

# Meditation: An Unexpected Adjunct to the Non-Diet Approach



EAT  LOVE  
*Redefining fullness*

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# 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

# 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/](http://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](http://www.susanpiver.com)