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FRC Wednesdays at Noon: Addiction Medicine Conference

Meditation: For Our Health and Wellness

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1. The title of your lecture being– Meditation: For our health and wellness, can you talk more about what that is going to entail?

Answer: We are going to look at meditation from a variety of perspectives. We'll look at it historically, some of the roots, at least in the United States. We'll talk about the health benefits in that its become a very popular way to reduce stress in our lives and to perhaps quiet our minds. Meditation technique called the mindfulness or the wife-style technique called the mindfulness is been very popular. In fact it appeared on the cover of Times magazine in the early February in 2014. From there we'll talk about the science of meditation, we'll talk about meditation and brain interaction and we'll end up with the little discussion on what I called mind wandering and its role in our lives.

2. For someone who's never done meditation, how do you convince or rather what do you suggest them about meditation?

Answer: Meditation is not what you think. Maybe better than what you think, but its not what you think [laughs]. We attempt to quiet our minds in meditation. I think its important for everybody to spend some time in their own inner silence, in their own contemplating fashion, whatever that happens to be, however the person is comfortable with. I would suggest to them that we spend sometime each day in contemplation, away from the hustle and bustle of the world. And there's no side effect, there's nothing to be afraid of, sitting down for 10 to 20 minutes a day and do the meditative practice. There are many many different types of meditation. We leave it to you to decide which one is the best for yourself. I think you need to have some structure. Its important to have a mentor or a teacher when it come to meditation. (Continued)



(Continued) And certainly in many years in this country now there are meditation teachers to give students some guidance. But more than anything I encourage people to try to quiet their life down each day instead of just going day in and day out with the hustle and bustle of the world. At some point we need to try to quiet our minds and find out that there is incredible peace within us if we can just sit down and try to quiet things for a while.

3. So someone who's in recovery and may have a difficult and challenging time lets say, with that stillness, how would you approach that?

Answer: I would suggest you to do it slowly, you do not try to sit down for two hours at a time. Try to do it for 5 or 10 minutes. We all have very active minds and the mind is, I would suggest the biggest challenge that we face in the world. Being able to quiet the mind can bring about great joy. Alternatively, while we were talking about the meditation for our own health and wellness, we are talking about meditation for spiritual progress and we are talking about meditation because it could possibly help someone in the recovery program. We have to change our thought patterns and that's the bottom line, recovery from addiction, or dealing with stress and depression or whatever, we have to change our thought patterns. Once we change our thought patterns, its suggested that this internal change circuits in our brain which will change our behaviors which will improve our lives. So we have nothing to lose except our noisy minds that we all have.

4. What do you suggest if someone says that meditation is more of a spiritual, a religious kind of a thing. How would you approach that? Because a lot of people tend to associate meditation with both.

Answer: Well certainly meditative practices have their roots in the wisdom and tradition of the world, not only from the eastern religion but from the western religion too. However, I really do not know much of the religion. I approach meditation from the perspective of a Scientist. I try to do the techniques as if it was a personal experiment and I look at the result. So if you are not comfortable with spirituality or religion, it doesn't even have to be a part of it.

The beauty of mindfulness is its been secularized, or decontextualized. Its taking out of its wisdom tradition roots and its been brought to the 21st century in America and in the world. It's the technique we can use to help us quiet our minds and reduce stress in our lives and most importantly to live in the moment, learn to live in the moment. You do not have to have spiritual or religious contacts, however I would say alternatively it all depends on your goals. I would like to compare meditation with exercise, if someone came to me and said you know I would like to try an exercise, I would ask them what are your goals, if your goals are spiritual or religious in nature then you do a certain type of meditation where you relax your body or reduce stress. So the interesting thing about meditation is that it can impact our lives from a lot of different perspectives.



5. When people say meditation helps your health, a lot of times that's said but not explained. Can you touch on that and how meditation would help heal your body, heal your mind. What is your approach on that?

Answer: Well meditation can affect us, as I said, on a variety of different levels. We can use it simply for relaxation, it will reduce blood pressure for example which has its benefits. Perhaps more importantly is if we use meditation for stress reduction. In fact stress is self reflected I suggest. For stress to take place two things have to happen, one has to be the change in the world and then we have to respond to that change in the stressful manner. Well, we cannot control the changes in the world but we begin to learn how to control the responses to the changes in the world. We can begin to reduce our stressful responses to change. So we can reduce stress which has numerable health benefits and beyond that we can begin to quiet out minds and reduce mental turmoil which again has health benefits but alternatively meditation, its original use was for spiritual reasons to try to connect us or reconnect us with something sacred that's within each one of us and to me that's its biggest health benefit. When I look at the word "health" I think its not only as physical, psychological, emotional, mental parts of health but I also think in terms of spiritual health. So it can impact us on a variety of levels. This is why I consider meditation to be a medication it's the ultimate complementary medicine. It will complement whatever you do without any untoward side effect.

6. What do you suggest for meditation beginners?

Answer: I suggest that people should do a little bit of reading to find out what they are comfortable with and then try with one of the local teachers. There are a variety of meditation in Gainesville and I am sure whatever the audience is, you can find a teacher online, you can do a little bit of reading. I do not believe you should have to pay anything for meditation techniques but some organizations might have some modest fee associated with it. But see what resonates with you, see what the principles are that have been offered by the teacher for a particular program and try different techniques to what ultimately resonates with you

7. Is there anything that you would like the people to be aware of meditation?

Answer: Meditation is human kinds...It will impact us in so many ways and it might prelude to todays talk but I think this is the good place to wrap things up and to summarize things. There's a quote from a teacher from China called Lao Tzu. The quote is- "If you are depressed then you are living in your past, if you are anxious then you are living in your future, if you are at peace then you living at the present moment". I am sure Lao Tzu as a meditation teacher and that's where he learned the principles behind this quote. So there are a lot of benefits from meditation and it does not cost anything except for a little bit of your time.

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