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Picture: Shutterstock If practicing your meditation has become just one more thing to check the list of activities - or if you've tried meditation but haven't found it as relaxing as you'd hoped - maybe it's time to rethink the way you approach Mindfulness. There are many advantages to making meditation a normal habit. But if you're not in the right mental state when you open your yoga mat, sit on the couch or open your Calm or Headspace apps, you're not going to reap any potential benefits. In other words, you may need to learn how to relax before you meditate. And, yes, I know it's hard. (Especially now.) This week we're learning how to be more present with meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg. Hearing her called moreAt Wired, Matt Jancer suggests creating a dedicated meditation space to help you get into the Mindfulness mindset. This can be difficult, especially if you have already infected one part of your home as a work area and another classroom for your children. (You didn't take our advice to use verbal masking tape, did you?) G/O Media may get a \$10 commission off your first coffee bag but that doesn't mean you still can't find a way to create a unique meditation environment, even in a space that has to serve multiple purposes. Jancer recommends lighting a candle before starting your meditation practice, for example, or drinking tea – and the ritual here is that you light the same candle every time (especially if it's a scented candle, so you can associate the scent with mindfulness and relaxation) and drink the same kind of tea. You can also change your mindset by changing your clothes, whether that means going from day clothes to pajamas or simply swapping your everyday stretch pants for your meditation-only stretch pants. All these little rituals can help remind you that it's time to relax: a sense of the soft fabric against your skin, the warmth and taste of the tea, the aroma of your freshly lit candle, the light casting by its flame. (You're already feeling more relaxed, aren't you?) The thing about meditation is that you can't get into it and think okay, I need to start this app now or I won't be able to get to sleep on time and then I'll be tired tomorrow and have a zoom session that the kids are supposed to go outside and identify five kinds of flowers for the school thing and I can't wait for the school year to end only so I don't know what I'm going to do with them all day but it's not like anyone knows what they're doing at all these days so I'm just going to trigger this meditation and get it over with. (Sorry I ruined the sense of calm between us together.) Meditation, like most proper practices, takes longer than it takes, if it makes sense. Mindfulness is not something you can. Order and shut down whenever it fits your schedule. You need to come to it ready to commit to the process – and making the preparatory work part of the process will make your meditation habit both more relaxing and more meaningful. Ture, a lot of guided meditation videos and applications start the process by switching you to a more conscious state. The people behind them know that most of us don't come to meditation as relaxed as we can or should be. But if you take further steps to make practicing your meditation unique and separate from everything else on your activity list, you may be surprised by the ways your practice will deepen and grow - and you'll find new ways to maintain the sense of calm, focus and clarity in your daily life. This year I'm trying to meditate more, which included diving pretty deep into all... Read more Mindful Breath meditation HelpGuide 9:08 Mindful Breath meditation with Music HelpGuide 9:14 Mindful breathing is a very basic but powerful mindfulness meditation practice. The idea is simply to focus your attention on your breathing – for its natural rhythm and flow and in how it feels all about inhaling and exhaling. Focusing on breathing is especially helpful because it serves as an anchor – something you can turn your attention to at any time if you start to feel stressed or swept away by negative emotions. Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Pinterest Many health experts recognize the powerful relationship between mind and body. Mindfulness meditation is the practice of non-judgmental self-awareness to help improve mood and anxiety. Mindfulness meditation is a simple and powerful tool that anyone can learn. By taking time out of a busy schedule, a person can focus attention on body position, breathing and thought processes. The goal is to reduce stress, feel better and take the time to value life every day. Interns at another Johns Hopkins member hospital: If you average less than 7 hours a night (which most Americans are), you don't get enough shut-eye (see how sleep deprivation can wreak havoc on your health). But bans on smartphones and hot tubs are only going so far. Here's a larger commitment strategy worth it: meditation. Meditation is the most natural partner of sleep. This reflects the activity of the brain during the initial stage of rest (non-REM sleep), which seems critical to brain rehabilitation. During waking life, neurons shoot intermittently in different parts of the brain. In non-REM sleep, this variable pattern becomes more unity: neurons synchronize and shoot en masse. This synchronization may reset neurons and reduce information overload, says Bruce O'Hara, PhD, a researcher from the University of Kentucky. Amazingly, a similar effect happens during meditation: neurons become like rockettes within about 10 seconds of focusing on breathing. It's not just restorative, but... May also help chronically restless fall asleep easier. In one study, 20 insomnia that meditation had a sedative for better, longer sleep. They also reported clearer thinking and feeling stronger physically. I figured you had to clear your head of all thoughts, says former book editor Helen Phuket, a 28-year-old book editor. But after reading The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nahat Han and When Things Are Broken Down by Pema Chödrön, I learned meditation is not about blocking thoughts but about letting them come and then go. It opened the door for me. Here's the ultimate proof: Those who meditate regularly may need less sleep. When O'Hara studied the sleep habits and brain speed of the Uges, he discovered that their two-hour daily meditation, plus quite a few of 4 hours of nocturnal sleep, provided the equivalent of 7 hours of mental rehabilitation, which, as we saw, was the dream. If you're new to meditation, these 3 mindfulness meditations can get you started. MORE: The simple breathing technique to help you sleep this content is created and maintained by a third party, and imported to this page to help users provide their e-mail addresses. You may be able to find more information about this and similar content piano.io it is not easy to feel sorry for a model. Kathy Preston was once, and you can't tell. The 39-year-old author and meditation consultant is very pretty: all the long legs, the body of the hair, the deep blue eyes that shine with warmth and intelligence, and the atmosphere of a nice girl and once. However, for a woman who looks like she could have George Clooney, Brad Pitt and Colin Farrell wrapped around her finger at once, her choices in men were once confusing. They were just bad, admits Preston, terrible, really. Not only would I date men who were completely wrong to me, she says, but I also tended to date guys who somehow drained my energy. Some were just boring, a couple were alcoholics, and one was really abusive. I kept wanting to see something that just wasn't there, and I was desperately trying to figure out what was wrong. I struggled to fill my heart with the illusion of love. It's a familiar story, really – almost a cliché. Girl meets guy. A girl gets a son. A girl gets slammed by her stupid choice but still wants a son. Turn on Jerry Springer, and you can catch him every day. But for Preston, it wasn't just about the kid. Her need would have motivated her life. She desperately wanted the end of Cinderella: to become a beautiful princess through someone else's love. By the time she recognized her personal story line, she had lost friends, jobs, money, and almost herself. In the end, though, it was Preston who board to her rescue in an unconventional, even inspiring way: she began meditating. The science of Monk MindsOnce is considered solely for hippies, meditation is offered in schools, Corporate offices, even prisons. It's this decade what cardio was to the 1980s – the rate you can't miss if you're really interested in improving your health. It even caught the eye of the medical establishment. Of course, scientists have known for many years that meditation has a positive, short-term effect on the nervous system. In 1975, Herbert Benson, M.D., who was to go on to find the Brain/Body Institute of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, published a thin volume called Relaxation Response, in which he introduced the idea – revolutionary at the time – that meditation can reduce the effects of stress and improve physical health by slowing heart rate, breathing, and metabolic rate. [Page break] The book became a fugitive bestseller and marked the beginning of the American medical establishment's serious interest in alternative therapies. But it wasn't until the technological leaps of the past decade made it possible, through robust scans, to see how meditation affects the brain. It was only then that meditation became what many doctors now consider truly appropriate for scientific inquiry. Richard Davidson, PhD, has studied the minds of the most dedicated meditators on the planet for 10 years. Director of the W.M. Keck Laboratory for Functional Brain Imaging and Behavior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he long learned the nature of positive emotion when, in 1992, he received a fax from Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, to actually volunteer the opinions of his monks. In Buddhist tradition, meditation strives to calm the mind – neutralize sources of negative emotion and foster healthier emotional states. Davidson connected the monks to measure their neural impulses and eventually discovered that meditation does reduce stress and neutralizes negative emotion for them. She also seems to have facilitated a faster and more spontaneous recovery from negative reactions — exactly what Preston herself promises in her new book, Expect a Miracle: 7 Spiritual Steps to Finding the Right Relationship. Meditation only 20 minutes a day, every day, she says, and you will create the space in your life you have to really listen to your heart, to fulfill its strongest desires, and change your life. That's why I call my form of spiritual practice a transformative meditation, because it brings positive, healthy and permanent changes in your life view, which is you at your deepest, most basic level. Indeed, Preston may be right. In a study published in the Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine, brain scans of new meditators who were placed in meditation for 3 hours a week for 8 weeks showed significant increases in activity in a part of the brain associated with positive emotion. Furthermore, the increased activity lasted at least 4 months after the experiment when study participants were scanned again. It seems, literally changes the minds of those who practice it. When you appear daily for conscious contact with a higher power, what you actually do is compliment your day/your personality/your world with the grace to trust yourself and the universe, says Freston. You can't think your way into that kind of optimism. You can only reach it through your heart - by closing your eyes, breathing deeply, and listening to the truth that is being verified there. But Preston's twist in meditation takes it beyond listening. There's talk, too. In her version, while you meant ear to your inner voice, you also put on spiritual intent - a vision of what you want from life, love, the universe. It's not like a wish granted by a Gini. And it's not for material things. When you repeat a positive mantra, like 'I'm still focused.' In my silence, I'm magnetic to miracles, you also imagine what you want in your life, she says. For most people, it's love. To be seen, to be loved, and to rise to man's highest potential. Be who you are and be absolutely loved, totally and healthily about it. Preston, who escaped from the B-List LifeAs, worked steadily, initially in Paris, and made many catalogues. In the modeling world, it's not a job on the list. It's a livelihood, of course, but it's one where rejection implies, because if a model has landed editing jobs or a coveted itinerary, it doesn't make catalogues. Never, ever. I was 17 when I started, a nerdy Atlanta girl with mall hair, a zit and a strong desire to please, says Preston. And I just never felt like I fit in. The successful models were so cool. They'd come into the room and nothing more. I was less confident and going through a lot of rejection – which of course made me feel even less confident. I remember photographers leaning closely, staring attentively at my skin, and speaking quickly in French among themselves. Then they would send me home from work – because of my zets or perhaps because I looked tired or insecure to them that day. It was an ongoing battle to maintain my self-esteem. The local bibliotech, of all places, provided an escape hatch. Preston became a model when most of the girls were in college, so books were her teachers. I read everything I could say about religion, philosophy, psychology and alternative therapies, she says. There was so much attention on how I looked, what my price was today, and where I was invited next that I had to go inside to find some validity – something that was going to make me feel fine when I kept feeling less than okay. I could go the other way, of course, get very angry and act - a lot of girls I know have experimented with drugs and alcohol. But I didn't do it. I kept meditating; I learned about prayer. But she also got hooked. With men who tended to reflect how she felt about herself - lemons, almost every one of them. It was one in particular that stung the most. When I was in my mid-twenties, I met this guy, she remembers. Something about me immediately connected with him, and it was strong. At first, everything looked great. He chased me in the greenhouse, and he succeeded, so I was very flattered. I fell head over heels in love with him. Then he started cheating. Preston left him. And then she took it back. Then she found out he was still cheating. And then she left him. And then she took it back. Then she found out he was still cheating. Repeat it seven times. The pattern, though excruciating, became what Preston knew, accepted and even expected from their relationship. It became her pattern. Every time I came back, I got attached to him more and more, and at that time, more and more humiliated, she says. Preston was starting to look Haggard. She lost modeling jobs. She lost money. She lost most of the people she counted back then as friends. (They just found it too painful, she says in charity, to see her spiral out of control.) I was pathetic, she says. I hated looking at myself in the mirror. (When Preston does glimpse her reflection, she says, she won't see beauty. She saw desperation, and she believes that's what other people saw, too. We all communicate all the time who we are through our physical being – through the vibrations our bodies ex exoth, she says. If you feel desperate and scared, the way I did, people feel it. They may not see a desperate person when you walk into a room, but they sense something about you that they're not crazy about. It's your fear. It's tangible, and it's disgusting. As Marian Williamson says, a thought never leaves its source. Williamson, who Preston frequently cites, is the blockbuster author of New Age Back to Love and seven other books. It was Williamson's teachings and the measures taken by alcoholics and Codependents Anonymous that Preston turned to grab the grip. I started putting together what I knew about spirituality and psychology, she explains, because at their best, I think they end up in the same thing. What Preston came to this was this: I realized I was always looking for 'The One' and wondered why he wasn't performing, she says. It took four years with a friend who cheated on me so I'd finally understand that the common denominator in all my relationships was me. I was the one who gave out my phone number. At the Lance Observatory, Preston quotes Buddha: We are what we think. With our thoughts, we make the world. As soon as I realized it - I really understood it - I started thinking differently on purpose, she says. And my life has changed dramatically. It was pretty simple, really. Pretty miraculous, but beautiful. For the perfect blind date as he did with tibetan monks, meditation changed Preston's mind. Meditation has changed my energy from that of fear and despair to quiet, hopeful confidence, she says. It taught me how to still be, to be present in my life, and to take care of what I do and how I feel as opposed to what he does or how he feels. It gave me the strength, the focus and the hope I needed to break my relationship for good. As Preston tells it, she didn't throw away the end of the random book or squeal obscurities: she just left and was left gone. She was finally so strong. When you're constantly responding to someone else, you're distracted, she says. And that distraction leaves you weak and far from the truth of who you are and what you do - and your perfect relationship. Hers started a year later, on blind date. In the months that have passed, Preston has gone from model to meditation counselor. Her blind date was Tom Preston, shooter and ceo of M.T.V. Networks. The two pressed immediately. Tom is funny; It's light; It's full of love, says Preston. It is as positive as my other relationships have been negative – the yin to their yang. However, I really think if I had met him a few years earlier, he wouldn't have been interested in me and I wouldn't have been able to see him. I was in a positive place when I met Tom. I projected positive energy. So I pulled a wonderful, positive man. But make no mistake: while she got her happy ending - she and Tom got married five years ago - Kathy Preston didn't live the legend she always wanted. The little girl in her son saved herself long before the handsome prince arrived. She believes Tom thought, Kathy's great because Kathy thought so, too. As a meditation consultant, she has a long list of clients ranging from novice meditation to cancer patients, most of them coming to her through referrals. She finds the work spiritually nozzly. I'm a completely different person now, she says. I feel like I can surpass my highest potential, not just because of Tom, but because of me. [Page Break] cheat sheet for new step 1 meditators: Do not move. Find a quiet space that is both private and inspiring. It could be outside, in a church or in a temple - even in the corner of your bedroom. Sit or lie down, close your eyes (to help you relax), and set an hour for the kitchen for 3 minutes, so there's no need to worry about when to finish meditation. As your comfort level increases, gradually increase the amount of time you meditate to 20 minutes a day or, ideally, twice a day. Step 2: Invite the divine. Turn your meditation space into a haven for spiritual practice by adding an element or two of your spiritual life —perhaps a candle, crystals, a cross, a Buddha, a picture of God as you understand it, even a small bunch of flowers—to remind you why you're there. When Create the space, says Freston, and action will follow. Step 3: Have spiritual intent. Start by repeating a positive mantra, one that is spiritual and meaningful to you. Use it to help drain your brain and relax as fully as you can. Then visualize what you want out of life - what you want your world to include and how you want it to feel. For me, it's always about having peace and creativity, says Freston.) And then actually evoke the presence of the divine, thank god or the universe for what you have —or simply help with the meditation process. Step 4: Pay attention to what comes up. In the likeness of the installations you create, you'll notice thoughts or emotions -- some negative, some of them not -- that you might not have been aware of because you were disguised in the activity. Don't try to drive them. They're what's really in your heart. Step 5: Surrender. In other words, accept that things don't always go according to your plan. Relax under the strain of self-imposed laws and actions. Give up your frustration or any negative feelings you might feel. Trust everything's going to be okay. And give in to the idea that miracles are your highest potential. My work in meditation, both as a counselor and a practitioner, is rooted in the belief that we create our own reality, that healthy relationships can only occur when we're healthy inside, says Preston, who says the more she meditated, the more positive she became, safer and understanding her patterns of self-destruction. Healthy, in Preston's jargon, L-Anon-meets-the Dalai Lama means mostly mentally calm, emotionally flexible, strong. We tend to give our energy to what we fear instead of what we hope for, she says. When you meditate, you do the opposite, strengthening your focus even when you direct it at what confirms, what is positive. And as a result, you become more positive, you become healthier - and you start attracting healthy people for you. This content is created and maintained by a third party and imported to this page to help users provide their e-mail addresses. 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