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Mental Health Matters



5 Types of Mindfulness Meditation for Reducing Stress

Sounds

While many people believe that a quiet environment is vital for a successful meditation session, you might feel it's more useful to focus on the sounds in your environment. It could be a metronome clicking or the washing machine whirling. Whatever it is, zero in on the tone and quality of the sound with intention. Music can also be a useful focus in mindfulness meditation, with additional benefits like energizing you in the morning or relaxing you at night. The key is to find what works for you. Some people might find that a quiet room is what works best for them, while others might find that focusing on their favorite music is the most effective.

How Music Can Be Therapeutic

Sensations

Paying focused, non-judgmental attention to physical sensations in your body both from the inside and outside—like air on the surface of the skin or the feeling of your breath as it leaves your nostrils—can bring you "into the now" and lead to a deep meditative experience. One advantage is that you can practice a sensation-based technique from anywhere such as during a sound bath, a massage, or even a self-message, which in Ayurveda is called abhyanga. Abhyanga is a warm-oil massage that can be a soothing self-care treatment, particularly when practiced daily. Focus on the sensations that you feel during this massage such as the warmth of the oil or the gentle pressure of your fingers on your skin.

Thoughts

The key point of mindfulness is to be aware of what's happening in the present moment without passing judgment on that awareness. It is normal for your mind to stay active during meditation, but try to observe your thoughts like clouds passing by. Try not to cling to your thoughts or dwell on them. This gives space for the mind to digest all that it needs to process while you can witness these thoughts without judging or labeling them.

Breathing

Breathing is one of the few constants in life, with an inherent pattern—breath in, breath out—that makes it a useful tool in meditation. The very act of being aware of one's own breath can lead to deep, satisfying breathing from your diaphragm, which can promote physical and emotional relaxation, a contrast to the short, stifled breaths from your chest that you may feel during an anxious episode.

The Basics of Deep Breathing Exercises

Taste

When stressed, people often instinctively use their sense of taste as a stress reliever, whether they're munching mindlessly or satisfying sweets cravings brought on by cortisol. But the sense of taste can be a healthy, effective complement to mindfulness exercises.

Mindful eating involves slowing chewing, putting down your fork between each mouthful, and being aware of the tastes of what you are eating. During mindful eating, avoid being distracted by any type of screen, whether its a television or mobile device. The focus is on being present during the meal. This supports healthier eating because the mind and body are more aware of the process. Doing this can also help prevent overeating because you are more aware of when you are truly full versus just mindlessly eating. By focusing on the taste of food, the experience of eating, and the sensations of your body, you will feel satiated sooner.