

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a pink tank top and black leggings, is sitting in a meditative pose on a beach covered in smooth, dark grey stones. She has her eyes closed and her hands resting on her knees in a mudra. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

inner peace

Once reserved for mystics and New Agers, the 5,000-year-old practice of meditation has become mainstream as a way to cope with modern-day stresses and even improve athletic performance.

By Paige Dunn

Photos by Tim Tadder

You're an over-achieving multi-tasker, proud that you've managed to not only cope but thrive on the chaos around you. But being in such a frazzled state so often can compromise your mental and physical health if you don't take the reins and slow it down occasionally. One way to get a grip is through meditation.

Once you've experienced the benefits meditation offers, you'll wonder why everyone isn't doing it. It's been demonstrated to help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, decrease heart and respiratory rates, and increase blood flow. Recent studies show that people who meditate are better able to concentrate, show more creativity, feel less anger and note improved relationships with others. In short, they just tend to be healthier and happier than those who don't.

Although the mention of meditation may make you hear the "ohms" of cross-legged swamis echoing from mountaintop monasteries, there's nothing mysterious or mystical about why it's so effective. Meditation helps us control stress through relaxation.

When stressed, our bodies release hormones that increase heart rate and breathing, among other responses. Stress overload negatively affects not only the heart and blood vessels, but also the nervous and immune systems. By focusing our concentration on something simple such as our breathing—quelling for a time the cacophony of