



# **MEDITATION BENEFITS**

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Meditation has been linked to a variety of health benefits. A review of scientific studies identified favorable outcomes of meditation which include: relaxation, concentration, an elevated state of awareness, self-observing attitudes, perceptual sensitivity, good memory, self control, empathy, and good self esteem. Meditation has been linked to a host of biochemical and physical changes in the body that alter metabolism, heart rate, respiration, elevated blood pressure and brain activity. Studies also show that meditation can improve academic and work performance.

Meditation has now entered the health care domain because of evidence suggesting a positive correlation between the practice of meditation and emotional and physical health. Examples of such benefits include: reduction in stress, anxiety, depression, headaches, pain, and blood pressure.

In a Buddhist Discourse on Concentration, *Samadhi Sutta*<sup>14</sup>, meditation benefits are indicated and described as follows:

*Happy living* – We gain immediate happiness by the mere act of letting go from worries and burdens of life. It is akin to unloading a heavy load that one has carried in a long journey. The body feels lighter and the mind is relieved. By training the mind to be free of worries, we find happiness in everything we do and everywhere we go. We

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<sup>14</sup> **Samadhi Sutta:** Samadhi, a Pali word which means concentration. Sutta means Discourse.

sleep with happiness, wake with happiness, and go about our daily duties with happiness. This aspect alone is enough of a reason for someone to meditate.

Happiness derived from a mind that is peaceful is durable and lasting. It is a true kind of happiness. Nothing can adversely affect a person whose mind is peaceful even when facing difficult life conditions. The more we meditate, the higher the degree of happiness we gain. This is the kind of happiness that no one can take away from us.

*Super knowledge and insight* – It is said that less than 10% of the human brain is utilized, while the other 90% is left unused. Although the human brain is far better developed than other species in the animal kingdom, some of our faculties are underdeveloped and imperfect. Unlike some animals, we can't see in the dark, smell or hear from a far distance, nor can we remember things that happened to us a long time ago.

Our minds are clouded by mental impurities like dirt clouds water. Meditation can help purify the mind, perfect our faculties, and bring us transcendental knowledge that has been concealed from us. When we reach a higher point of meditative attainment and our faculties are perfected, we will have clarity that brings forth a higher form of insight and knowledge including the ability to read other people's thoughts, to see the past or the future, or to recall our past lives. Cases of such supra-mundane abilities have been documented throughout time.

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**Mindfulness and comprehension** – Meditation can help us develop a keen sense of perception and awareness. We will become more alert and mindful of everything around. Our body and our mind will become more in sync with one another. We will become more focused and less distracted. Our concentration and memory will improve resulting in better performance in school and at work. We will have better capability to understand and comprehend matters that are complicated. Our success will become easier to attain.

**Abandonment of defilements** – Defilements are mental impurities caused by greed, anger and delusion. They are the causes of all evil and man's biggest flaw. Greed causes discontent and misguided ambition. It drives people to cheat, steal, lie and to commit crimes. Anger gives rise to hatred and ill will. Delusion gives rise to ignorance, the worse of the three. One who is ignorant lacks the insight and understanding of what is right or wrong and what is good or bad. Many people commit crimes because they don't know that their actions are wrong.

Defilements come from a mind that is impure. Meditation helps to purify the mind and improve its moral quality leading to wisdom and good conduct and behavior. One who has wisdom is aware of the harmful effects of defilements and strives to free oneself of them. The wise practice generosity in order to combat greed; they observe moral precepts to combat ill will, and exercise wisdom to overcome ignorance.

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From a spiritual point of view, wisdom gained from meditation will help us become more ethical in our decision-making and also our choice of action. We will become more at ease with ourselves and our surroundings, knowing that our actions are morally sound. Our family life will become more harmonious and we will be a better parent to our children.

All actions, good or bad, originate from the mind. Most social problems originate from a low moral quality of mind. If the people of society practice meditation regularly, the quality of their mind will elevate to its original quality of goodness. Mutual respect and cooperation will increase, crime and civil unrest will be reduced, and the willingness to participate in social good will become more widespread. A society whose people practice meditation regularly will be a peaceful society. World peace begins with inner peace.

The understanding of the truth of nature and the true purpose of one's life will lead one to fulfill one's life along the path of righteousness and purity. A person with a purified mind will not commit any wrongful action. Such a person will be assured of a happy afterlife destination.

*Wisdom from Meditation* – There are three ways that wisdom is acquired: through learning, thinking, and meditating. Often, what we consider to be the truth today may no longer be true tomorrow. A real “truth” must be timeless; something that was be-

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believed to be true ten thousand years ago should still be true today and should remain true ten thousand years from now.

Knowledge gained from meditative insight is based on real truth. There is much more to the secrets of life than can be found in books or lectures, or through one's thinking abilities. Meditative attainment allows us to tap into the "inner knowledge" that reveals our true nature and the spiritual essence that exists within each one of us.

**Merit Gained From Meditation Practice** – One of the byproducts of meditation is "merit", a form of positive energy that is created whenever a good deed is performed, mentally, physically or verbally. Merit is the basis for all wealth, health and happiness, and the force that causes one to be beautiful, smart, rich, famous, or fortunate. Merit acts like a wish-fulfilling instrument that turns our wishes into reality. It behaves like a magnet that attracts good things to us. Merit also has the ability to purify the mind and improve its moral quality.

Merit is generated through the practice of good deeds, the most significant of which include charitable giving, keeping moral precepts, and mental cultivation through the practice of meditation. Whenever you practice meditation, you generate merit.

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