

Phone Numbers:

**God, Grant me the Serenity,
 To accept the things
 I cannot change,
 the Courage to change
 the things I can,
 and the Wisdom
 to know the difference.
 Thy will, not mine, be done.**

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1000 12/2014

CPA and Meditation



*"... a fellowship for those with
 chronic pain and chronic illness."*

The tool of meditation in CPA

The Eleventh Step states, *"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."* We have too often seen our fellowship friends omit the meditation suggestion in this Step because they are unfamiliar with the practice of meditation or they don't think they can do it "correctly." This brochure offers basic information about the practice of meditation, why it is a valuable tool in CPA recovery, and how you can learn more on your own. In CPA we suggest that not only will meditation help us maintain contact with our Higher Power, it can also assist us in developing new attitudes toward our chronic pain and chronic illness.

Meditation and the Twelve Steps

Although the practice of meditation is not a religious ritual, meditative practices have appeared in religious and spiritual traditions around the world for thousands of years. There are many different approaches to practicing meditation, but the primary goal is to train one's mind to focus attention in the present moment, with non-judgmental acceptance. There is no single "right" way to do this, and it is hardly ever a perfect practice. By using the tool of meditation, we can make a positive

difference in the way we relate to our pain and illness and can support our goal to live a life of quality and dignity.

In Step One we admit *"...we are powerless over our chronic pain and chronic illness."* Meditation helps us accept our pain and our illness, rather than fight it, reject it, or dramatize it. We develop the ability to pay attention to the sensations, thoughts and emotions we may be experiencing, yet hold them lightly. As a result we may begin to stop obsessing about physical sensations or emotional highs and lows. Through meditation practices, although our bodies may shift, our mind can be stable. This will give us steadiness in our recovery.

Serenity is not freedom *from* the storm, it is peace *amid* the storm. In nature, at the eye of the tornado it is peaceful, and deep under a raging ocean's waves the water is calm. We acknowledge what we are thinking and feeling, but we do not have to react to these occurrences. We recognize our pain, but we don't get involved in it. We simply remain in the present moment, with gentleness. We practice meditation to develop friendliness toward whatever appears in our minds or our bodies. With the tool of meditation we can find the peace amid the storm by letting whatever shows up just come and go.

When we meditate we discover a stillness of mind that allows us to slow down and live one moment at a time. The practice

of meditation makes it possible to release expectations and view our condition with non-judgmental awareness. It frees us from being lost in the past or projecting into the future. We are able to experience the promise of serenity throughout the day, even on the most challenging days.

How can meditation help with pain and illness?

Meditation can provide moments of quiet that make it possible to find happiness and well-being within the mind, independent of the body or external circumstances. We begin to find it easier to accept the pain and illness and view them not as enemies, but as a normal part of life.

Our meditation practice helps us develop more kindness and compassion toward ourselves, and our bodies. It teaches us how to rest alertly in what is happening, but not to grasp onto it.

Fear is sometimes referred to as “**F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal.” When we take the time to meditate, we calm our mind so it becomes stable and still. Then we can focus and pay attention, without judgment, to present-moment experiences. In this state of acceptance and alertness, we can reassess the situation and identify what is real and what is false. Meditation is a tool for managing our fear-based thoughts. It may not take the pain away, but the ability to establish a calm, still mind can decrease our emotional pain and “stinking

thinking.” We can learn how to experience intense emotions and thoughts, and physical sensations, without allowing them to hijack our serenity.

When we become preoccupied with our pain and our illness, the cycle of anxiety grows and our bodies can become tense, which can worsen our condition. With meditation, we can change that. Meditation has been proven to lower blood pressure, slow heart rates, and increase positive hormones such as endorphins, the body’s natural painkiller.

The slogan “This, too, shall pass” can seem impossible in the grip of intense pain or other challenging illness symptoms. With meditation we begin to see that feelings, and pain, come and go. When we create a stability of mind, we have a set of tools to utilize throughout our recovery. We have new ways to cope with the unpredictable and uncontrollable challenges we face, including pain, fatigue, medical procedures, and the people we encounter in the medical care system.

Suggestions for starting meditation practice

Meditation can be practiced anywhere, in the quiet of the bedroom or the noise of a doctor’s waiting room. When we are first learning, it is beneficial to create a quiet space in our home. Although many meditation methods suggest sitting upright, meditation can also be practiced in a reclined position. Remember that meditation techniques are not the

meditation, but merely a means to set the stage for the experience.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started.

Remember to “*Keep It Simple.*”

- Choose a place and time to practice regularly.
- Experiment with ways to position your body so you are comfortable. Meditation can be done in many ways, such as lying on a bed with a pillow under the knees, sitting on a soft chair, or sitting on a cushion on the floor. It is best to judge one’s own pain level and find a position that is restful and safe. The most important thing is to be sure that your spine is straight and you are positioned so you can relax completely and breathe easily.
- Eyes can be open or closed. See which works best for you. If you are prone to falling asleep when you close your eyes, you can meditate with your eyes open. Keep a gentle gaze, looking down your nose.
- Your breath should flow naturally. When you get distracted, one simple method is to inhale and say to yourself “breathing in,” and on the exhale say to yourself “breathing out.”
- There is no set time frame. You can practice for two minutes, and then rest, and then practice for another two minutes. You can take breaks

whenever you want, and, as your ability to meditate improves, you may wish to extend the amount of time you spend in your daily practice.

If you want to learn more

If you are interested in learning more about meditation, there are many resources available. You may want to start by investigating what is available in your local neighborhood. Places to consider are community colleges, universities, meditation centers, and religious organizations. The library will have books you can read. An Internet search can provide information about a variety of meditation practices and teachings. You can also find classes available online.

In recovery we learn that we have choices. It is suggested you investigate and seek out methods that work for you personally. As you learn about meditation, take what you want and leave the rest. We hope you will take some time to experiment and see if meditation can be of benefit to you. Many in the fellowship have found meditation to be a helpful tool in their recovery journey. Meditation can bring us a sense of calm serenity, acceptance of ourselves and others, and a relaxed feeling of well-being.

For more information
please visit our website at:
www.ChronicPainAnonymous.org