



DITCH THE

# STRESS

AND SEIZE SOME REST

RESEARCH ESTIMATES AS MUCH AS 90 PER CENT OF ALL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE CAUSED OR AGGRAVATED BY STRESS. HERE'S HOW YOU CAN AVOID BECOMING A STATISTIC.

## THE SINGLE GREATEST OBSTRUCTION

to our health and wellbeing is stress. Whether the stress is physical, emotional, mental or environmental, if it continues for more than three weeks, it has the power to wreak havoc in our mind/body system. Medical research estimates as much as 90 per cent of all health problems are caused or aggravated by stress.

Meditation is an important stress release tool because of its power to calm the mind. A calm mind is able to handle any stressful situation with more reserves and can respond appropriately. Often when the mind is already stressed and challenged only more stress follows.

The benefits of meditation are too numerous to go into in the scope of this article and it is apparent that Western medicine acknowledges meditation as a helpful adjunct to any therapy or condition. I was interested to see on a recent visit to a cardiology unit in one of Sydney's major hospitals a sign, prominently displayed on a main notice board promoting group meditation for pain relief.

Even though, one of the most profound and enjoyable goals of any meditation technique is to experience a unique state of rest, which helps you – physiologically – alleviate some of the daily stress, the mind often doesn't easily surrender to wanting to meditate. Maybe this explains why there are so many meditation techniques (and if this description fits you, it's worth trying different techniques to see which works best for you).

People who experience anxiety or depression find it very difficult to meditate and be still with their internal state. This is often because if meditation or trying to still the mind requires any effort, then the mind itself becomes restless and aware of its busyness, in turn it loses interest quickly because in trying too hard to compete with the mental chit chat it becomes agitated, rather than relaxed. This is why many people don't meditate even if they know or think they should.

## HOW CAN MEDITATION HELP OUR BRAIN DEAL WITH DAILY STRESS?

There are many systems of meditation, and they mainly fall into two categories: concentration or contemplation.

Concentration involves effort and, inevitably, keeps the mind lively and active. Where contemplation involves thinking about something. One thought leads onto another and, again, the mind remains active.

Meditation that stills and calms the mind with no effort involved yields the following benefits:

- + Lowers stress
- + Increases adaptation energy
- + Enhances creativity
- + Improves daily performance in all activities
- + Allows us to meet life's demands with equanimity and grace.

'Effortless Meditation', on the other hand is based on neither concentration nor contemplation, and is to do with transcendence – transcending the busy mind to a point of self-referral. As the name suggests, this technique enables the mind to meditate without effort. Effortless Meditation is based on a form of transcendence with the purpose of discovering the stillness that, with regular practice, leads one to discover the true Self.

In Effortless Meditation, we bypass our constant busy, chattering mind and experience the stillness of the Self to find a calm, peaceful even blissful state.

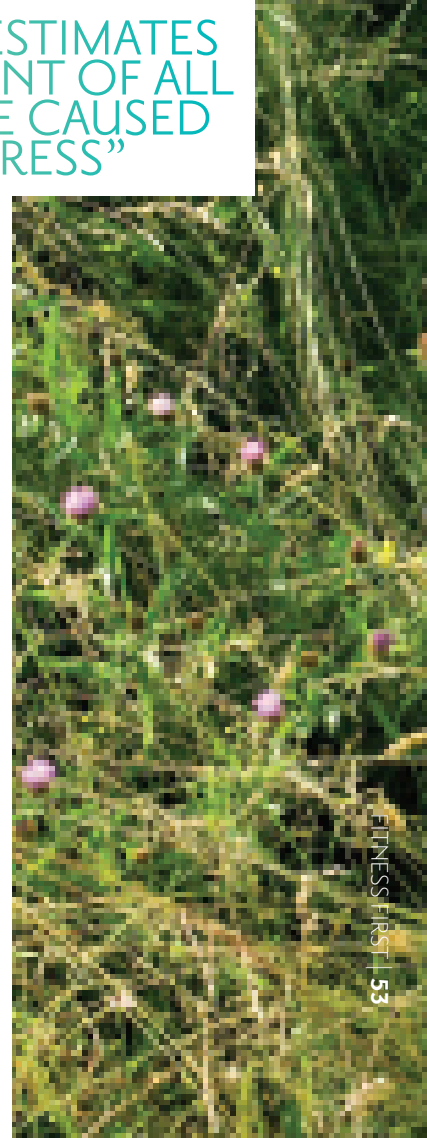
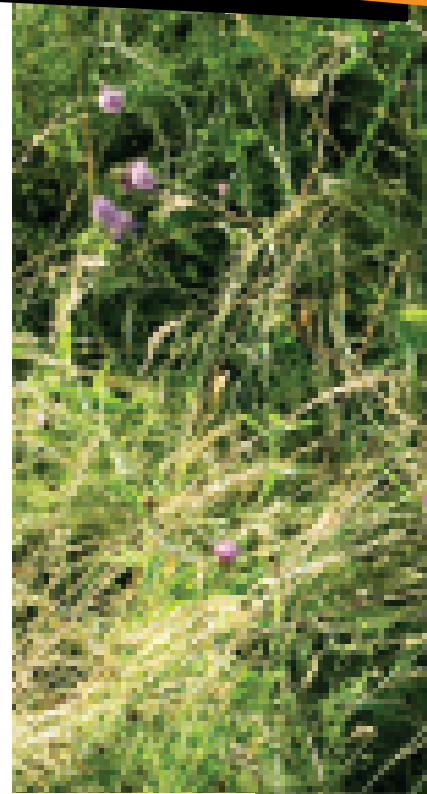
**“MEDICAL RESEARCH ESTIMATES AS MUCH AS 90 PER CENT OF ALL HEALTH PROBLEMS ARE CAUSED OR AGGRAVATED BY STRESS”**

A mantra is used initially to help novice meditators of Effortless Meditation technique experience transcendence, the real goal of any meditation technique.

We don't need to chant the mantra out aloud; in fact, it is more powerful when our mantra is silent in our mind. The mind is fascinated by the subtle vibration of the mantra and pauses in its constant thought process to experience the stillness and peace waiting within. This can be described in terms of four major brain wave patterns known as Alpha, Beta, Theta and Delta:

Beta Brain Activity is at a range 16 to 33 cycles per second in the Hertz scale. This is a highly analytical state of thinking, rationalising, planning, and just responding to daily stresses of living. Beta is emitted when we are consciously alert, analysing tasks, peak performance

and if we stay too long in this state we start to feel agitated, tense and fatigued. Students during exams are generally in beta state and this state applies to many people during their corporate working day, on the go, fast-paced or in high-speed mode. For many people this is an addictive state and that is why the mind does





not know how to relax unless it is taught how to.

Alpha Brain Activity is 15 to 8 cycles per second. This is a more creative, lateral thinking brain activity. Alpha is emitted when we are in a state of physical and mental relaxation, although aware of what is happening around us. Meditation and even listening to background music allows us to achieve this state easily.

Theta Brain Activity is 7 to 4 cycles per second. This is a highly relaxed state that advanced meditators reach in their meditation. It is higher in awareness and allows us to expand our consciousness beyond the mind and intellect. It has the power to neurologically rewire some behavioural conditioning if practiced daily for 3 months or more.

Delta Brain Activity is 4 to 0.4 cycles per second. This is beyond the pain threshold and a very deep state of relaxation. It is emitted during unconsciousness, deep sleep or catalepsy or under general anesthesia.

By practicing meditation that is easy and effortless, we create more coherence in our brain and more harmony in our life as a direct result.

## WHAT IS COHERENCE?

Coherence is unity. Meditation allows us to bring our mind, thoughts, feelings and actions closer to this deeply peaceful state. Coherence in our brain wave pattern affects how we experience life, as seen from the brain wave patterns. If we spend most of our time in beta brain state we literally frazzle with stress and are unable to enjoy what we are doing because eventually we get tense tired and agitated. This is well documented by Ernest Lawrence Rossi, PhD in *The 20-Minute Break*. This book offers practical strategies for recognising the body's natural signals for optimising creativity, performance and healing in everyday life. According to *The 20-Minute Break* theory, our mind/body systems need a natural period of healing and rejuvenation for about 20 minutes every 90 to 120 minutes. Often, we neglect the signs telling us that rest

is needed, recharging instead with caffeine, sugar or nicotine – all short term fixes that set the stage for fatigue, poor performance and long-term health and emotional problems. Dr Rossi presents strategies for overcoming such destructive habits, for breaking patterns of stress and tension, and for capitalising on the body's natural periods of creativity, alertness and self-healing. This research supports the brain wave theory, that when we are able to shift our beta brain into alpha and theta states, we start to feel more rejuvenated and better to cope with demanding activities. We become more coherent and productive as a result of regular meditation.

“REST IS THE BASIS OF ALL OUR ACTIVITY. THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH BETTER YOU FEEL AFTER A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP.”

While many of us would find it a challenge to rest for 20 minutes every two hours, we do, in fact do it in other unconscious ways such as spacing out, or not being able to listen in. Children do that naturally when too many instructions are presented to them, they just become overwhelmed; it's a familiar scenario in today's demanding education system. As adults, when we become overwhelmed with stimuli and we pretend we are coping when, in fact, we tend to disengage instead; often through food, loud music, strenuous exercise or daydreaming.

The human brain was designed to perform in its highest capacity or in high beta brain activity for maximum of 120 minutes. Once that time is up, it will look for ways to disengage, according to Dr Rossi. If we fail to give it rest, we will experience anxiety, frustration and lack of coordination; leading to accidents, wear and tear of muscles, ligaments as a result.



You will literally have more brainpower and energy as you benefit from a more coherent and unified thinking process. Rest, play, meditate and enjoy life!

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