



## **Integrative Therapy Fact Sheet: Meditation**

### **What is Meditation?**

Meditation is a practice that can help you feel relaxed by resting the mind and experiencing your body's natural ability to bring about calm feelings and improved well-being. Meditation helps you to see what's happening in your mind, and work to train it so that you can choose your focus and be present in the moment.

Meditation is simple, but not always easy. It is a process of giving your full attention to a focus that you decide. You can direct your attention to your breath, a word, a phrase, sensation in your body, or an object you choose, and try to remain fully aware of that focus, even as your thinking mind tries to bring up distracting thoughts.

There are different ways to practice meditation, which include mindfulness, guided imagery, contemplation, yoga, tai chi, and qigong. These practices are designed to improve relaxation, promote feelings of calm, and develop positive mind states like happiness, love, and compassion for ourselves and others.

### **What are the Benefits of Meditation?**

- ***Stress Management and Emotional Balance***

Studies have shown that people who practice meditation regularly demonstrate physical changes in the brain in the areas that control how we respond to feelings of threat and fear. Many people report feeling less stressed, more relaxed, and more emotionally balanced, over time. There is evidence that people who meditate have lower levels of anxiety, depression, and pain. Meditation can help you reduce your stress which can be helpful in improving overall health.

- ***Increased Concentration and Creativity***

Researchers have found that people who completed a 10-minute meditation were better at spotting and solving problems in creative ways than people who didn't meditate. Some science suggests that for beginners, meditating for just four days was enough to improve memory, executive functions, and ability to process visual information.

### **How Can I Learn to Meditate?**

A good place to begin is by focusing on your breath. When you notice that a thought comes, attend to it, notice it, be open to it – and it will pass. Then you can come back to the breath. Your normal response is to react to all your thoughts, and this keeps you busy in a sea of confusion. Meditation teaches you to attend to what is taking place within, without reacting, and this makes all the difference.



However, you may soon discover that your mind has a mind of its own, and without guidance or support, meditation feels difficult, or even impossible. Try not to be discouraged, and reach out for support. There are currently many meditation apps available, and resources to help, including:

- [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)
- [www.mentalworkout.com](http://www.mentalworkout.com)
- [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)
- [www.omvana.com](http://www.omvana.com)

## **Meditation at the Zakim Center**

The Zakim Center offers a variety of group programs, free of charge to patients, their family members, and caregivers. Our current offerings include:

### ***Mindfulness Meditation***

Offered Wednesday and Thursday, these guided meditation sessions are open to everyone from beginner to expert. This group is an opportunity to experience relaxation while here at Dana-Farber, and provides an oasis of calm for all interested in the practice.

### ***Mind Body Resilience Program***

This eight-week program teaches strategies to manage stress and nurture resilience. Focused on building skills in meditation, mindfulness, cognitive awareness, and positivity, this group provides a supportive environment to help participants develop new, healthy behaviors.

### ***Mind Body Resilience Program Online***

This is a virtual, eight-week program designed to teach patients and families tools to manage the stress of the cancer experience and develop skills to enhance resilience. This program is delivered live through video conference.

### ***Mind Body Book Club***

This group reads books that discuss concepts related to well-being of mind, body, and spirit and meets regularly to discuss each book as a group. For those patients who have participated in the eight-week Mind Body Resilience program, these readings will help reinforce many of the tools and strategies learned in the group.

## **Additional Information**

**National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health's "Meditation" Page**

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation>

To learn more about the Zakim Center's programs and services, please visit our website at [dana-farber.org/zakim](http://dana-farber.org/zakim), email [Zakim\\_Center@dfci.harvard.edu](mailto:Zakim_Center@dfci.harvard.edu), or call **617-632-3322**.



**Dana-Farber**  
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**Leonard P. Zakim Center**  
for Integrative Therapies and Healthy Living

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