

## Weekly Teachings 15/7/2012



### The Effect of Meditation on Health

One of the readers of these 'Letters' asked why in our Community we do not lay the same stress on the health benefits of meditation as some do.

The answer is summed up by Laurence Freeman: *'From a spiritual perspective you relax in order to meditate rather than meditating just in order to relax.'* ('Jesus, the Teacher Within')

Why is meditation so popular in our times especially in our secular world? The main answer is that it has been demonstrated to be an excellent antidote to stress, which is the cause of many illnesses in our present time.

Stress affects the release of important hormones into the bloodstream. The two most important ones here are serotonin and cortisol. Serotonin is a chemical that influences our emotional state: a happy state is associated with increased levels of serotonin and an unhappy state is associated with decreased levels. Stress reduces the serotonin level considerably. Moreover, stress will lead to higher levels of the hormone cortisol in our blood stream, which triggers our 'flight or fight' reflex. This leads to a permanent state of tension and alertness to danger, which in turn is proven to lead to memory loss, depression and anxiety.

Meditation's impact on stress underlies many of its proven physical health benefits. In some patients, regular meditation is associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, as well as decreases in blood pressure, both of which are likely to result from better stress management. Regular meditation also confers psychological benefits, such as reducing anxiety and depression, improving coping mechanisms (both with disease and chronic pain), and addressing addictive behaviour, all of which are again, at least in part, manifestations of stress. ('The Blissful Brain' by Dr Shanida Nataraja)

These health benefits of meditation also come the way of those, who practice meditation as a spiritual discipline, but there they are seen as fortunate side-effects not as the main objective

of the discipline.

Meditation as a spiritual discipline is not just about a wholeness of body, but a wholeness of mind and spirit as well ? a wholeness of our total being; the silence of meditation allows us to transform into who we are meant to be, a being acting out of love, peaceful and harmonious. We move from the surface to the depth of our being, where Christ dwells. And in so doing, we not only get into a better relationship with ourselves, but also with others, with creation and with the Divine Reality, in which all are embedded.

*?Men and women must be first restored to themselves that, making of themselves as it were a stepping-stone, they may rise thence and be borne up to God.? (St Augustine)*

Kim Nataraja

For further help with setting up and leading groups, please look at the [?Christian Meditation Groups?](#) Website in English, Spanish and French, based on the book [?A Pearl of Great Price?](#) by Laurence Freeman

School of Meditation Weekly Teachings

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.wccm.org/content/weekly-teachings-1572012>