plus in the US it is now part of treatment at hospitals, is taught at law schools and taught to athletes, all because it literally is a magic pill to help you feel better, cope better and perform better.

Now some people have weird conceptions of meditation but there are many different styles. The essence of it, and why it works so well, is about slowing down your thinking. Bad habits and stress mean we think too much (about 66,000 per day, most of which is either nonsense or repetitive). These thoughts deplete our energy like a virus in a computer, and also stress our bodies out. They drown out creative impulses and answers from our unconscious mind. We are not meant to think that much, but to only think when we need to.

Meditation can be as simple as focusing on 3 deep slow breathes in and out, as long as you are focusing on the breath rather than having a conversation in your head at the same time. This simple act can change how you feel and release stress. For most people it will take more than 3 deep breaths to begin with as your thinking can seem out of control and it is a new habit to learn. I suggest starting with doing 10, and seeing how many you can do before your mind wanders. If it does, start again.

Another simple method is to shut your eyes and listen to the sounds around. Most people with manic minds think in pictures so by focusing on sounds you interrupt the flow of thoughts. We also tend to be thinking of the past or future so again this focuses you on the now, which is much calmer.

Doing any form of meditation for a few minutes in a morning starts retraining your mind. It's a bit like going to the gym, you start small and build up as you get stronger. Your brain also works in patterns, or habits, so that you do not have to consciously think of everything you do. Doing a meditation helps form new patterns so that it become natural for you to do this and quieten your mind when it gets busy.

The studies have shown that instead of a few minutes a day doing a class once a week also has a benefit. Of course doing both will work even quicker!

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Another new discovery is that keeping a gratitude journal has been proven to reduce depression and anxiety in 94% cases, that's more effective than antidepressants. This involves ending the day by listing 7 things you are grateful for that day – new things each day. What happens is that through out the day your mind starts looking for things to put on the list, and noticing things you appreciate makes you feel good and reduces stress. As with meditation it actually changes the shape of your brain so that you get a new pattern of thinking. It's a simple thing that has very powerful results. Try it. (a variation on this for couples is to tell each other 5 things you are grateful for about each other).

So my 10 mins a day looks like this:

AM – a few minutes quiet and meditating

PM – a few minutes quiet and meditating

- gratitude journal

You can also do a few deep breathes throughout the day whenever you want to change how you feel.

I know this sounds too simple but give it a go, if you are consistent you will soon see a benefit, and we can all find a few minutes for ourselves (I know you would for your children, boss or a friend). And doing this will give you more energy for other people, and make you more fun to be around – so it's win win really! And if you want to be your best even quicker then you can always do more than 10 minutes....

There are also many other techniques to help you quickly release stored up stress or heal old wounds that cause you stress and limit you. All stress is caused by your thinking and response to situations, which is down to patterns you have learnt. Changing your thinking can literally change your life, and once you slow down your thinking it is even easier.

(One word of warning – if you have issues from the past that you haven't dealt with they may come up when you meditate, or even if not at first it may seem like your mind becomes more manic. This is normal and will pass. If in doubt contact myself or anyone who teaches meditation.)

Now how exactly will this save the world? Well briefly:

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- Happy minds never harm other people or the planet, they also make more conscious choices about what they spend money on (and don't spend to cheer themselves up)
- The more energy you have and the happier you are the more likely you are to help others and do more to give back
- Happiness is contagious (another wonderful study), so literally the happier you are the happier those around you will be – a ripple effect
- There are studies into how meditating on peace has actually helped reduce violence in specific areas
- This is where it gets a little whacky – the energy you give out (your emotions) has been proven to affect plants and water. Negativity weakens them, positivity strengthens them
- The happier you are the less likely you are to be ill, therefore saving on resources and drugs that filter into the earth
- If you are able to do more and be more creative then solutions to the worlds problems will be easier to find and implement

So that simple 10 minutes a day can start a revolution – you'll be happier, your family and friends will be happier, you will achieve more and the earth will benefit. How can you not do it???? It's at least worth a trial.....

Let me know if you have any questions, need any help or want details about the research I mentioned.

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Kathryn Hodgson is trained in NLP Psychotherapy and Evolutional Kinesiology (amongst many other things!). If you want to learn more about how she can help you, or read any of her other free articles, visit her website at www.katalyst4change.co.uk

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