

Wellness Articles

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Managing stress through meditation

April is Stress Awareness Month.

Meditation is one way to help you relax and relieve stress.

The goal of mindful meditation is to focus your attention on the things that are happening right now, in the present moment. The idea is to note what you experience without trying to change it.

Meditation can help you relax, because you are not worrying about what happened before or what may occur in the future.

You don't need any special tools or equipment to practice this meditation. You just sit in a comfortable position in a chair or on the floor. Or you can lie down, if that is more comfortable.

If your mind wanders, don't worry or judge yourself. When you become aware that your thoughts are wandering, simply focus again on the present moment. One way to do this is by paying attention to your body. For example, is your breathing fast or slow, deep or shallow?

Meditation may bring up certain feelings or emotions. If this happens, don't try to rid your mind of these feelings. Just focus on what you feel at the present moment. Don't get lost in the thoughts that those feelings might trigger.

Getting ready

- Choose a time and place where you can meditate without being interrupted. Try to find a quiet place, but don't worry if there are some noises, such as traffic. That kind of noise is just part of the present moment.

- When you start, try to meditate for only 10 minutes at a time. Then you can increase the time bit by bit. You can also try meditating for 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening.

The practice

- Sit in a comfortable position, either in a chair or on the floor. Or you can lie down, if that is more comfortable. You can close your eyes, or you can look down, keeping your gaze a few centimetres in front of you on the floor.
- As you sit, start to pay attention to your breathing. This is a good way to focus your attention on what is happening right now. Don't try to change your breathing. Just notice how it feels in your lungs and chest.
- If your mind wanders, don't worry or feel bad about yourself. Try to notice your thoughts, such as "I wonder what I will need to do at work today." Then let the thought go, and bring your focus back to the present moment and your breathing. You may do this over and over again during a meditation session. That's OK.