

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 exploring 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. Seek out methods that work for you. 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.

**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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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 part of this Step because they are unfamiliar with the practice of meditation or they don’t think they can do it “correctly.” In fact, the tool of meditation can be used at any time in our program and in many different ways. Perhaps you have thought, “I can’t still my mind,” “I can’t assume a meditative pose,” or “I don’t have time.” These are misperceptions about meditation that deter us from doing the footwork and getting started.

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 meditation can help us maintain contact with our Higher Power and 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 necessarily a religious ritual, meditative practices have appeared in religious and spiritual traditions around the world for thousands of years. By using the tool

of meditation, we can make a positive difference in the way we relate to our pain and illness, supporting our aim to live a life of quality and dignity.

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 it, and it is not meant to be perfect.

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 fluctuate, our mind can be stable. This will give us steadiness in our recovery.

***“Serenity is not freedom from the storm;
but peace amid the storm.”***

In nature, the eye within the ferocious hurricane is peaceful, and the water deep under a raging ocean’s waves is calm. In meditation, we acknowledge what we are thinking and feeling, but we do not have to react to these occurrences. We recognize our pain and other symptoms, but we don’t fixate upon them. We simply remain in the present moment with openness. We witness the ever-changing flow of thoughts and emotions.

As we practice meditation, we discover increased awareness of whatever appears in our minds or our bodies. With consistent practice the habit of suppressing or grasping onto thoughts, emotions, or sensations begins to diminish. The tool of meditation allows us to find the peace amid the storm by letting whatever shows up to just come and go.

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 focuses the mind. It can make it possible to find greater contentment and well-being within our mind, independent of our body or external circumstances. We begin to find it easier to accept the pain and illness, and view them as a part of life.

Our meditation practice helps us develop more compassion toward ourselves and our bodies. It helps us turn toward what we are experiencing with curiosity and softness. This can counteract the possibility of generating drama and trauma which increase suffering.

Meditation can be a tool for managing our fear-based thoughts and reactions to our bodily sensations. Fear is

sometimes referred to as “**F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal.” When we take the time to meditate, 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. We remain in the present without projecting into the future.

In meditation, we practice relating to inner and outer disturbances with kindness and compassion. This may decrease our emotional or physical pain and “stinking thinking.” We can learn how to experience intense emotions, thoughts, and physical sensations without allowing them to hijack our serenity.

There is significant evidence that meditation helps to improve the body’s ability to respond to pain and illness. When we become preoccupied with our condition, the cycle of anxiety grows, and our bodies can become tense, which can worsen our symptoms. 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.

Meditation won’t cause trauma; however, it may uncover it. If trauma is part of your history, you may want to get assistance from a counselor or therapist to help you go slowly. Meditation can foster emotional regulation and self-compassion. These skills can help support our recovery journey.

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 pains do 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 difficulties we face, such as pain, fatigue, medical procedures, and people we encounter, including friends, family, and those in the health care system.

Suggestions for Starting Meditation Practice

Meditation can be practiced anywhere: in the quiet of the bedroom or the noisiness 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.

“Keep It Simple”

Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

- 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 softly open. Keep a gentle gaze, looking down your nose.
- Your breath should flow naturally.
- 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.
- There are many different meditation practices, such as ones focused on breathing, compassion, or the body. Take some time and investigate specific meditation methods to see which appeal to you. A helpful way to start is by listening to a guided meditation, which can often be found for free on the Internet.

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