

Meditation: An Unexpected Adjunct to the Non-Diet Approach



EAT  to LOVE
Redefining fullness

JENNA HOLLENSTEIN, MS, RD, CDN

WWW.EAT2LOVE.COM
JENNA@EAT2LOVE.COM

Our Plan



- What meditation is (and isn't)
- Science meets spirituality
- Why this is important for RDs*
- How this supports the non-diet approach
- Practice together
- Q&A

* don't take my word for it, try this out in your own life

Types of Meditation



- Focused attention
 - *Shamatha-vipashyana*, Zen, Loving-kindness, Chakra, Kundalini, Sound, Mantra, Pranayama, Qigong
- Open awareness
 - Mindfulness meditation, Vipassana, Taoist
- Effortless presence
 - Self-enquiry, Dzogchen, Mahamudra, Taoist, Raja
- Check out: <http://liveanddare.com/types-of-meditation/>

My Story



- Awkward kid
- Drunk young adult
- Sober meditator
- Meditation-based non-diet nutrition therapist

Definition #1



"Meditation is not a matter of trying to achieve ecstasy, spiritual bliss, or tranquility, nor is it attempting to be a better person. It is simply the creation of a space in which we are able to expose and undo our neurotic games, our self-deceptions, our hidden fears and hopes."

~ Chögyam Trungpa

Definition #2



“Substituting for our discursive mind another object of attention”

~ My meditation teacher, Susan Piver

Definition #3



“Feeling, allowing, being with things as they are.”

~ me

What Meditation Is



- **Synchronizing mind and body**
 - Meditation vs. meditative activities
- **Mindfulness + Awareness**
 - Mindfulness – technique
 - Awareness – insight
- **A way to relax (but not in the way you think!)**

What Meditation Isn't



- Religious
- Self-help
- Doing nothing
- A way to stop thinking/space out/calm down

Science Meets Spirituality



- Structural and functional changes in the brain influence how we experience ourselves and our world
- The mind is what the brain does

The Buddha's Teachings



Four Noble Truths

- Truth of suffering
- Cause of suffering
- Cessation of suffering
- Eightfold path

Three Marks of Existence

- Suffering
- Impermanence
- No self (egolessness)

What Happens in the Brain



- **Structure:**

- Increased gray matter in anterior cingulate cortex, prefrontal cortex, and hippocampus
- Decreased brain cell volume in amygdala
- Weakened connections between amygdala and prefrontal cortex

- **Function:**

- Frontal lobe goes “offline”
- Parietal lobe processing slows down
- Thalamus slows down sensory inputs
- Reticular formation decreases arousal

What Happens in the Body



- Lower cortisol levels
- Decreased symptoms associated with
 - Depression
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Pain
 - Insomnia
- Increased focus and concentration

(Jacobs et al., *Health Psychol*, 2013; Khoury et al., *J Psychosom Res.*, 2017; Strauss et al., *PLoS ONE*, 2014; Zeidan et al., *Neurosci Lett*, 2012; Ong et al., *Sleep*, 2014; Black et al., *JAMA Intern Med*, 2015)

Why Is This Important for Dietitians?



- Improvements in stress and self-regulation
- Decreased depression and anxiety
- Increased self-efficacy
- Improved clinician-patient relationships
- Increased empathy and spirituality

(Irving, Dobkin and Park, *Complement Ther Clin Pract.*, 2009; Shapiro, Schwartz and Bonner, *J Behav Med.*, 1998; Shapiro, Brown and Biegel, *Train Educ Prof Psychol.*, 2007; BMJ Support Palliat Care. 2016 Jun;6(2):160-9; van der Riet et al. *Nurse Educ Today.*, 2018; in press)

Four Immeasurables



- Lovingkindness – wish for others’ happiness and no separation between you and others
- Compassion – feeling others’ pain in your own heart
- Sympathetic joy – feeling others’ happiness in your own heart
- Equanimity – “the mind of no preference”

How Does Meditation Support the Non-Diet Approach?

Interoception

- Improves perception and interpretation of what is happening in the body in real time
- Physical:
 - Hunger, fullness, emotional manifestations
- Emotional:
 - “Heart hunger”

Distress Tolerance

- Ability to see clearly
- Expanding and accommodating a range of physical and emotional states
- Flexibility and resilience

Self-Compassion

Is:

- Self-kindness vs. self-judgment
- Common humanity vs. isolation
- Mindfulness vs. over-identification

Is not:

- Self-pity
- Self-indulgence
- Self-esteem

A Word of Caution



- Meditation is not a panacea
- Meditation is not a replacement for medication
- Meditation may not be for everyone, specifically those with trauma

Shamatha-vipashyana Meditation



- Mindfulness of body
- Mindfulness of breath
- Mindfulness of mind

Let's Try It



Questions?



Open Heart Project Meditation Instructor Training Course



- September 25-November 20, 2018
- Learn more: susanpiver.com/meditation-instructor-training/

Suggested Reading



- Richard Hanson. *Buddha's brain: the practical neuroscience of happiness, love & wisdom.*
- Kristin Neff. *Self-compassion: the proven power of being kind to yourself.*
- Pema Chödrön. *The places that scare you.*
- Susan Piver. *Start here now: an open-hearted guide to the path and practice of meditation.*
- Insight Timer app
- Open Heart Project Sangha: www.susanpiver.com