



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

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MEDITATION – THE NUTS & BOLTS OF IT!

Meditation has become very fashionable in western cultures in recent years. Many people think it means being able to sit in silence for long periods of time! This is just one of the many types of meditation. Have you ever wondered about the facts of this practice, how it is relevant to you and what the benefits are?

Meditation is a skill, which, with practice, helps you soothe your mind and relax your body. When you spend most of your time studying and working, it can be difficult to stop thinking about what you have done or need to do next. This mental tension is translated into the heart, resulting in anxiety, headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances and physical tension. True relaxation relaxes the mind, the heart and the body. Meditation is one way to achieve inner peace and relieve tension.

Recent brain research has shown that the actual structure of the brain is constantly changing as a result of our experiences. This is called neuroplasticity. The brain “prunes” or re shapes itself as a result of the repeated use or neglect of neural pathways.

Stress, some lifestyle habits, like drinking alcohol and coffee, can kill brain cells! Always using the left brain – e.g. thinking, planning, reading, without balancing this activity with right brain activities – e.g. music, exercise, artistic pastimes, creates changes in brain structure and function and makes relaxation and stillness of mind more difficult.

It has been shown that meditation can stimulate brain growth. Mindfulness meditation, designed to train the mind to be still and present, affects neuroplasticity and assists our minds to let go of past and future worries. Yoga, tai chi and other forms of eastern movement are types of meditation which also affect brain structure, assist cellular growth and promote balance of the brain hemispheres.



A PLACE OF OPPORTUNITY

When you meditate, you deeply relax all parts of yourself and feel refreshed, peaceful and energised. And you are taking care of your brain!

You can meditate anywhere, anytime, for any length of time. A few deep and mindful breaths can significantly relax your mind, heart and body. Meditation comes in many forms – mindfulness (a single focus), guided imagery (eg. visualising a beautiful place being described by someone's voice), directing energy through various parts of the body, muscle tension/relaxation, spiritual meditations, yoga and more. Meditation can be short or more prolonged, whatever fits your lifestyle.

Please visit the counselling website and click on <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/counselling/meditation.html> to find online meditations of various types and lengths. This is a simple, easy and effective way to manage the demands placed on you at university and in life.

Where can I get help from others?

You can make an appointment with the University Counselling Service - it is free and confidential.

Phone: 02 492 15801

Email: counselling@newcastle.edu.au

Visit: Find us in the Hunter Building foyer near the Griffith Duncan Theatre