

The 5 W's of Meditation- Part V: Why should I meditate?

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“The regular practice of meditation is said to produce true happiness by realizing a state of awareness and detachment,” (Lyubomirsky, *The How of Happiness*, 2007)

Meditation can be used for so many reasons; it is a unique tool that is beneficial in every dimension of life. I use meditation as a self-awareness technique with my clients, and the benefits span from increased happiness and positive affect, decreased negative emotion and perceived stress, decreased stressors and illness symptoms, lower levels of hostility, anxiety, depression and dysphoria (Beauchamp-Turner & Levingson, 1992; Lane, Seskevich, & Pieper, 2007; Smith, Compton, & West, 1995), enhanced forgiveness (Oman, Shapiro, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008), increases in intelligence, creativity and cognitive flexibility (Cowger & Torrance, 1982; Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2007); greater spiritual experiences and empathy for others (Shapiro et al., 1998); improvements in self-actualization (Alexander, Rainforth, & Gelderlos, 1991) where self-actualization includes, “increased acceptance of self, of others, and of nature’s superior perception of reality,” (Maslow, 1968, p.26), and on.

Ultimately, meditation is a part of one’s life that can be used to help create the life you want to live! In tuning in to the self, one is aware of how he or she wants to live in the world. This creates clarity in relationships with others, business, project execution, decision making, and mental functioning. Additionally, meditation can help the individual connect to the greater whole of life, increasing the spiritual connection to non-self.

The question to ask yourself is, “What do I hope to gain from meditating?” Once you have a clear question, you are open to a clear answer. Your answer to this question will help to set an intention, which in turn will guide the direction your own meditative journey takes.

Meditation is not one-size-fits-all. Your own needs, desires and aspirations will help guide you to the style and form that are most harmoniously aligned with where you want to go.

Life is all about choices, and we can choose what kind of practice we want to use as we continue to become he-or-she-who-we-are-here-to-be. Your own voice, your own truth, is the best place to start.

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