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Zen Meditation: The Mindfulness of Awareness



“To a mind that is still, the whole universe surrenders”- Buddha

Meditation is an essential part of our guests' experience. In the short term, it offers serenity. Given time, it leads to a shift in consciousness that supports physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

The aim of Meditation is simple: To foster awareness and clarity. At first attending to the intake and outtake of breath, and then to the thoughts that meander through the mind as the session goes on. The idea is to notice internal and external distractions without reacting to them.

Practicing this level of awareness helps our guests positively channel their consciousness in a way that improves their lives in the short and long term.

At Zen Resort, your meditation will be integrated with Yoga and Pranayama as part of our daily Zenchi classes. Each includes mindful meditation and takes place in the morning, with views toward the open ocean as the Balinese countryside awakens.

There is no shortage of secluded spots in Zen gardens should you wish to find your own private hideaway. Individual classes can be arranged if you want to learn with the help of our Meditation master.

Daily Meditation ensures our guests start each day in a positive and composed state of mind.

It's easy to underestimate the power of something based on stillness and introspection. But Meditation is central to the wellbeing of our guests, particularly when it's practiced alongside Yoga and Pranayama as part of our Zenchi classes.

That's because Meditation is proven to improve physical, emotional and mental stability. It empowers those who practice it with greater control over their state of mind, which explains why it's increasingly used to treat mental health conditions and stress-related illnesses.

But at Zen Resort Meditation is also thought of as a preventative measure, as a way to fortify

mind and body. We are all confronted with challenges that cause anxiety and inhibit our ability to think clearly. A few minutes of deep, meditative concentration each day can provide the foundations we need to face them in the right way.

The objective of meditation is to transform your state of mind through three stages of focus: Awareness, meditative concentration and enlightenment. Once our attention is engaged, concentration moves into a meditative state. That state has a transformative effect that leads to liberation and, eventually, enlightenment.



There are many meditation techniques, but the two main categories are concentrative and mindfulness.

Concentrative meditation aims to focus attention on one thing in particular: the breath, an image or a sound. This process stills the mind to allow a greater awareness and sense of clarity to emerge.

Mindfulness meditation instead focuses on awareness of sensations and feelings around you. The aim is to experience every aspect of the environment, without consciously thinking about or reacting to it.

Both forms of Meditation lead to a state of consciousness marked by serenity, clarity and bliss. Many scientific studies have shown its power, from altering brain waves and improving cognitive functioning, to alleviating physical and emotional pain.

Meditation is a means of transforming the mind. Meditation practices are techniques that encourage and develop concentration, clarity, emotional positivity, and a calm seeing of the true nature of things. By engaging with a particular meditation practice you learn the patterns and habits of your mind and a means to cultivate new, more positive ways of being. With regular work and patience these nourishing, focused states of mind can deepen into profoundly peaceful and energized states of mind. Such experiences can have a transformative effect and lead to a new understanding of life.

In meditation, the mind is clear, relaxed, and inwardly focused. When you meditate, you are fully awake and alert, but your mind is not focused on the external world or on the events taking place around you. Meditation requires an inner state that is still, so that the mind becomes silent. When the mind is silent and no longer distracts you, meditation deepens.

From childhood, we have been educated only to examine and verify things in the external world. No one has taught us how to look within, to find within and to verify within. So in many ways we remain strangers to ourselves. This lack of self-understanding is one of the main reasons our relationships don't seem to work, and why confusion and disappointment so often prevail.

The goal of meditation is to go beyond the mind and experience our essential nature: peace, happiness and bliss. But as anyone who has tried to meditate knows, the mind itself is the biggest obstacle standing between ourselves and this awareness.

It is undisciplined and unruly. It resists any attempts to discipline it or to guide it on a particular path. You could say that the mind has a mind of its own. That is why many people sit for meditation and experience only fantasies, daydreams or hallucinations. They never attain the stillness that distinguishes the genuine experience of deep meditation.

We are taught how to move and behave in the outer world, but we are never taught how to be still and examine what is within ourselves. When we learn to do this through meditation, we attain the highest of all joys that can ever be experienced by a human being. All the other joys in the world are momentary, but the joy of meditation is immense and everlasting. This is not an exaggeration; it is a truth supported by the long line of sages, both those who renounced the world and attained truth, and those who continued living in the world yet remained unaffected by it. Meditation is a practical means for calming yourself, for letting go of your biases and seeing what is, openly and clearly.

Meditation is very simple. You can begin by attending to your breath, and then if a thought comes, attend to it, notice it, be open to it—and it will pass. Then you can come back to the breath. Your normal response is to react to all your thoughts, and this keeps you ever busy in a sea of confusion. Meditation teaches you to attend to what is taking place within without reacting, and this makes all the difference. It brings you freedom from the mind and its meandering. And in this freedom you begin to experience who you are, distinct from your mental turmoil. You experience inner joy and contentment, you experience relief and inner relaxation, and you find a respite from the tumult of your life. In that sense Meditation is very therapeutic. It not only leads to inner balance and stability, it also exposes your inner complexes, your immaturities, your unproductive reflexes and habit.

Have patience and do your practice systematically. Every action has a reaction. It is not possible for you to meditate and not receive benefits. You may not notice those benefits now, but slowly and gradually you are storing the *samskaras* (impressions) in the unconscious mind that will help you later. If you sow a seed today, you don't reap the fruit tomorrow, but eventually you will. It takes time to see results. Be gentle with yourself.

Meditation means gently fathoming all the levels of your being, one level after another. Be honest with yourself. Don't care what others say about their experiences, keep your mind focused on your goal. It is your own mind that does not allow you to meditate. To work with your mind, you'll have to be patient; you'll have to work with yourself gradually.

The Benefits of Meditation

Some of the most important benefits of meditation make themselves known gradually over time and are not dramatic or easily observed. Studies have shown that meditation can dramatically improve our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Some of the scientifically proven benefits of meditation are mentioned below:

- Meditation makes you happy.
- Meditation can relieve symptoms of depression.
- Meditation alleviates stress.
- Meditation reduces anxiety and worry.
- Meditation makes the healthy areas of your brain grow.
- Meditation helps you Focus.
- Meditation Makes You Creative

Also, meditation has been proven to be an effective treatment and even preventative measure towards disease likes asthma, arthritis, Alzheimer's, hypertension, high cholesterol, epilepsy and psoriasis.

The History of Meditation



Around 500 B.C, Gautama Buddha founded the principles of meditation and became its major proponent. His teachings were spread far and wide across the Asian continent, from India to China to Japan and other Asian countries. The different cultures in these countries adopted varying forms of the meditation and they each found their own unique way of practicing it. Meditation spread to Western countries much latter, gaining popularity in the mid-20th Century. Today, meditation is practiced all over the world and it is an intensely

personal and spiritual experience.



Meditation is not necessarily a religious practice, but because of its spiritual element it forms an integral part of many religions. The basic objective of most meditation styles remain the same and are performed in a state of inner and outer stillness and concentration. Meditation is an intensely personal and spiritual experience. The desired purpose of meditation is to channel awareness into a more positive direction by totally transforming one's state of mind.



The entire process of meditation comprises the three stages of concentration (Dharma), meditation (Dhyana) and enlightenment or absorption (Samadhi). The individual preparing to meditate usually starts off by harnessing awareness, such as focusing the mind onto a certain object. Once attention gets engaged, concentration turns into meditation or Dhyana. And through continuous meditation, the meditator merges with the object of concentration.



While there are a wide variety of meditation techniques, two main categories comprise all major forms. The first, concentrative meditation focuses the attention on the breath, an image or a sound, in order to still the mind and allow a greater awareness and clarity to emerge. Sitting silently and focusing on dynamics of breathing is concentrative meditation in its most basic form. Anxiety causes breathing to become shallow, rigid and uneven. In contrast in a state of tranquility and calmness, breathing is slow, deep and even.



The purpose of the second category, mindfulness meditation is to increase awareness of the inundation of "sensations and feelings" around oneself, but at a distance. In mindfulness meditation, one experiences every aspect of the environment without consciously thinking about or reacting to it, thus gaining intense calmness and clarity. Meditation leads to a state of consciousness that brings serenity, clarity, and bliss. The "normal" state of mind is actually quite abnormal, receiving sensory stimuli and often reacting physically and emotionally in an uncontrolled way.



Meditation is a practice that gives balance physically, emotionally and mentally. Today, meditation is increasingly utilized to treat anxiety, stress, and depression. The “deep rest” meditation dissolves stress and facilitates better choices through clear thinking. Meditation has also been used to help people quit smoking, conquer drug and alcohol addictions and reduce symptoms of premenstrual syndrome and menopause. Meditation aids in lowering heart rate and blood pressure by slowing down breathing, which reduces the amount of oxygen needed. Along with the mind, muscles gently relax.

The sunrise meditation at Zen takes place overlooking a lush and vivid green tropical forest which falls down to a glittering sea below, the heady scent of frangipani and incense smells like temples of devotion and the air tastes fresh and new, feels oxygenating. This sense of freshness will blow through you as you breathe and bend to clean the system. But more than that is a sense of wonder that grows as if you are experiencing nature in all its uniqueness. Have you ever stood in the darkness before dawn when for a time all is still and silent as a light gradually moves in, so subtle at first that you are not quite aware of the shift into sunrise? Then colours come in; purples, pinks, orange as sun touches morning and all nature comes alive. A frenzy of bird song grows louder, almost deafening in the jungle of dew dripping leaves and you must listen very carefully to the meditation and the rhythm of your breath. It is in this environment that we can be aware of the oneness of nature with our own breath, becoming calm in a natural and simple state of being.



At Zen Resort you have the opportunity for sunrise meditation at the Nirvanam Sanctuary that overlooks a lush tropical forest, vineyards and rice fields with wide open views of the Sea of Bali. There are also numerous secluded locations in Zen gardens to find your own private meditation hideaway. Special meditation techniques classes for individuals and groups can be arranged with our Meditation master.

Meditation and serenity

Meditation leads to a state of consciousness that brings serenity, clarity and bliss facilitating physical, emotional and mental balance. Today, meditation is increasingly utilized to treat anxiety, stress, and depression. The “deep rest” meditation dissolves stress and facilitates better choices through clear thinking. Meditation has also been used to help people quit smoking, conquer drug and alcohol addictions and reduce symptoms of premenstrual syndrome and menopause. Meditation aids in lowering heart rate and blood pressure by slowing down breathing.

This happens by following the meditation practice which comprises both movement and stillness. This preparation is necessary to be open for guided meditation to a deeper self-awareness and a reconnection to divine energy that resonates with nature. When frequencies align, an awakening begins. This can be heard in the silence within as a tangled mix of facing all that we like and dislike about our self in order to evolve and grow by letting the light in.

By illuminating the dark corners of the mind, we can begin self-analysis to take blocks away that may prevent us connecting fully with our own frequency to self-heal. Humans have the ability to self- heal, aided with the nourishment of plant frequencies, but this pathway can become blocked by negative thought patterns and events, for example, modern lifestyles where digital frequencies do not generally resonate in harmony as humans have not evolved biologically at the same rate as technology. Yet humans hold memories in a similar way as computers whilst the traces of those memories keep repeating and here rebooting the memory and a defrag process is needed at regular intervals to overwrite those memories with cleansing on a deep cellular level.

The power of unifying fields of consciousness are so immediate, this can encourage us to make conscious healthy changes in ourselves which in turn affect the great systems which dominate our world. Through meditation and becoming aware of ourselves we are more able to become aware of how healing that is to our planet, as well as making conscious choices on ways to facilitate harmony and sustainability.

If we look back on all the philosophers through the passage of time, the message is the same: “Yesterday I was clever and wanted to change the world. Today I am wise and am changing myself” Rumi.



Meditation and Modern Lifestyles

We have forgotten how to breathe in our fast pace daily life and we need to learn to reset patterns of behaviour and health through resetting the breath. We need to find a slower pace of life in tune with nature that facilitates relaxation.

The science has started to prove that point:

- The hypothesis that philosophers acknowledge that in order to create a sustainable outlook one has to first become self-sustainable in health on a holistic level highlight the importance of nurturing and maintaining energies; identifying that these energies can flow positively into other domains of life, Philo et al. (2015)
- Brain research has highlighted scientific analysis that meditation alters frequencies in brain waves leading to increased cognitive functioning. Through meditation it is possible to gain greater control over the brain and this can lead to greater control on wider outlooks towards life, Colzato and Silk (2010)
- Multiple research studies have shown that meditation and yoga triggers chemical balancing effects on mental disorders, thus resulting in a pathway to heal the self. This healing can create ripples towards healing the universal consciousness which in turn can generate a good frequency towards healing the planet, Varanbally and Gangadhar (2016)
- Mental health is enhanced by deep meditation because the induced stillness of the mind restores frequencies conducive to stress free mental health. Furthermore, a stress-free mind alters the physiology of the body to restore physical health and improve immunity against pathological invaders. Thus all dimensions of health: mental, physical and spiritual can all benefit from deep meditation, Hankey and Shetkar (2016)
- Neuro scientific research indicates that meditation or asanas, such as those performed in a combination of yoga and meditation, increases oxytocin in the brain. Oxytocin is a feel-good chemical released in feelings of love which also has neuroplasticity harnessing effects; thus bridging connections in the brain that may be misfiring due to serious mental illness ranging from depression to schizophrenia, Mehta et al. (2016)
- Research has identified plasticity changes in the brain as a result of studying magnetic imaging of brains during meditation. In the schizophrenia study it was evaluated that to be mindful of movement in meditation and the experience thereof, synchronized with breathing while imitating movements of the instructor and participants, resulted in released oxytocin. This in turn lead to a reduction in negative symptoms and a sense of social connectedness, which further can effect change towards being conscious of decisions made that may positively affect the planet. For example such changes in thought can be as simple as becoming more mindful of the decision against single use plastics in everyday life as a result of feeling better in oneself from a chemical change as a direct result of movement meditation. As an awakening or realigning happens on some levels, so does awareness in a need to protect surroundings. Feeling better in the self creates a need to make the surroundings better, Halsband et al. (2009)
- Ethnographic fieldwork methods of research argue that meditation allows people with traumatic stress to develop stronger mind and body connections to help realign themselves. By focusing on the present rather than traumatic memories, silence was seen as a healing modality. Feelings such as shame, regret or pain could be evolved into acceptance, empowerment and a neutrality of pain receptors. This

process results from going deeper into the real self. Meditation helps to manage complex body as well as emotional pain, Myers et al. (2015)

- Although numerous clinical studies testify that meditation does benefit the outlook on chronic disease, a subjective health benefits of meditation study of such patients identified better pain related quality of life and better satisfaction with life through meditation. Whilst this study design did not enable determination if meditation increased the internal locus of control giving more self-control over disease, other research on meditation itself does examine increased self-control which is an important regulator of flare ups of conditions, Lauche et al (2014)
- A study of migraines and the effect of meditation on changing frequencies highlights that secondary effects of meditation decrease headache duration, disability and is beneficial for self-efficacy, Wells et al. (2014)

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