



What if it were suggested to you that a simple micro-practice* could have multiple positive, and even medicinal health effects, and this ‘medicine’ had absolutely no negative side effects? What if this micro-practice worked to repair chronic health issues (both psychological and physiological)? And what if you were told that you could learn 4 variations of this micro-practice in an hour and that you would then have access to the healing effects of this practice for a lifetime? Would you be interested in trying it? What would it cost you to adopt this practice? And what would it cost you if you chose not to?

“Insanity is when you keep doing the same thing, yet expect different results”
~ Albert Einstein

*Micro-practice: a brief practice that one can perform in less than 5 minutes, anytime, anywhere for any reason.

The Following is Excerpted and Adapted from:

Gawler, I, & Bedson, P. (2010). *Meditation: An in-depth guide*. New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin

The Impact of Stress/Emergency Mode:

As we look at the specific aspects of stress or what could be referred to as the ‘emergency mode’ (the activation of the sympathetic nervous system), the link with chronic disease and poor physical, emotional and mental health should be obvious. Prolonged stress/emergency mode is associated with the following effects of mind, body and spirit:

- A contracted and tense body—as adrenaline flows into the muscles they contract in readiness for action;
- Shallow, faster breathing patterns—more costal (rib cage) breathing, less slow and deep diaphragmatic breathing (abdominal)breathing;
- More anaerobic metabolism—cells and tissues are less oxygenated, resulting in more acidic waste products of metabolism in the body;
- A more acidic internal environment for cells and tissues;
- Elevated cholesterol and sugar levels in the blood;
- Elevated heart rate and blood pressure;
- An imbalanced immune system—either hyperactive (more prone to inflammation, allergies and autoimmune diseases) or hypoactive (more prone to infections and tumor growth);
- Suppressed digestion and elimination—digestive enzymes and acids are released inappropriately, causing nutrient deficiencies, digestive upsets and ulcers. Decrease in peristalsis and sluggish movement through the bowel causing constipation and increased absorption of toxins into the bloodstream; and
- Poor lymphatic drainage.

The psychological changes associated with stress include the following:

- Hyperactive and excessive thinking, which is fear-based and “problem saturated” or excessively goal-oriented, as opposed to creative and holistic thinking, which includes “big picture” thinking;
- Anxiety—caused by a hyperactive “threat detector”;
- Aggression and excessive competitiveness;
- Social isolation and loneliness—excessive internalization or suppression of emotions coupled with poor communication;
- Disconnection and desensitization—getting out of touch with one’s needs, feelings and instincts. One may also feel out of touch with other people and nature;
- Lack of empathy and compassion for self, others and the natural world; and
- Rigidity/inflexibility of body, emotions and mind (fight response);
- Collapse, despair, avoid and dash (flight response);
- Stuckness, immobilized or unmoving in fear (freeze response).

In prolonged stress/emergency mode, the body-mind shuts down or slows down the following essential life-promoting functions:

- Nourishment—from food and relationships (that is, we are not open to receive);
- Healing—physical and emotional healing are put on hold as we move into a coping pattern;
- Digestion—we do not fully absorb nutrients from our food, nor do we take time to digest and integrate the lessons of everyday life;
- Detoxification and letting go of the past—we contract, hold on, control, defend, push forward and lose the ability to release and let go.

The benefits of relaxation response:

Our health and well-being depend on the flexibility to use the stress response or emergency mode when needed, but also to be able to switch it off when it is not needed. The stress response fulfils the need to protect ourselves and to fight for survival. The relaxation response (activation of the parasympathetic nervous system) allows us to put down our defenses, to slow down and to open up. It enables us to heal, grow and be happy.

Regular access to the relaxation response is associated with many positive effects. The physical benefits of the relaxation response include:

- A more relaxed body;
- A slower, deeper breathing pattern;
- A more aerobic metabolism and therefore, increased oxygenated cells and tissues, resulting in more energy;
- A more alkaline internal environment for all cells and tissues;
- Lower cholesterol and sugar levels in the blood;
- Lower heart rate and blood pressure;
- A balanced and responsive immune system that detects and responds to foreign, unwanted and toxic pathogens;
- Improved digestion, absorption of nutrients and elimination of wastes and toxins;
- Improved lymphatic drainage.

The psychological benefits of the relaxation response include:

- A balance between thinking and feeling;
- Increased creative and intuitive thinking, and a generally more holistic approach to life;
- Less anxiety as the ‘threat detector’ relaxes;

- Less panic, more confidence and ease in the wide range of situations;
- More empathy and compassion for self and others;
- Better connection with our needs and feelings;
- The ability to connect more with others and the natural world;
- More flexibility and resilience, and the ability to trust and ‘go with the flow’ when appropriate.

The relaxation response facilitates growth by enabling us to open up emotionally, to interact, to give and receive, to listen, to be present and available, to heal, to let go of what is not needed, to be more spontaneous and less serious, and to have fun. Mindfulness meditation is a powerful tool for breaking the habit of being in stress response and accessing the benefits of the relaxations response.

The virtues that are cultivated by fostering the relaxation response through mindfulness, meditation and breathing practices include:

- Patience—less hurrying and addiction to busyness
- Empathy—letting others be themselves and listening deeply
- Trust—less need to be always in control
- Humility—realizing and accepting what we do not know
- Self-discipline—training the monkey mind
- Equanimity—accepting and exploring every aspect of ourselves
- Gratitude—for the simple pleasures in everyday life.

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